

Exploring Career Preparedness and Marketable Skills Among University Graduates

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EAST TEXAS A&M
— UNIVERSITY —

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 what 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 gender?

Methodology

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

Demographics	Category	2024		2025	
		N	Percent	N	Percent
Gender	Male	263	33.59	282	34.6
	Female	520	66.41	583	71.53
Level	Graduate	340	43.42	322	39.51
	Undergraduate	443	56.58	493	60.49
College	CA	42	5.36	36	4.42
	CB	215	27.46	190	23.31
	CH	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

From your perspective, in relation to the degree you earned at East Texas A&M, please choose and rank the top FIVE (5) most important marketable skills in your field of study (choose five items from the left list, and drag each of them into the right-side box; you can change the order of the items in the box to rank them):

Items
Critical Thinking/Problem Solving
Communication
Career & self-Development

Rank the FIVE most important marketable skills in your field of study (starting from the most important, top position 1, to the least important, bottom position 5)

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

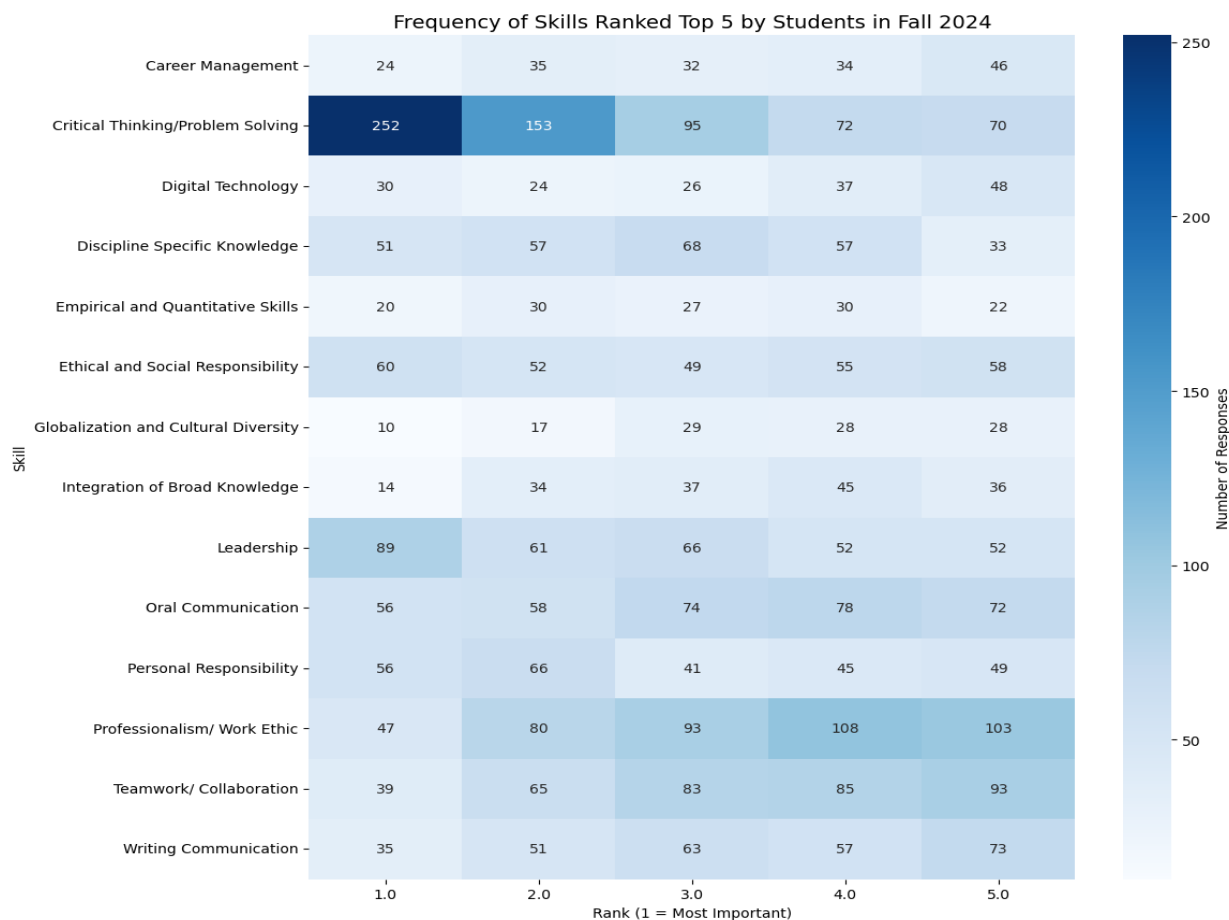
- Descriptive analysis of percentage and group mean;
 - Ranking: 1 -> Most Important ; 5 -> Least Important;
 - Self-assessment: Poor -> 1; Excellent ->5;

