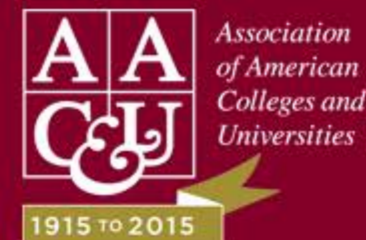*Falling Short?*

College Learning and Career Success

Key findings from survey among 400 employers and 613 college students conducted in November and December 2014

For

The Association of American Colleges and Universities by

Hart Research Associates

Methodology

- Online survey among 400 executives at private-sector and nonprofit organizations that have 25 or more employees

  - Each reports that 25% or more of their new hires hold an associate degree from a two-year college or a bachelor's degree from a four-year college

- Online survey among 613 college students, all within a year of obtaining a degree or, in the case of two-year students, transferring to a four-year college

  - Sample includes 304 students at four-year public colleges, 151 students at four-year private colleges, and 158 students at two-year colleges

Three in five employers believe that it takes BOTH specific knowledge/skills and broad knowledge/skills to achieve long-term career success.

Which is more important for recent college graduates to have who want to pursue advancement and long-term career success at your company?

(employers)

Range of knowledge and skills that apply to a range of fields or positions
25%

Knowledge and skills that apply to a specific field or position
15%
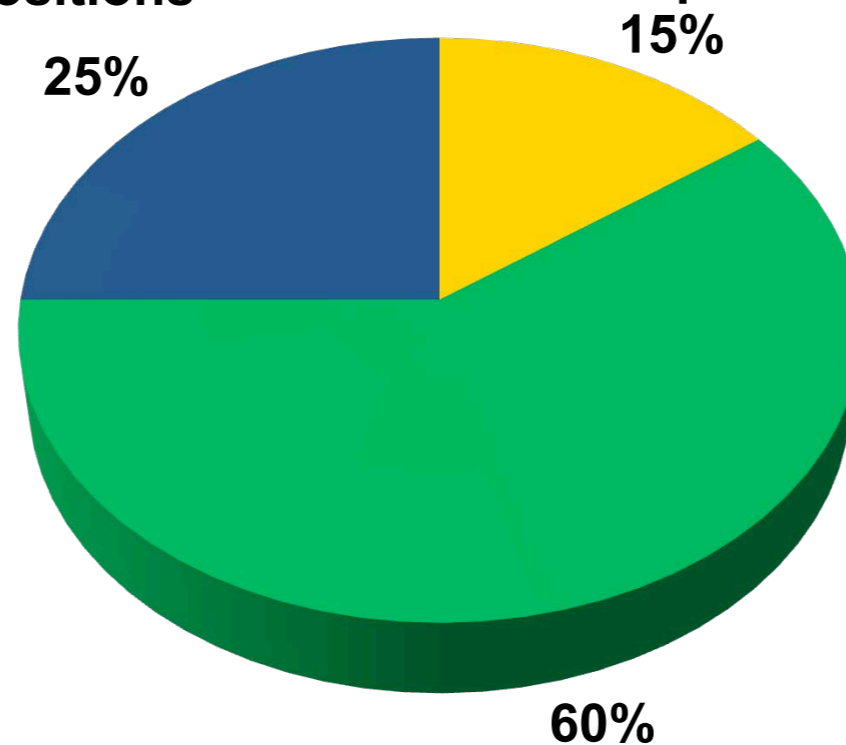
60%
Both field-specific and broad range of knowledge and skills

College students:
Specific	15%
Both	63%
Broad range	22%

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Employers are in broad agreement on college learning outcomes for all students, regardless of their chosen field of study.

Employers' agreement with statements about college learning aims regardless of student's chosen field of study

■ Strongly agree   ■ Somewhat agree

Students/ total agree
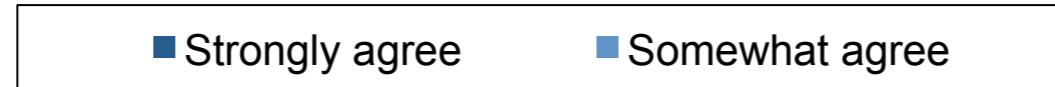
All college students should have educational experiences that teach them how to solve problems with people whose views are different from their own

59%   96%   94%

All college students should gain an understanding of democratic institutions and values

32%   87%   85%

Every college student should take courses that build the civic knowledge, skills, and judgment essential for contributing to our democratic society

33%   86%   86%

Every college student should acquire broad knowledge in the liberal arts and sciences

29%   78%   83%

All college students should gain intercultural skills and an understanding of societies and countries outside the United States

21%   78%   87%

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Learning Outcomes that at Least Four in Five Employers Rate as Very Important

*Proportions of employers rating each skill/knowledge area
as very important for recent college graduates to have**

Students:
very important
for success
<u>in workplace*</u>

Skill/knowledge area	Employers	Students
Oral communication	85%	78%
Working effectively with others in teams	83%	77%
Written communication	82%	75%
Ethical judgment and decision-making	81%	74%
Critical/analytical thinking	81%	79%
Applying knowledge/skills to real world	80%	79%

