

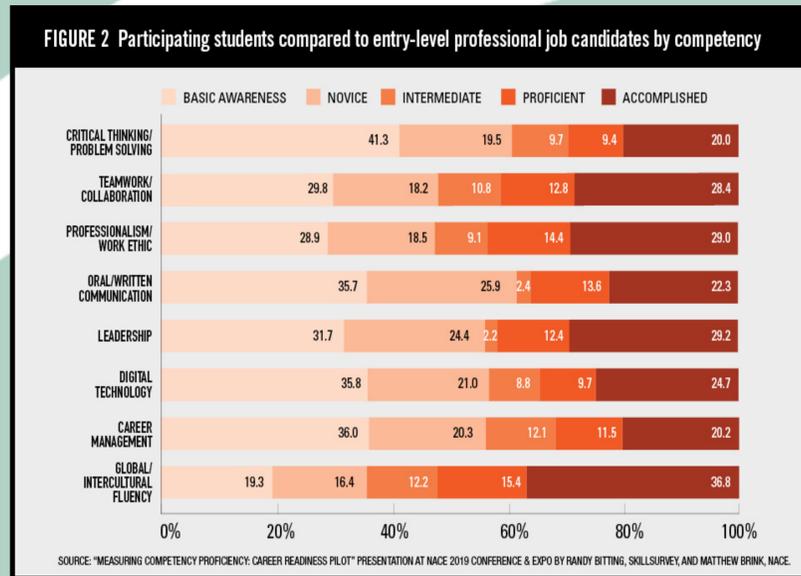
# Tackling the Career Fair: Scaffolded Activities to Prepare Students for Recruitment

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## Introduction

As students near graduation, their concern over marketability and readiness for the job market grows. Some students may already be working in degree-related fields, while others are discouraged that many new positions require a graduate degree. Apprehension over both their marketability and skill set, as well as general job readiness, is legitimate, as studies have shown that a) “approximately 53% of college graduates are unemployed or working in a job that doesn’t require a bachelor’s degree,” and b) studies have found that students believe they are more qualified and ready for the job market than has been found to be the case by respective or potential employers. (Figure 1, NACE 2019) Historically, students do not always avail themselves of the benefits of Career Services and other resources, which may mean that those assets need to be met where students are, which is most often in the classroom.

Although it is never a guarantee that career-oriented assignments or exercises will result in employment, these can equip students to understand what “type” of candidate that employers are seeking, including minimal expected skills and level of responsibility. Industry professionals are looking for a high level of oral and written communication, ability to collaborate and work with a team, and critical thinking, among other competencies. (Figure 2, NACE 2019) College faculty are in a unique position to help assess these skill levels through their courses and provide feedback for improvement and mastery, but in a way that is cumulative and thus not overwhelming to the potentially under-prepared student.



## GCH/SOCW Social Determinants

In this course, my teaching methods use experiential learning activities to encourage students to interact with varied community populations through meaningful community-based learning, with a secondary intention of building connections with local non-profits for whom they may be able to intern or work in the future. Their reflection on the experience, including both community need and their role, as well as comfort level, further prepares students to understand the types of jobs which may be available and their readiness to work one-on-one in a population.

## GCH Health, Ethics, Leadership, and Advocacy

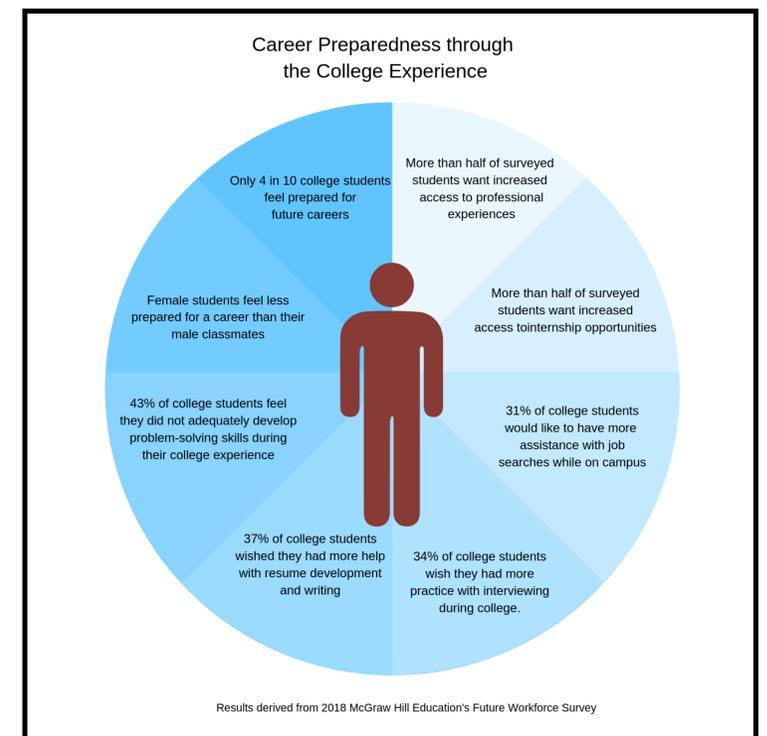
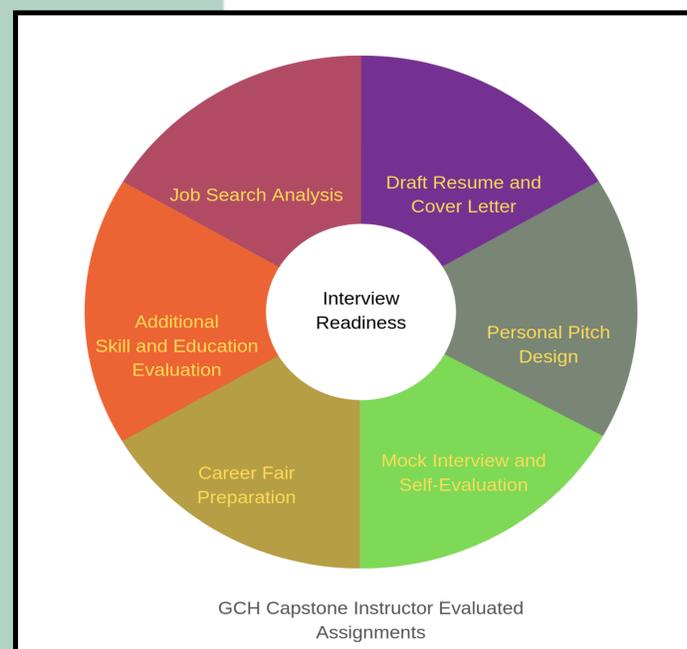
In this course, my teaching methods include assignments which require formal, professional communication, and “knowing your audience” preparation. Students are also reminded throughout the course to seriously consider internships and volunteerism, statistically connecting volunteerism and permanent job placement, or the “foot in the door” approach.