Please rate your current level of skill in each area:

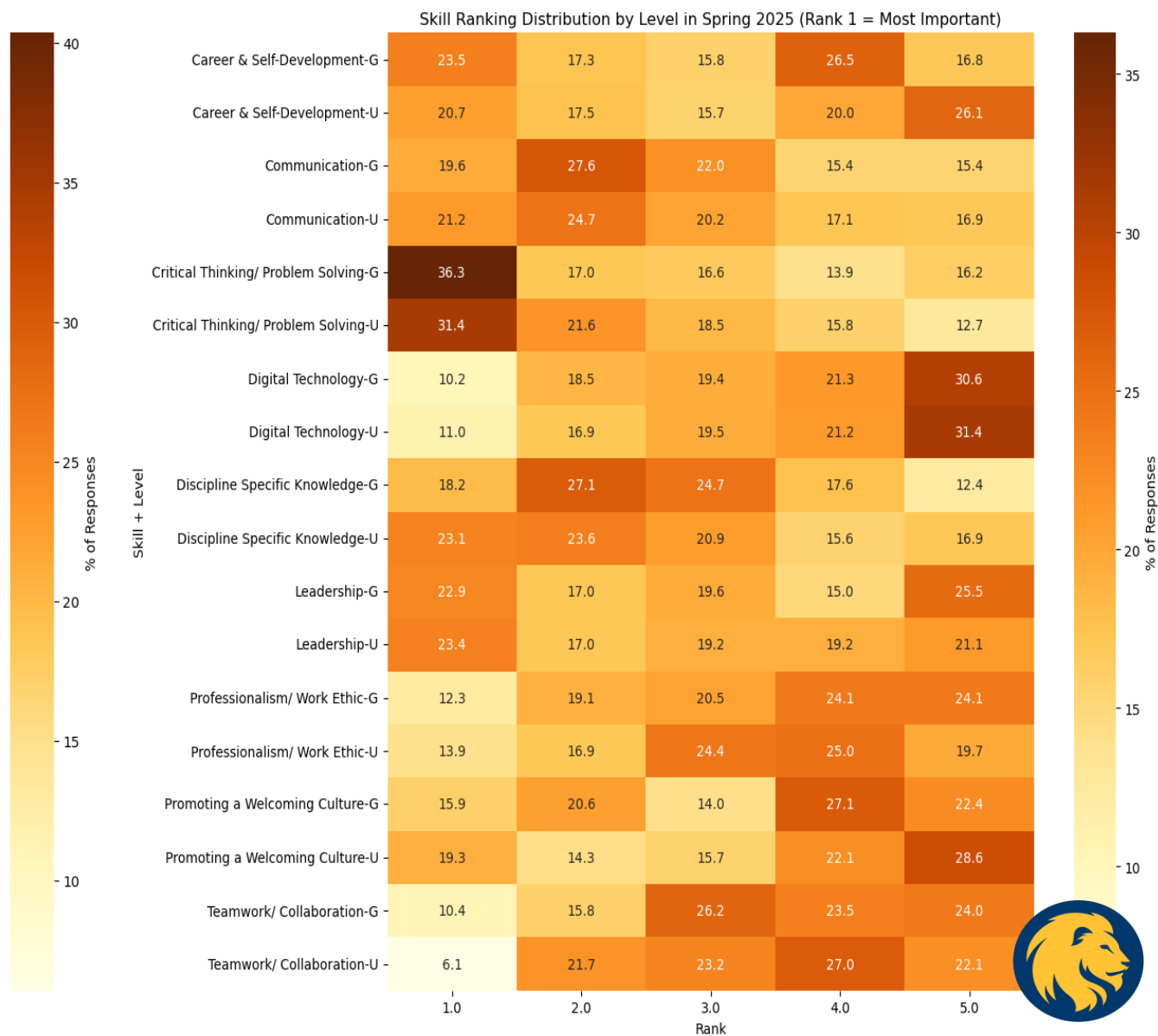
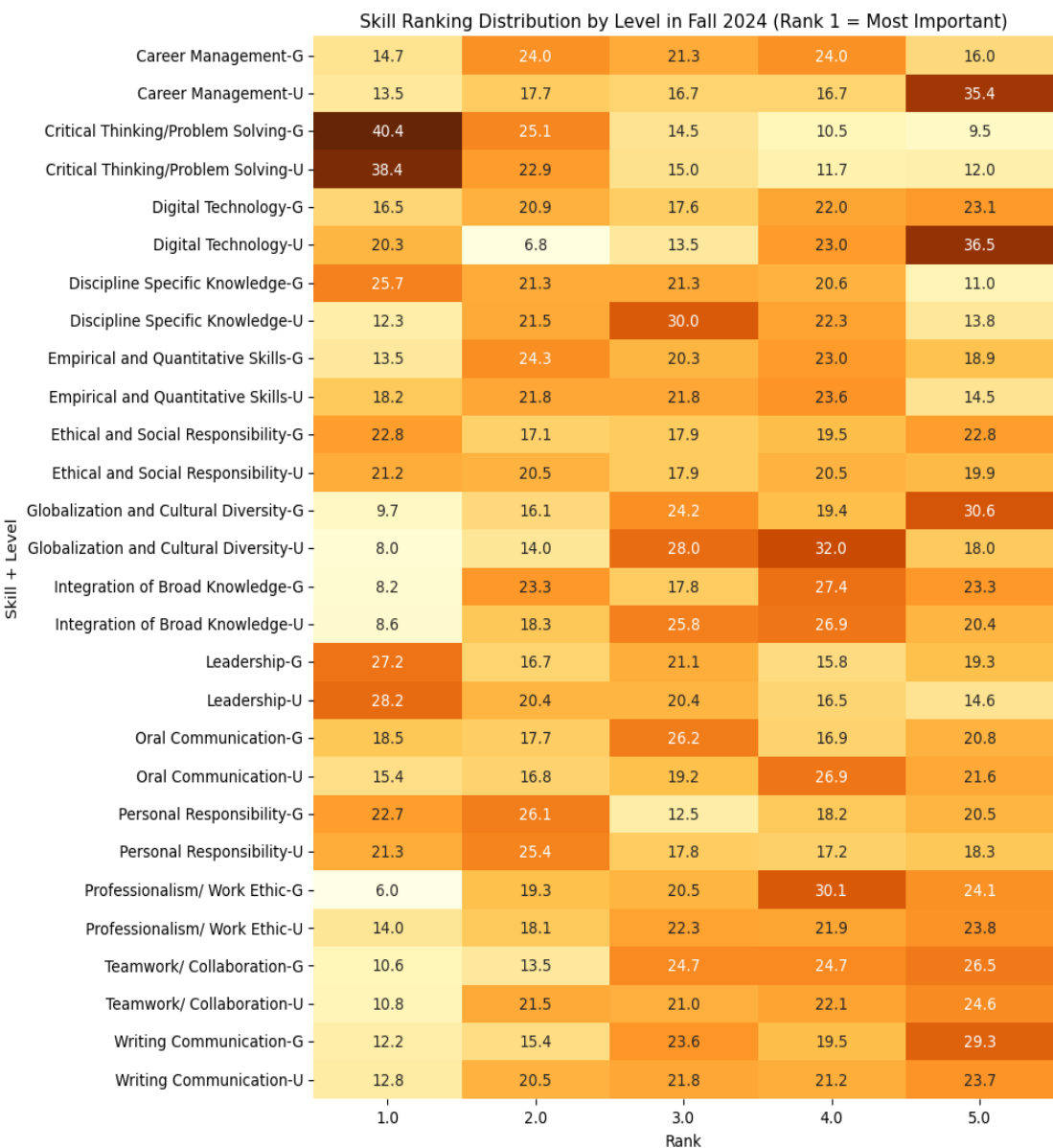
	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent
Critical Thinking/Problem Solving	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Writing Communication	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Oral Communication	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Empirical and Quantitative Skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Personal Responsibility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Overall Trend in Students' Ranking of Marketable Skills