*8, 9, 10 ratings on zero-to-10 scale, 10 = very important

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1915 TO 2015
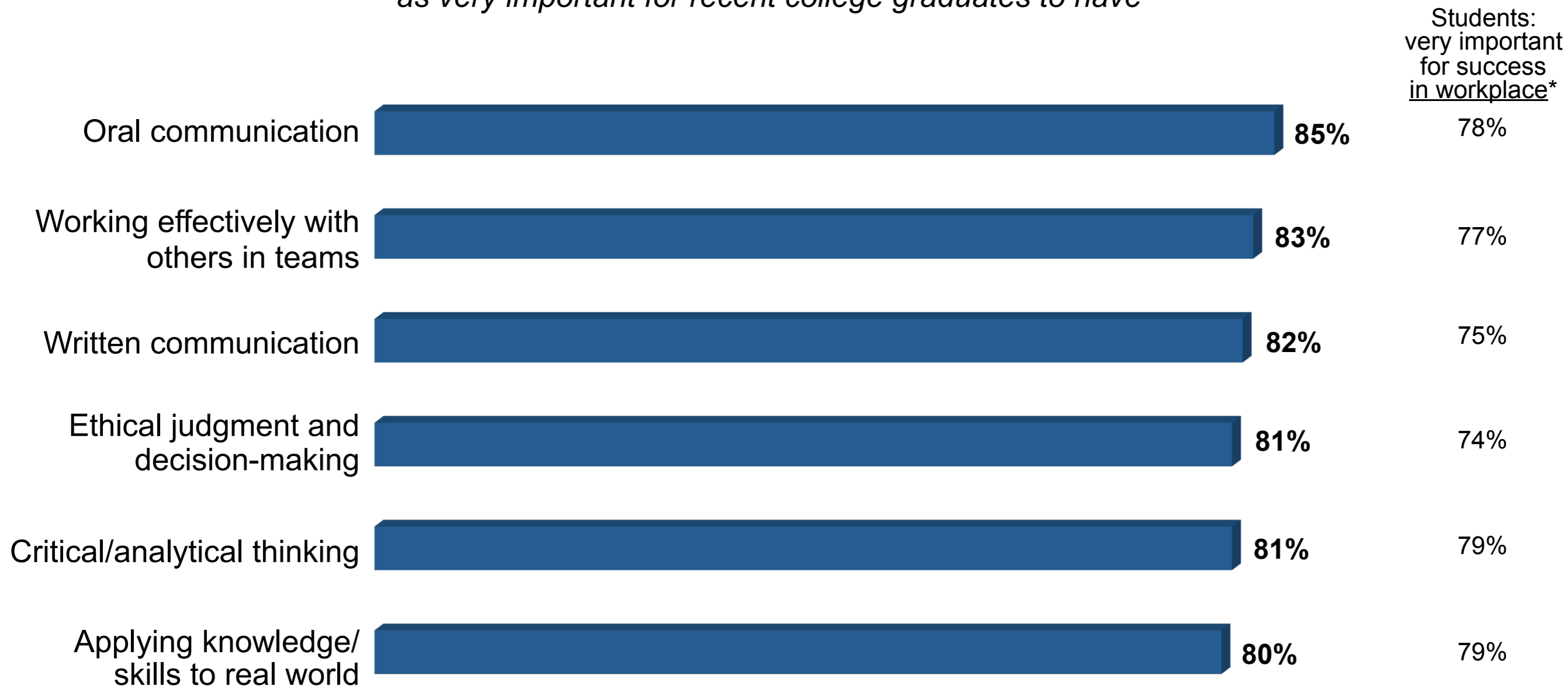
Learning Outcomes that More than Half of Employers Rate as Very Important

Proportions of employers rating each skill/knowledge area as very important for recent college graduates to have*

Students: very important for success in workplace*

Skill/Knowledge Area	Employers	Students
Analyzing/solving complex problems	70%	73%
Locating, organizing, evaluating information	68%	73%
Being innovative/creative	65%	69%
Staying current on technologies	60%	68%
Working with numbers/statistics	56%	55%
Analyzing/solving problems with people from different backgrounds	56%	71%

