Exploring Career Preparedness and Marketable Skills Among University Graduates

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Introduction

- Investigates ETAMU graduating students' perceptions of key marketable skills and their confidence
- Aligns students' skill development with the university's strategic goals ("Strategic Plan: 2024-2029", n.d.)
- Explore the growing needs of students based on NACE (National Association of Colleges and Employers) marketable skills ("What is career readiness", n.d.)
- Analyze student priorities and confidence based on demographics to inform future curriculum adjustments and career readiness programs



Research questions

To want extent do students feel confident in the skills they ranked most important, based on their experience studying in ETAMU?

- What are the skills that are highly important, by level?
- What are the skills students felt most confident vs. least confident, by genderl?



Methodology

Data: Responses of Graduate Exit Survey from both undergraduates and graduates in ETAMU

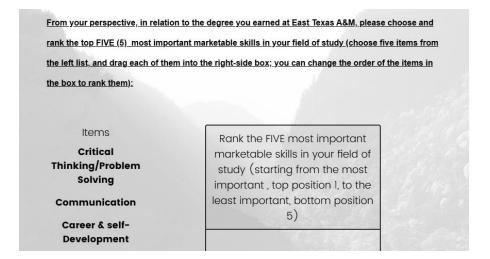
		20	24	2025		
Demographics	Category	N	Percent	N	Percent	
Gender	Male	263	33.59	282	34.6	
Gender	Female	520	66.41	583	71.53	
Level	Graduate	340	43.42	322	39.51	
Level	Undergraduate	443	56.58	493	60.49	
College	CA	42	5.36	36	4.42	
	СВ	215	27.46	190	23.31	
	СН	81	10.34	84	10.31	
	CI	189	24.14	192	23.56	
	CS	62	7.92	101	12.39	
	ED	194	24.78	212	26.01	

Instruments:

- Drag and Drop top 5 marketable skills from a pool of skills;
- 5-point Likert scale self-assessment questions of students' perceived competence in all marketable skills;

Data analysis

- Descriptive analysis of percentage and group mean;
- Ranking: 1 -> Most Important; 5 -> Least Important;
- Self-assessment: Poor -> 1; Excellent ->5;



Please rate your current lev	el of skill in ea	ich area:				
	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent	
Critical Thinking/Problem Solving	0	0	0	0	0	
Writing Communication	0	0	0	0	0	
Oral Communication	0	0	0	0	0	
Empirical and Quantitative Skills	0	0	0	0	0	
Personal Responsibility	0	0	0	0	0	



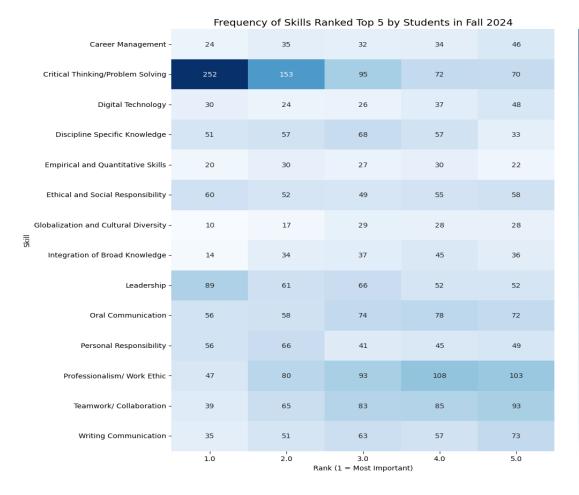
Overall Trend in Students' Ranking of Marketable Skills

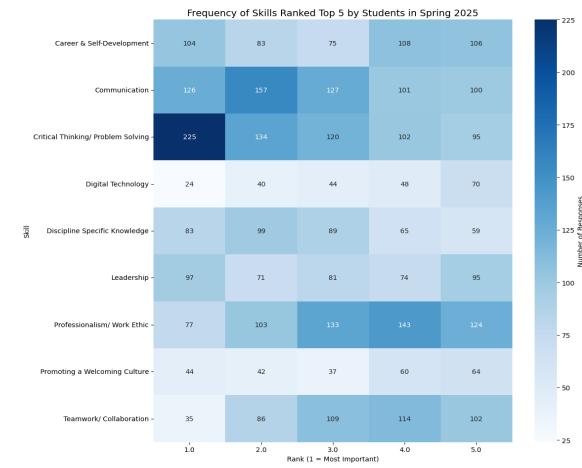
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Ranking of Marketable Skills by Level