## Incorporating Scaffolded Career-Teaching in Courses to Meet “Bigger Picture” Goals

Students may not be aware that they have multiple opportunities to build professional experiences through both on-campus resources, such as Career Services, and unfortunately, many students may not take advantage of services at all. Core curriculum assignments can bring some of this information to students in the classroom in a way that is instructional and transformative.

## GCH Capstone

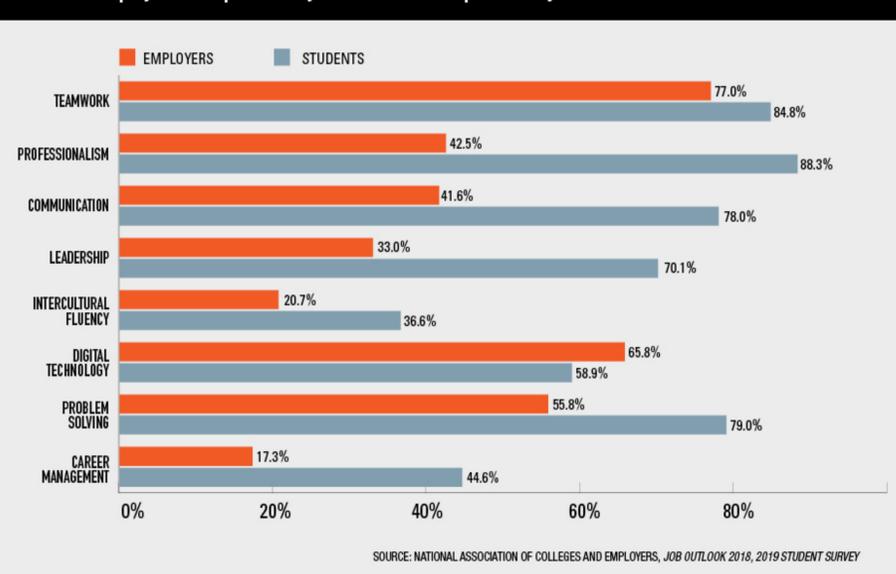
Career-oriented assignments build upon each other and are due at varied intervals during the semester. These are critiqued and graded and lead to both an informed look at career fairs and graduate school.



## Readiness-Test the Career Fair

Students can also self-test the results of their instructor-evaluated opportunities at the Career Fair. Using this recruitment event to present themselves professionally, produce a resume, and practice their personal pitch is a way to test-interview for the job they want, even if they are not currently qualified. This adds value to their education by encouraging a realistic assessment of knowledge and praxis now to close the proficiency gap in employment later.

**FIGURE 1 Employer rated proficiency vs. student rated proficiency**



**Resources**  
McGraw-Hill, “New Survey: Only 4 in 10 U.S. College Students Feel Well-Prepared for Their Future Careers; Perceptions of Preparedness Vary Widely By Gender,” June 2018.  
Forbes, “What Every College Student Should Be Doing For Career Success,” August 2018.  
National Association of Colleges and Employers, “Measuring Competency Proficiency: The Career Readiness Pilot Project,” August 2019.  
The Atlantic, “Why Aren’t College Students using Career Services,” January 2018.  
Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education, “Preparing 21<sup>st</sup> Century Citizens: The Role of Work-Based Learning in Linked Learning,” August 2013.