*8, 9, 10 ratings on zero-to-10 scale, 10 = very important

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1915 TO 2015
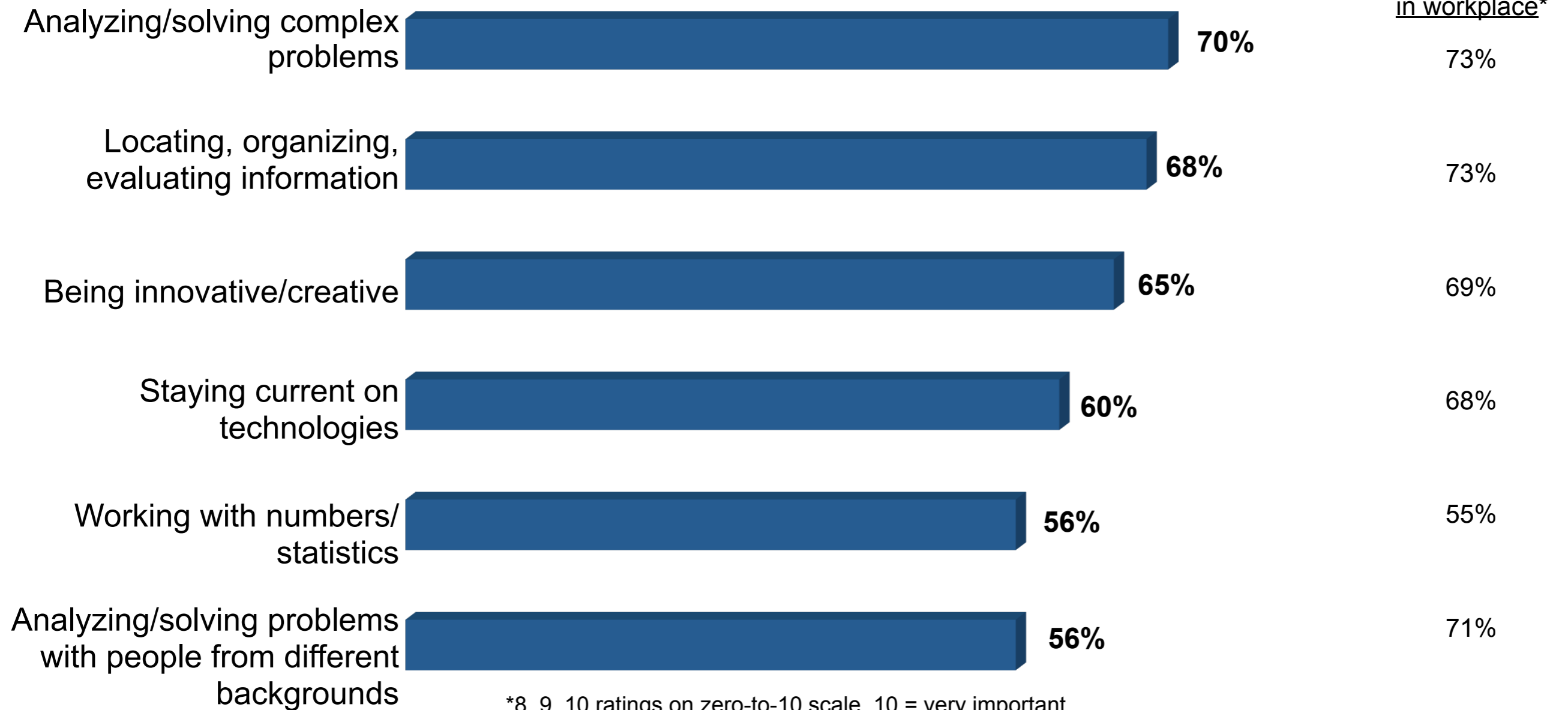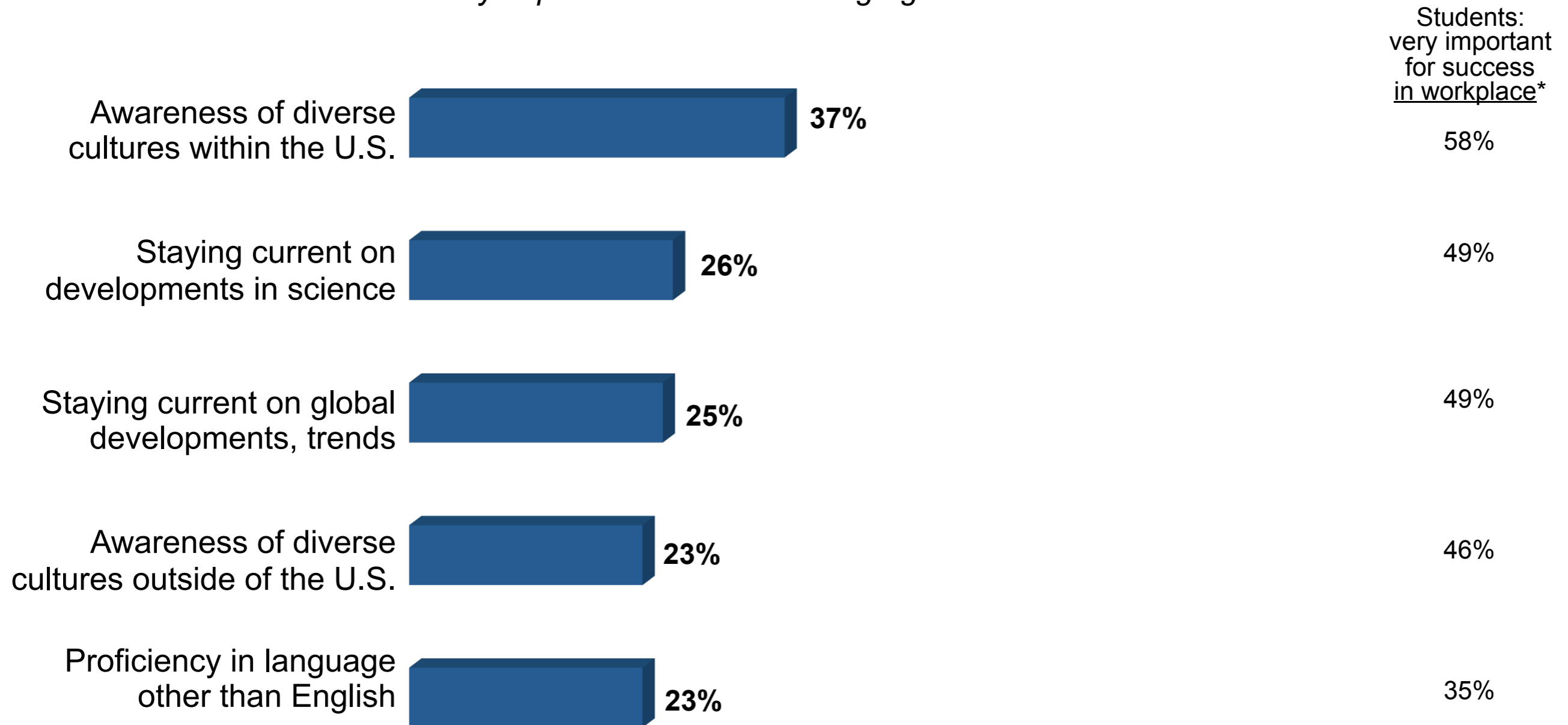
Learning Outcomes that Fewer than Two in Five Employers Rate as Very Important