_	Skill Rankir	ng Distribution by	Level in Fall 202	4 (Rank 1 = Mos	t Important)				Skill Ranking	g Distribution by L	evel in Spring 20	25 (Rank 1 = Mo	st Important)
Career Management-G -	14.7	24.0	21.3	24.0	16.0	-	- 40	Career & Self-Development-G -	23.5	17.3	15.8	26.5	16.8
Career Management-U -	13.5	17.7	16.7	16.7	35.4								
Critical Thinking/Problem Solving-G -	40.4	25.1	14.5	10.5	9.5			Career & Self-Development-U -	20.7	17.5	15.7	20.0	26.1
Critical Thinking/Problem Solving-U -	38.4	22.9	15.0	11.7	12.0			Communication-G -	19.6	27.6		15.4	15.4
Digital Technology-G -	16.5	20.9	17.6	22.0	23.1	-	- 35						
Digital Technology-U -	20.3	6.8	13.5	23.0	36.5			Communication-U -	21.2	24.7	20.2	17.1	16.9
Discipline Specific Knowledge-G -	25.7	21.3	21.3	20.6	11.0			Critical Thinking/ Problem Solving-G -	36.3	17.0	16.6	13.9	16.2
Discipline Specific Knowledge-U -	12.3	21.5	30.0	22.3	13.8			chical minking, modern solving o	30.5	17.0	10.0	13.3	10.2
Empirical and Quantitative Skills-G -	13.5	24.3	20.3	23.0	18.9	-	- 30	Critical Thinking/ Problem Solving-U -	31.4	21.6	18.5	15.8	12.7
Empirical and Quantitative Skills-U -	18.2	21.8	21.8	23.6	14.5			Digital Technology-G -	10.2	18.5	19.4	21.3	30.6
Ethical and Social Responsibility-G -	22.8	17.1	17.9	19.5	22.8			Digital lectifiology-d -	10.2	10.5	19.4	21.3	30.0
Ethical and Social Responsibility-U -	21.2	20.5	17.9	20.5	19.9			Digital Technology-U -	11.0	16.9	19.5	21.2	31.4
Globalization and Cultural Diversity-G - ত	9.7	16.1	24.2	19.4	30.6	-	- 25 S	Discipline Specific Knowledge-G -	10.0	27.1		17.6	10.4
बे Globalization and Cultural Diversity-U -	8.0	14.0	28.0	32.0	18.0		of Responses	Discipline Specific Knowledge-G -	18.2	27.1	24.7	17.6	12.4
Integration of Broad Knowledge-G -	8.2	23.3	17.8	27.4	23.3		of Re	+ ☐ Discipline Specific Knowledge-U -		23.6	20.9	15.6	16.9
ntegration of Broad Knowledge-U -	8.6	18.3	25.8	26.9	20.4		%	ν					
Leadership-G -	27.2	16.7	21.1	15.8	19.3	-	- 20	Leadership-G -	22.9	17.0	19.6	15.0	25.5
Leadership-U -	28.2	20.4	20.4	16.5	14.6			Leadership-U -	23.4	17.0	19.2	19.2	21.1
Oral Communication-G -	18.5	17.7	26.2	16.9	20.8								
Oral Communication-U -	15.4	16.8	19.2	26.9	21.6			Professionalism/ Work Ethic-G -	12.3	19.1	20.5	24.1	24.1
Personal Responsibility-G -	22.7		12.5	18.2	20.5	-	- 15	Professionalism/ Work Ethic-U -	13.9	16.9	24.4	25.0	19.7
Personal Responsibility-U -	21.3	25.4	17.8	17.2	18.3			·					
Professionalism/ Work Ethic-G -	6.0	19.3	20.5	30.1	24.1			Promoting a Welcoming Culture-G -	15.9	20.6	14.0	27.1	
Professionalism/ Work Ethic-U -	14.0	18.1	22.3	21.9	23.8			Promoting a Welcoming Culture-U -	19.3	14.3	15.7	22.1	28.6
Teamwork/ Collaboration-G -	10.6	13.5	24.7		26.5	-	- 10		25.5	2.13	2517		20.0
Teamwork/ Collaboration-U -	10.8	21.5	21.0	22.1	24.6			Teamwork/ Collaboration-G -	10.4	15.8	26.2	23.5	24.0
Writing Communication-G -	12.2	15.4	23.6	19.5	29.3			Teamwork/ Collaboration-U -	6.1	21.7	23.2	27.0	22.1
Writing Communication-U -	12.8	20.5	21.8	21.2	23.7			lealitwork/ Collaboration-U -	ı	21.7			
	1.0	2.0	3.0 Rank	4.0	5.0				1.0	2.0	3.0 Rank	4.0	5.0
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Overall Trend in Students' Self-Assessment of Marketable Skills

