Preparing BA Sociologists for Careers

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WHAT ARE EMPLOYERS LOOKING FOR?
Major Take Aways from Employer Surveys

1. Employers value skills and knowledge that cut across majors

2. Employers are interested in hiring graduates who know how to apply those skills

93% of employers agree that demonstrated capacity to think critically, communicate clearly, and solve complex problems is more important than major.

(AAC&U 2013)
Attributes Employers Seek on a Resume

- Written communication skills
- Problem-solving skills
- Ability to work in a team
- Initiative
- Analytical/quantitative skills
- Strong work ethic
- Verbal communication skills
- Leadership
- Detail-oriented
- Technical skills
- Flexibility/adaptability
- Computer skills
- Interpersonal skills
- Organizational ability
- Strategic planning skills
- Tactfulness
- Creativity
- Friendly/outgoing personality
- Entreprenuerial skills/risk-taker
- Fluency in a foreign language

Source: National Association of Colleges and Employers Job Outlook 2019
Very Important Skills for Recent College Grads We Are Hiring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Business Executives</th>
<th>Hiring Managers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Able to effectively communicate orally</td>
<td>85% in 2014</td>
<td>80%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Critical thinking/analytical reasoning</td>
<td>81% in 2014</td>
<td>78%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethical judgment and decision-making</td>
<td>81% in 2014</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to work effectively in teams</td>
<td>83% in 2014</td>
<td>77%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Able to work independently (prioritize, manage time)</td>
<td></td>
<td>77%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-motivated, initiative, proactive: ideas/solutions</td>
<td></td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to communicate effectively in writing</td>
<td>82% in 2014</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can apply knowledge/skills to real-world settings</td>
<td>80% in 2014</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 8-10 ratings on a 0-to-10 scale; 15 outcomes tested

Source: AAC&U 2018
Very Important Skills for Recent College Grads We Are Hiring

- Can find, organize, evaluate info from many sources: 68% in 2014, 73%
- Able to analyze and solve complex problems: 70% in 2014, 67%
- Analyze/solve problems w/people from diff. backgrounds/cultures: 56% in 2014, 65%
- Able to innovate and be creative: 65% in 2014, 61%
- Stay current on changing tech/applications to workplace: 60% in 2014, 60%
- Able to work with numbers and statistics: 56% in 2014, 54%
- Proficiency in language other than English: 23% in 2014, 25%

*8-10 ratings on a 0-to-10 scale; 15 outcomes tested

Source: AAC&U 2018
Gap between importance and perceived preparation:

Among business execs:

- Critical thinking/analytical reasoning: 34% (33% important)
- Apply knowledge/skills to real world: 33% (33% important)
- Communicate effectively in writing: 35% (40% important)
- Self-motivated: 38% (43% important)
- Communicate effectively orally: 42% (43% important)
- Able to work independently: 77% (77% important)
- Able to work effectively in teams: 77% (77% important)
- Ethical judgment/decision-making: 77% (77% important)
- Able to analyze/solve complex problems: 73% (67% important)
- Find, organize, evaluate info: multiple sources: 41% (41% important)
- Solve problems w/people of diff. backgrounds: 54% (61% important)
- Able to innovate/be creative: 52% (65% important)
- Able to work with numbers/stats: 60% (65% important)
- Stay current on changing tech: 52% (60% important)
- Proficiency in foreign language: 22% (23% important)

Source: AAC&U 2018
WHAT ABOUT SOCIOLOGY MAJORS?

Bachelors and Beyond (2012)
What are sociology majors doing?

![Bar chart showing the distribution of activities among sociology majors 6 months and 18 months after graduation.](chart)

- **Working**: 56% at 6 months, 56% at 18 months.
- **In school**: 9% at 6 months, 10% at 18 months.
- **Both**: 20% at 6 months, 27% at 18 months.
- **Neither**: 9% at 6 months, 5% at 18 months.
- **Other**: 6% at 6 months, 2% at 18 months.

Source: ASA 2013. Bachelors and Beyond, Wave II and III.
What practical skills are sociology grads using in their jobs?

- Searching for existing stats: 35%
- Making presentations: 36%
- Report writing: 38%
- Presenting data in tables and graphs: 42%
- Making evidence-based arguments: 48%
- Using computer to locate information: 69%
- Working in teams: 82%
- Working with diverse groups: 84%
- Organizational and leadership skills: 86%

Source: ASA 2013. Bachelors and Beyond, Wave III.
Ability to articulate skills

Applied experience & networking opportunities

Working in sociology-related job

More job satisfaction
What skills do they wish they had learned?

- More applied experiences
- More opportunities for internships
- More help finding a job
- More experience with technology and statistical analysis

Source: ASA 2013. Bachelors and Beyond, Wave III.
WHAT CAN DEPARTMENTS DO?
Helping students better articulate their skills

- Integrating assignments into courses with explicit skills identified
- Relationships with alumni
  - Alumni panels and networking events with students
  - Visible on website
  - Advisory boards
  - Alumni surveys
- Partnerships with Career Services
  - Educating them about what skills our students gain
Integrating applied experiences & networking opportunities

• Applied sociology course
• Integrating applied assignments into other courses
• Alumni networking events
• Developing a robust internship program
• One-credit skills courses
Curricular Support for Student Career Readiness

1. Assignments
2. Courses across the sociology curriculum
3. Connections between courses
4. Partnerships with other campus units

Additional Resources


• NACE Career Readiness Resources: [https://www.naceweb.org/career-readiness/competencies/career-readiness-resources/](https://www.naceweb.org/career-readiness/competencies/career-readiness-resources/)

• 21st Century Careers with an Undergraduate Degree in Sociology (3rd edition coming in fall)