Proportions of employers rating each skill/knowledge area
*as very important for recent college graduates to have**

Students:
very important
for success
in workplace*

Skill/Knowledge Area	Employers	Students
Awareness of diverse cultures within the U.S.	37%	58%
Staying current on developments in science	26%	49%
Staying current on global developments, trends	25%	49%
Awareness of diverse cultures outside of the U.S.	23%	46%
Proficiency in language other than English	23%	35%

*8, 9, 10 ratings on zero-to-10 scale, 10 = very important

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Employers perceive great value in students' completing applied learning projects, but see room to improve college students' preparedness to complete applied learning projects.

- 88% think that it is important for colleges to ensure that ALL students are prepared with the skills/knowledge needed to complete a significant applied learning project.

  ➔ BUT just 14% of employers think that most college students are prepared with the skills/knowledge needed to complete a significant applied learning project.

- 80% say that it is very important for recent graduates to demonstrate the ability to apply learning in real-world settings.

  ➔ BUT only 23% of employers think that recent college graduates are very well prepared to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings.

- 60% believe that ALL college students should be expected to complete a significant applied learning project before graduating.

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Employers see benefits to requiring students to complete a significant applied learning project.

In order to graduate, some colleges and many departments require students to complete a significant project, such as a research project, collaborative project, or some other project, in which they apply their college learning. This applied learning project takes a semester or more to complete.

If college students were required to complete a significant applied learning project like this, how much do you think this would improve each of the following?

■ Would improve this a lot   ■ Would improve this a fair amount

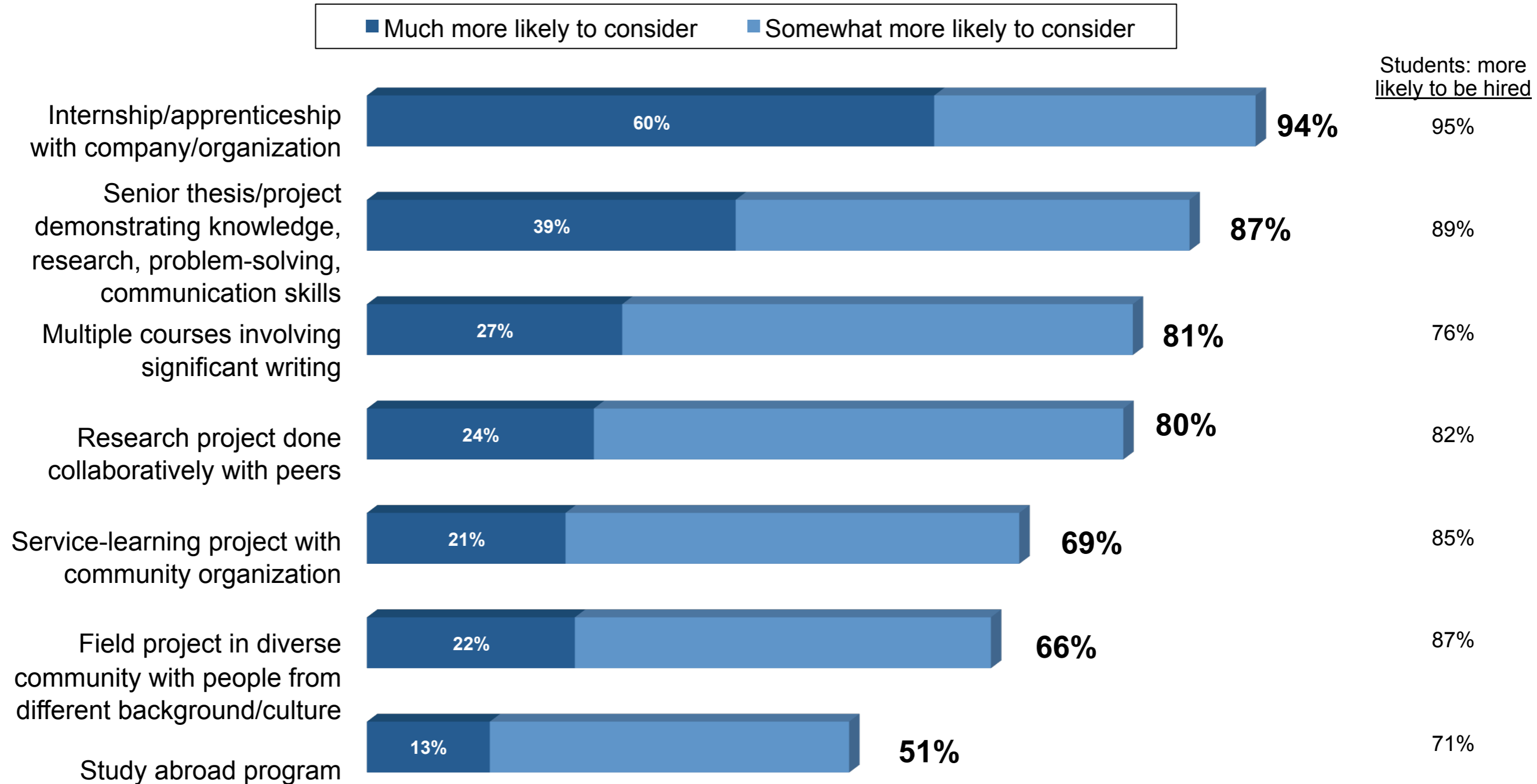## The quality of college graduates' preparation for careers

30%   **73%**

The quality of college learning

28%   **70%**

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Employers say they are more likely to consider hiring recent college graduates who have completed an applied learning or project-based learning experience.