Descriptive Statistics for Self-Assessment Scores Across Skills in Fall 2024

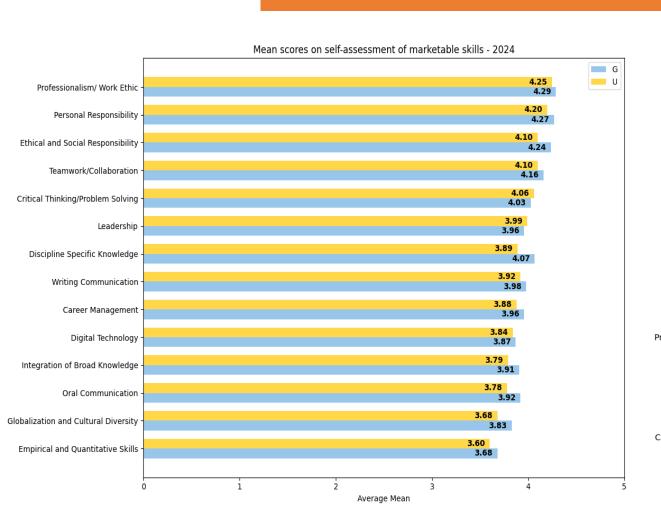
Skills	Mean	SD
Professionalism/ Work Ethic	4.27	0.79
Personal Responsibility	4.23	0.77
Ethical and Social Responsibility	4.16	0.82
Teamwork/ Collaboration	4.13	0.85
Critical Thinking/Problem Solving	4.05	0.78
Leadership	3.98	0.86
Discipline Specific Knowledge	3.97	0.85
Writing Communication	3.95	0.84
Career Management	3.91	0.87
Digital Technology	3.86	0.87
Oral Communication	3.84	0.89
Integration of Broad Knowledge	3.84	0.86
Globalization and Cultural Diversity	3.74	0.92
Empirical and Quantitative Skills	3.64	0.88

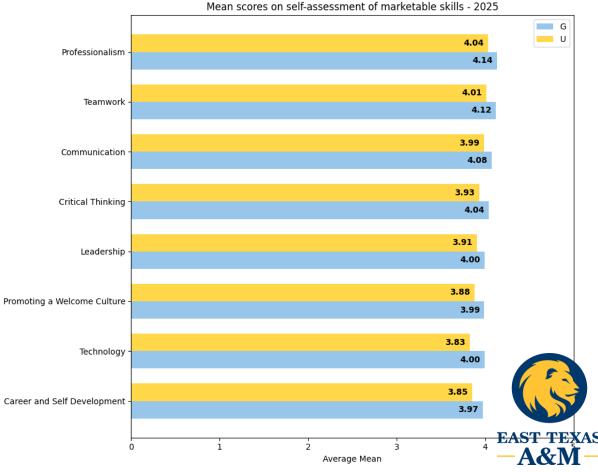
Descriptive Statistics for Self-Assessment Scores Across Skills in Spring 2025

Skills	Mean	SD
Professionalism/ Work Ethic	4.08	0.76
Teamwork/ Collaboration	4.06	0.77
Communication	4.03	0.79
Critical Thinking/ Problem Solving	3.98	0.77
Leadership	3.94	0.81
Promoting a Welcome Culture	3.92	0.80
Career & Self Development	3.90	0.80
Digital Technology	3.89	0.82



Self-Assessment of Marketable Skills by Level





Conclusion

- Across both Fall 2024 and Spring 2025, students consistently prioritized key marketable skills such as Critical Thinking, Leadership, Communication, Professionalism, and Teamwork, regardless of level.
- Skills related to global awareness and inclusive environments—such as Globalization & Cultural Diversity and Promoting a Welcoming Culture—were consistently ranked lower, suggesting that students may not view these as core areas they want to develop within their degree studies.
- Skills related to career readiness (e.g., Career Management, Digital Technology) appeared more prominently in recent terms, particularly among graduate students—indicating a growing interest in career-oriented preparation.
- Students generally felt confident in these top-ranked skills, with self-assessment scores concentrated around "Good" or "Very Good", indicating there is still room for improvement.



References

- East Texas A&M University. (n.d.). Strategic Planning: 2024-2029. Strategic Plan: 2024-2029 | East Texas A&M University, ETAMU
- NACE. (n.d.). What is Career Readiness? https://www.naceweb.org/career-readiness/competencies/career-readiness-defined.



