

# Undergraduate Students and Workforce Preparedness

Employer Perception of Undergraduate Student Preparedness for Internship and Practical Training at a Midwest, Regional University.

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### Key Definitions:

Hard skills are the technical abilities necessary to be able to perform the job. Soft skills are the interpersonal abilities needed to function within work groups. Overall employer satisfaction was identified as a combination of hard and soft skills, and was measured using the compound of these two variables.

### Analysis:

The analysis examined the relationship of overall employer satisfaction by reviewing the correlation of intern hard and soft skill demonstration with three demographic categories: gender, traditional and non-traditional student status, and technical and theory-based. Employer satisfaction with skill demonstration was measured on a standard 5-point Likert scale, where 1 was considered poor performance and 5 was excellent. The findings revealed no differences in employer satisfaction based on gender, student status, or major type. Additionally, findings suggest that employers were very satisfied with the preparedness of junior and senior interns from a Midwest, regional university with an average rating of good to excellent. Therefore, it was determined these students were highly prepared for their fields.

### Demographics:

The analysis examined the relationship of overall employer satisfaction by reviewing the correlation of intern hard and soft skill demonstration with credits completed. Differences in preparedness between gender, traditional and non-traditional student status, and technical and theory-based majors were also investigated.

*Gender Statistics of Hard and Soft Skills*

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Hard Skills	Female	247	4.56	.571	.036
	Male	153	4.53	.598	.048
Soft Skills	Female	247	4.58	.511	.033
	Male	154	4.59	.473	.038
Hard and Soft Skills	Female	246	4.58	.503	.032
	Male	153	4.58	.479	.039

*Student Status Statistics of Hard and Soft Skills*

Variable	Status	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Hard Skills	Traditional	305	4.55	.576	.033
	Nontraditional	95	4.54	.600	.062
Soft Skills	Traditional	306	4.58	.514	.029
	Nontraditional	95	4.60	.435	.045
Hard and Soft Skills	Traditional	304	4.58	.507	.029
	Nontraditional	95	4.59	.447	.046

*Student Major Type Statistics of Hard and Soft Skills*

Variable	Major	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Hard Skills	Technical	97	4.55	.617	.063
	Theory	303	4.55	.570	.033
Soft Skills	Technical	97	4.60	.556	.056
	Theory	304	4.58	.476	.027
Hard and Soft Skills	Technical	97	4.59	.546	.055
	Theory	302	4.58	.476	.027

### Summary of Key Findings:

- The data consisting of 402 student internship for credit records collected from Training Supervisor Evaluation Forms provided evidence of the following findings:
- There was no statistically significant correlation between semester hours completed and overall employer satisfaction with student preparedness.
- There was no statistically significant correlation between semester hours completed and employer satisfaction with student hard and soft skill demonstration during the internship and practical training experience.
- There was no statistically significant difference in the relationship of employer satisfaction with gender, student status, or major.
- Training supervisors were very satisfied with student interns, noting leadership, attitude, work ethic, and customer service in the text analysis of 294 comments.
- Work ethic was consistently one of the most noted elements of the employers' comments located within the open-ended question of the Training Supervisor Evaluation Form.
- Judgement and leadership had the strongest relationship with overall employer satisfaction of the demonstration of hard and soft skills by undergraduate business interns.
- Students were highly prepared for internship and practical training with an average rating by employers of good to excellent of skill demonstration.