How much more likely is your company to consider hiring recent college graduates if they have had this experience?

■ Much more likely to consider   ■ Somewhat more likely to consider

Students: more likely to be hired

	Much more likely to consider	Total	Students: more likely to be hired
Internship/apprenticeship with company/organization	60%	94%	95%
Senior thesis/project demonstrating knowledge, research, problem-solving, communication skills	39%	87%	89%
Multiple courses involving significant writing	27%	81%	76%
Research project done collaboratively with peers	24%	80%	82%
Service-learning project with community organization	21%	69%	85%
Field project in diverse community with people from different background/culture	22%	66%	87%
Study abroad program	13%	51%	71%

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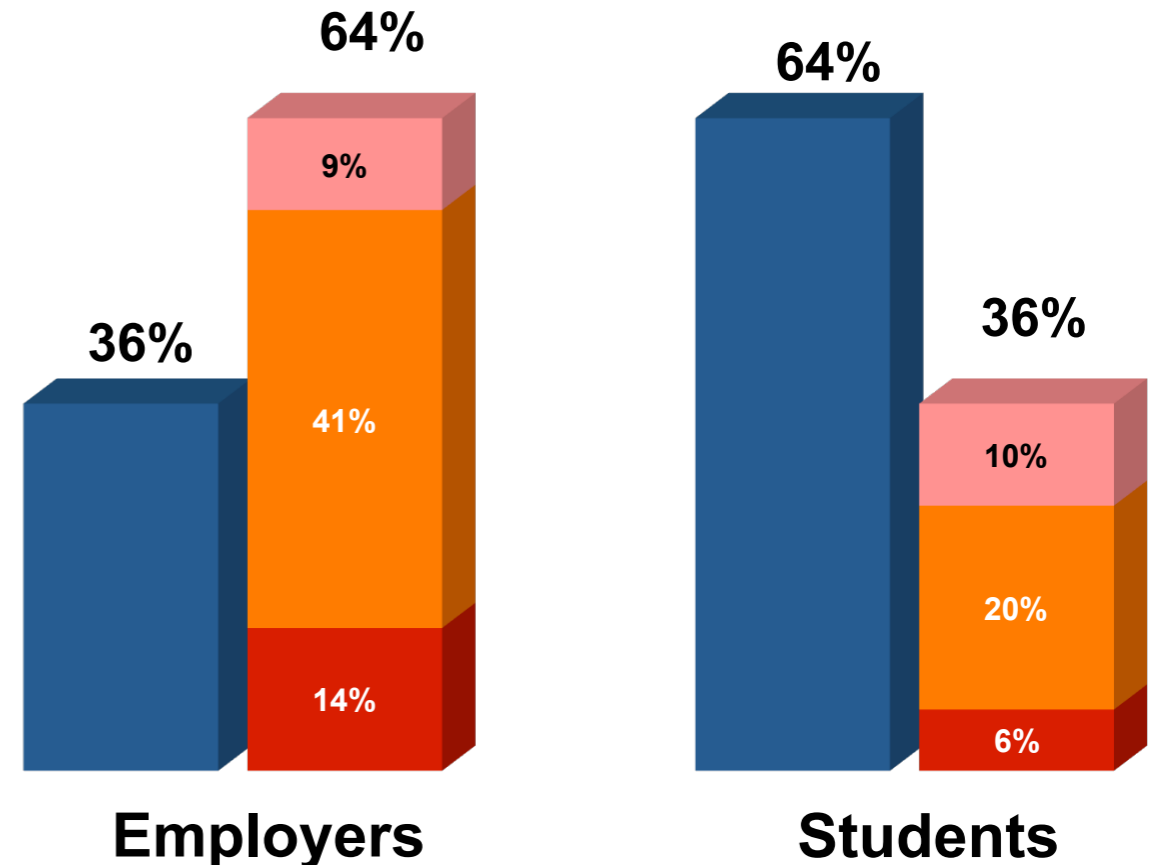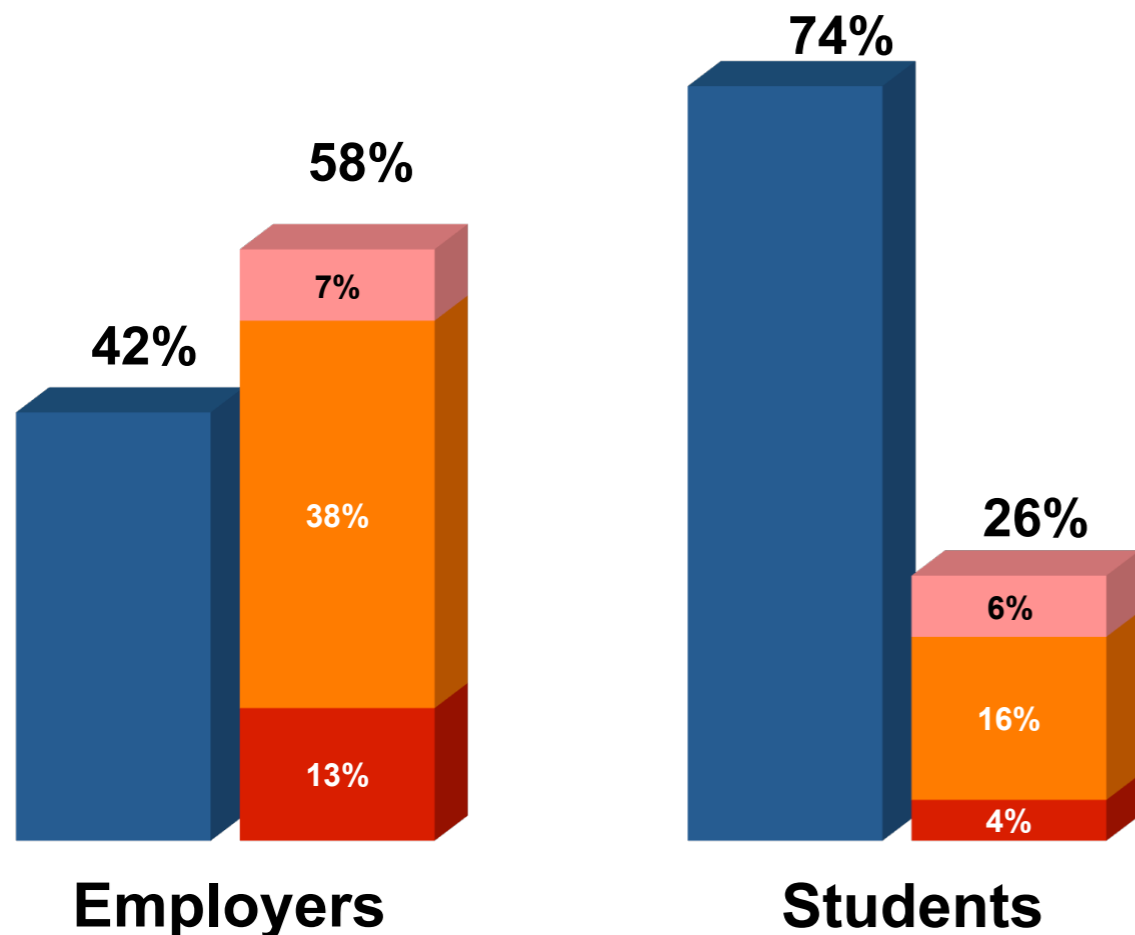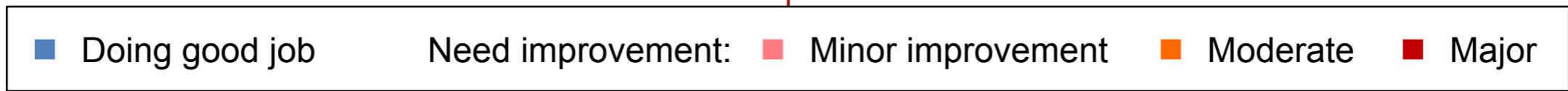A A C&U Association of American Colleges and Universities 1915 to 2015