Ranking of Marketable Skills by Level



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

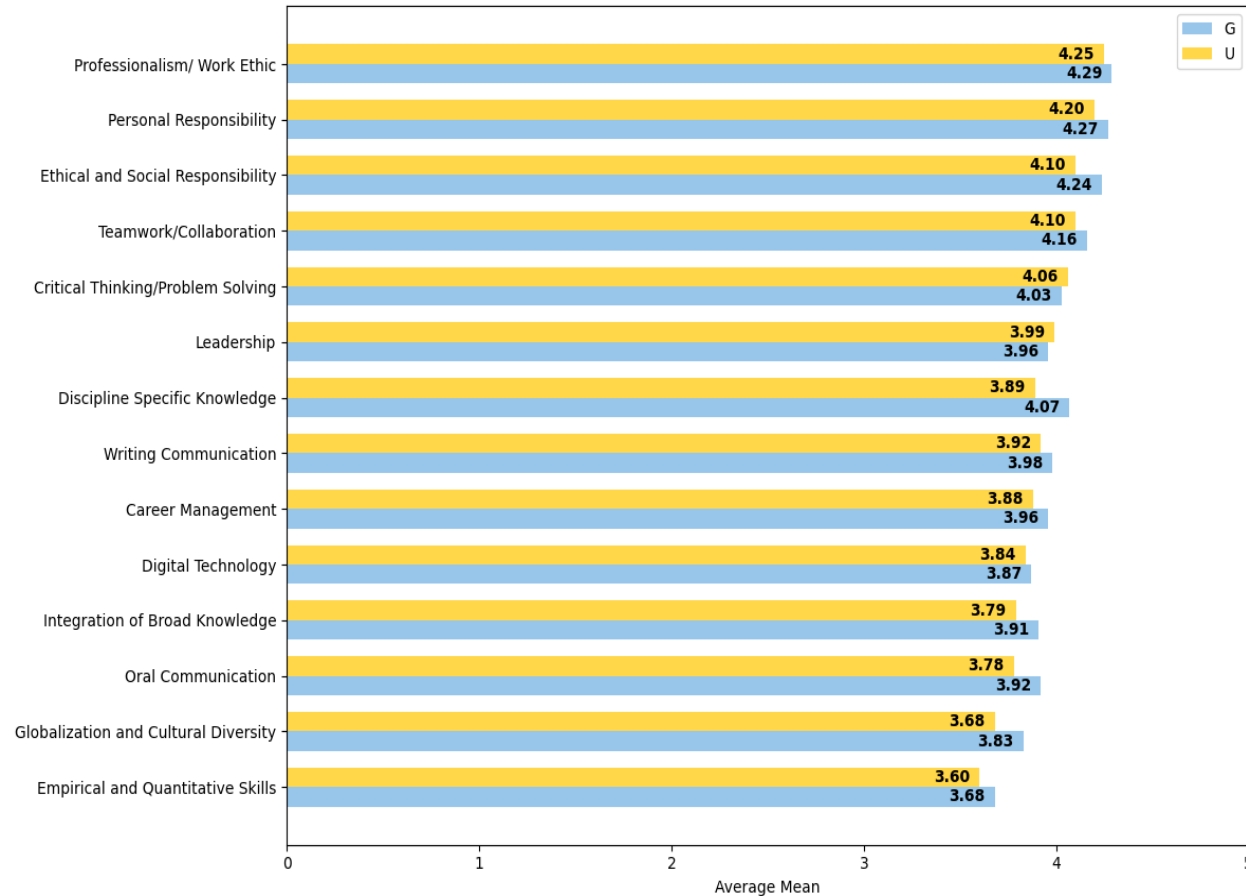
Skills	Mean	SD
Professionalism/ Work Ethic	4.08	0.76
Teamwork/ Collaboration	4.06	0.77
Communication	4.03	0.79
Critical Thinking/ Problem Solving	3.98	0.77
Leadership	3.94	0.81
Promoting a Welcome Culture	3.92	0.80
Career & Self Development	3.90	0.80
Digital Technology	3.89	0.82

Note. SD = Standard Deviation.