Employers are more likely than students to think improvements are needed to ensure college graduates gain the skills and knowledge needed for success.

How well are colleges and universities doing in ensuring that college graduates possess the full set of skills and knowledge that they will need for success in this?

Entry-level positions

Advancement/promotion

Legend: ■ Doing good job | Need improvement: ■ Minor improvement ■ Moderate ■ Major

Entry-level positions:
- Employers: 42% (Doing good job); 7% Minor, 38% Moderate, 13% Major (58% need improvement)
- Students: 74% (Doing good job); 6% Minor, 16% Moderate, 4% Major (26% need improvement)

Advancement/promotion:
- Employers: 36% (Doing good job); 9% Minor, 41% Moderate, 14% Major (64% need improvement)
- Students: 64% (Doing good job); 10% Minor, 20% Moderate, 6% Major (36% need improvement)

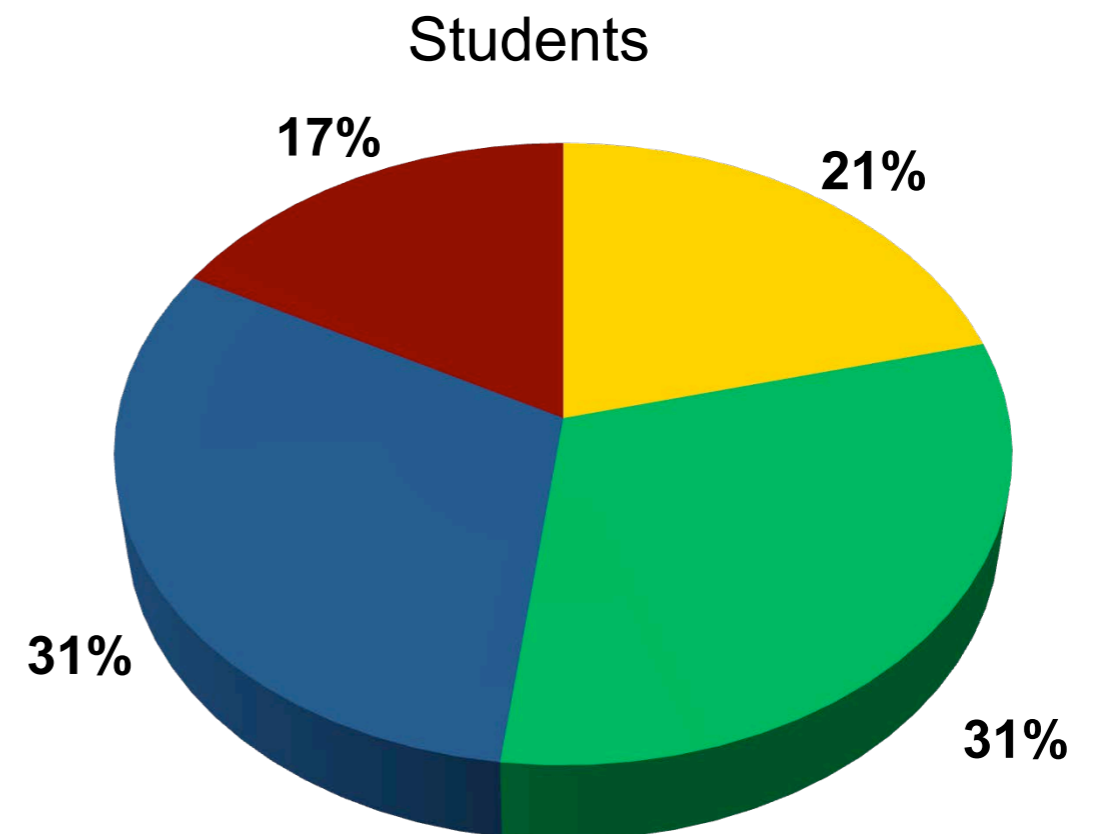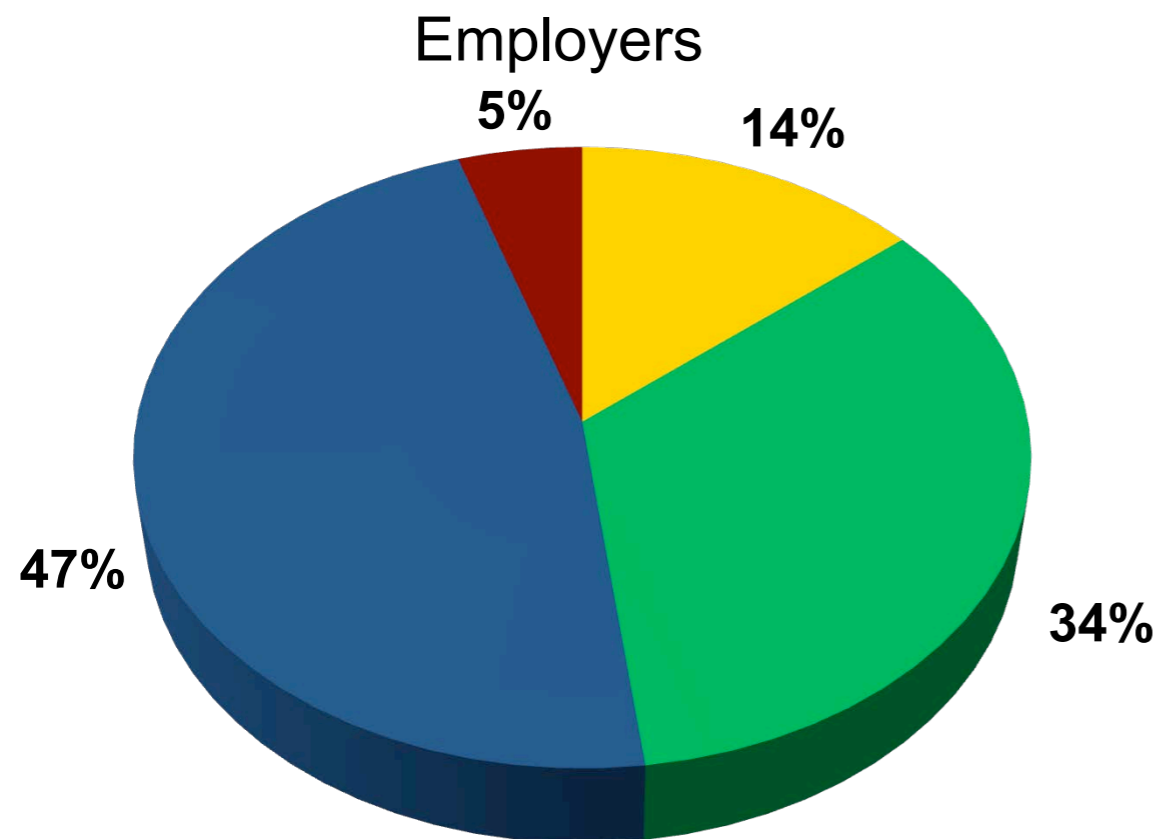LEAP · HART RESEARCH ASSOCIATES · Association of American Colleges and Universities · 1915 TO 2015

Top Priorities for Improvement

In which area do you think colleges and universities need to improve more?

- ■ (yellow) Ensure college graduates gain knowledge and skills that apply to a specific field or position
- ■ (green) Equal amount of improvement needed in both areas
- ■ (blue) Ensure graduates gain range of knowledge and skills that apply to a range of fields or positions
- ■ (dark red) Neither area needs improvement

Employers
- 5%
- 14%
- 47%
- 34%

Students
- 17%
- 21%
- 31%
- 31%

Employers give college graduates lower scores for preparedness across learning outcomes than current students give themselves.

Proportions who believe they/recent college graduates are well prepared in each area*

■ Employers ■ Students

Area	Employers	Students
Working effectively with others in teams	37%	64%
Staying current on technologies	37%	46%
Ethical judgment and decisionmaking	30%	62%
Locating, organizing, evaluating information	29%	64%
Oral communication	28%	62%
Working with numbers/statistics	28%	55%
Written communication	27%	65%
Critical/analytical thinking	26%	66%
Being innovative/creative	25%	57%

*8-10 ratings on zero-to-ten scale

(continued)

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Employers give college graduates lower scores for preparedness across learning outcomes than current students give themselves.

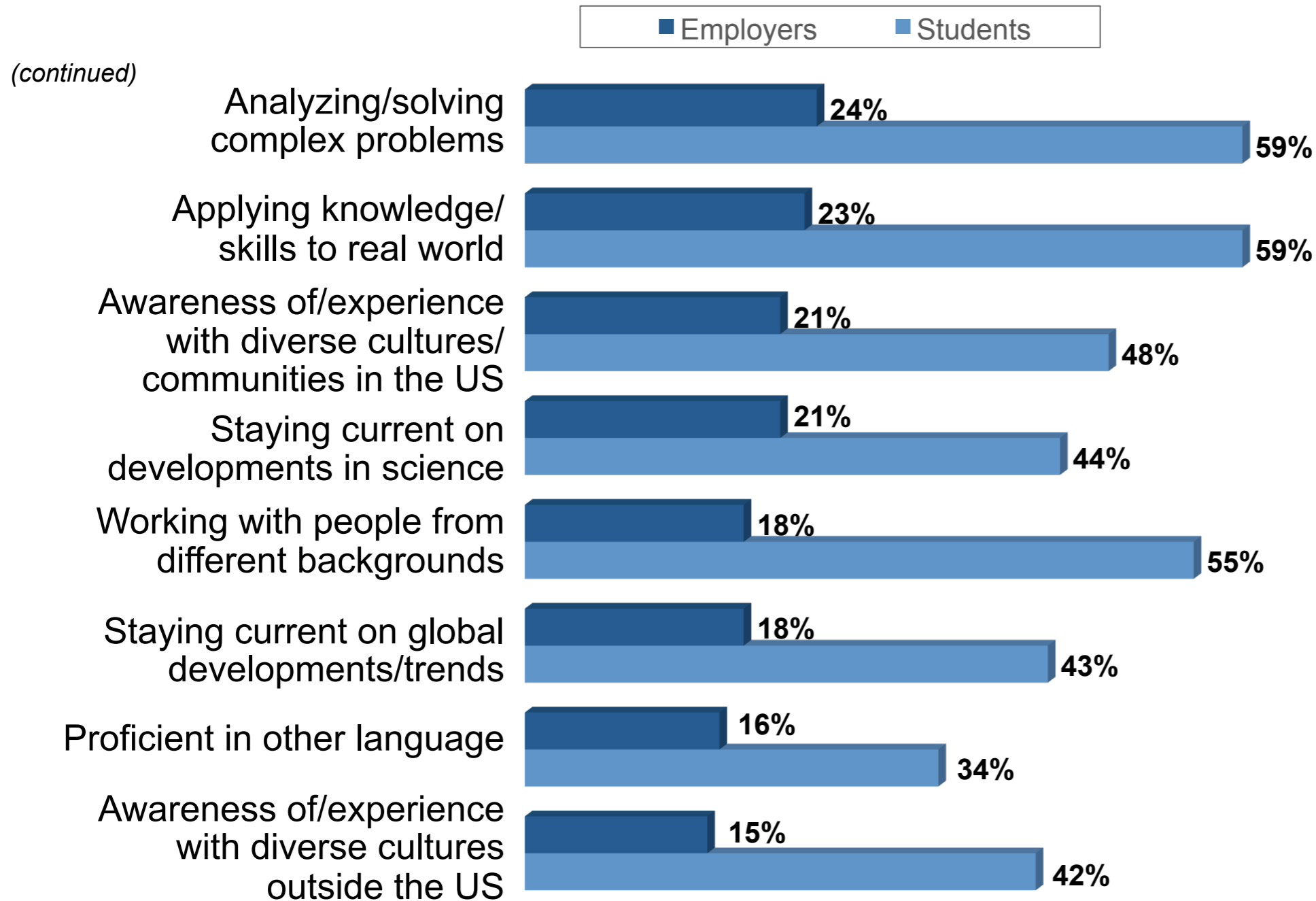*Proportions who believe they/recent college graduates are well prepared in each area**

■ Employers ■ Students

(continued)

Analyzing/solving complex problems
- Employers: 24%
- Students: 59%

Applying knowledge/ skills to real world
- Employers: 23%
- Students: 59%

Awareness of/experience with diverse cultures/ communities in the US
- Employers: 21%
- Students: 48%

Staying current on developments in science
- Employers: 21%
- Students: 44%

Working with people from different backgrounds
- Employers: 18%
- Students: 55%

Staying current on global developments/trends
- Employers: 18%
- Students: 43%

Proficient in other language
- Employers: 16%
- Students: 34%

Awareness of/experience with diverse cultures outside the US
- Employers: 15%
- Students: 42%

*8-10 ratings on zero-to-ten scale

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Most employers say they would find e-portfolios useful.

Employers: How useful do you find/would you find this in helping you evaluate job applicants'/recent college graduates' potential to succeed at your company?

College transcript

Electronic portfolio of student work summarizing and demonstrating accomplishments in key skill and knowledge areas

80%

45%

Very 9%

Very useful 36%

Very/fairly useful

Very/fairly useful