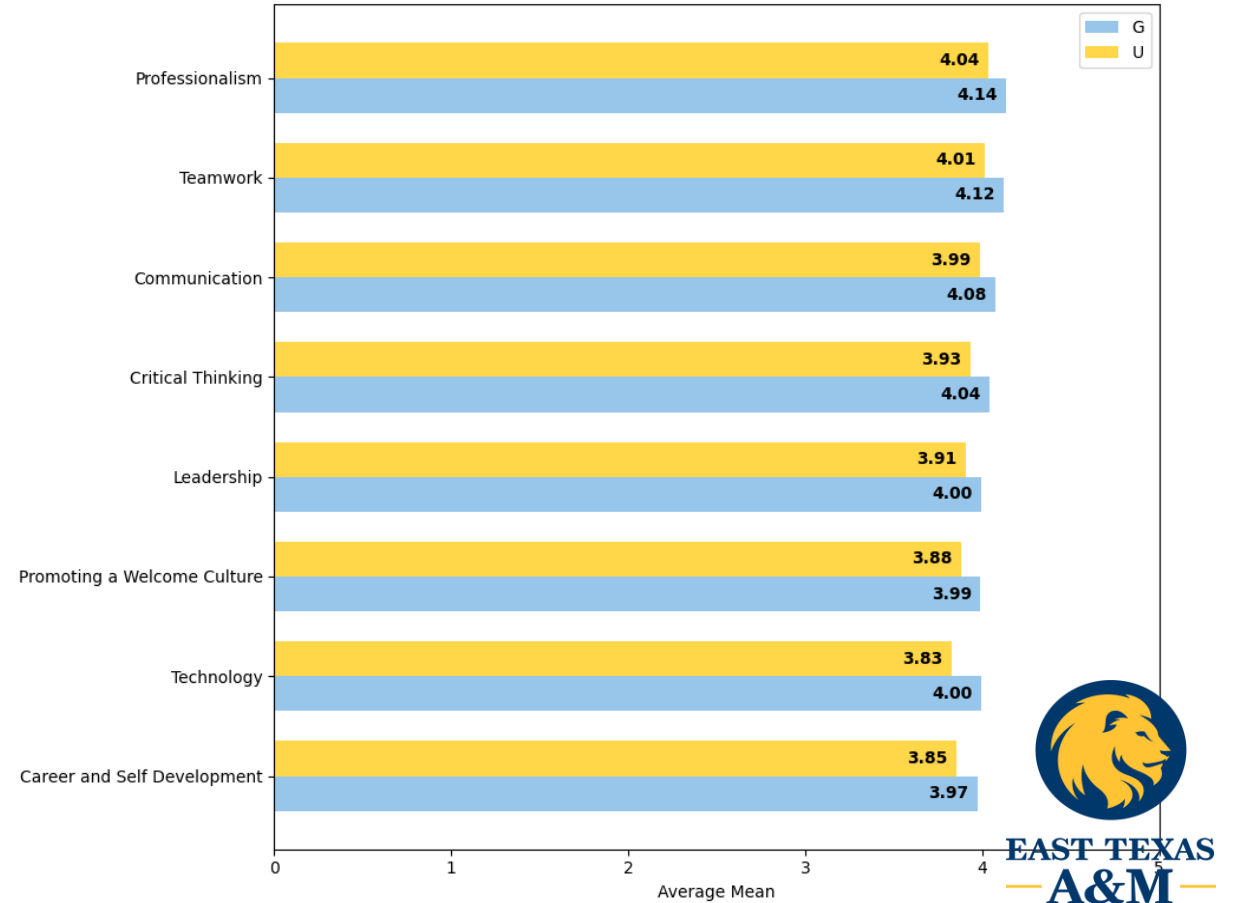
Self-Assessment of Marketable Skills by Level



Mean scores on self-assessment of marketable skills - 2024



Mean scores on self-assessment of marketable skills - 2025



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>.

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