COMPETENCY-BASED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPEMTN: A CASE STUDY OF

HOW RECRUITERS PERCEIVE UNDERGRADUATE BUSINESS STUDENTS

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By

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

COMPETENCY-BASED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A CASE
STUDY OF HOW RECRUITERS PERCEIVE UNDERGRADUATE BUSINESS
STUDENTS

presented by Joyce Gay Albright,

a candidate for the degree of Doctorate in Education,

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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ABSTRACT

D. McClelland claimed that employment recruiters should hire professionals based upon characteristics and skills and that these *competencies* could predict how employees would perform on the job. This approach to assessing employees led to the creation of company-specific competency models. My dissertation is a case study of how recruiters perceive undergraduate business students who complete educational requirements at a university college of business that has included a competency model in its curriculum.

Based upon the literature review, I learned that few studies have been conducted on the use of competency models in undergraduate business programs. On this basis, it is recommended that additional studies be conducted.

Using fifteen professional competencies identified by the college as a conceptual framework, I interviewed recruiters who evaluate these business students. My primary focus was determining how the recruiters perceive the students, and my secondary focus was identifying what competencies are valued by the recruiters.

Analysis of the responses indicated that the majority of the recruiters perceived the students as behaving professionally and demonstrating many of the competencies embedded in the college's professional development curriculum. The recruiters value competencies that are not included in the curriculum, and I recommend the college review these additional competencies.

Chapter 1: Study Overview

This is a case study of the University of Missouri's (MU) Trulaske College of Business (hereafter referred to as Trulaske), that has modified its undergraduate curriculum to include academic courses and professional development events in alignment with their own competency model, in order to determine whether this educational approach to developing business students makes a difference with employment recruiters. The specific focus of this case study is on the perspective of recruiters: Do they perceive MU business students as possessing and exhibiting professional competencies to a greater extent than the business students from other universities?

McClelland (1973) suggested that employment recruiters should hire professionals based upon specific characteristics and skills and that these *competencies* could predict how employees would perform on the job. This approach to assessing, evaluating, and developing employment candidates and employees led to the creation of company-specific competency models. Employers have been utilizing competency models in human resources systems (e.g., recruitment and selection, performance evaluation, training and development, retention and promotion, and replacement and succession planning) for many years (Sanghi, 2007).

In 2006, Trulaske received information from employment recruiters who stated that recent Trulaske alumni possessed the requisite knowledge of accountancy, finance, management, and marketing theories and models for the positions for which they had been hired; but they did not possess the needed skills, attributes, and behaviors needed to

successfully perform as business professionals. The feedback from employment recruiters included a need for undergraduates to obtain soft skills of management, known as interpersonal qualities (Robles, 2012), in addition to the hard skills they obtained through their traditional business classes. The recruiters also recommended to Trulaske administrators that students complete professional internships so that students obtain practical work experience desired by many employers. These recommendations aligned with recommendations from other employers (Professionalism in the Workplace Study, 2012) and the Policies Commission for Business and Economic Education (2000) that colleges of business should prepare future business professionals by teaching hard, or technical, business skills as well as soft skills. To only teach the technical skills does not adequately prepare students to compete in multi-dimensional business environments (Klemp, 1980).

In response to this expectation, Trulaske instituted a professional development program beginning in 2008 for all undergraduate business students. For degree completion, this program required students to complete two courses for credit and attend non-credit workshops, guest lectures, and business field trips. The curriculum for both non-credit and credit courses utilizes fifteen professional competencies, or management soft skills, that were developed by Trulaske faculty and external human resources experts (see *Appendix A*).

Employers define competencies as "the skills and traits that employees need to be successful in a job" (Mansfield, 1996); however, the term "competency" has not been clearly defined or universally applied. There are two primary meanings that are used by employers: one refers to the outputs resulting from educational and training programs,

and one refers to the inputs required for an individual to achieve competent performance (Hoffman, 1999). When referring to the professional development program that Trulaske created, this case study will utilize the employers' definition of competencies. This should not be confused with a recent approach by some universities to make education affordable by instituting *Competency-Based-Education* systems that provide college credit for skills already learned (Johnstone & Soares, 2014).

Trulaske faculty who taught in the Professional Development Program and maintained oversight of the course and workshop curriculum identified the 15 competencies (achievement orientation, critical thinking, decision making, teamwork, learning agility, self control, establish relationships, manage conflict, self awareness, empathy, value differences, leadership, influence others, integrity, and communicate effectively), which became the foundation for the program curriculum. The inclusion of these competencies in the curriculum was influenced by the competencies included in many corporate human resource systems. Course content was created for each competency and experiential assignments were designed to facilitate the development of and reflection upon the competencies. The experiential assignments included activities such as a 15-hour organizational field experience, the completion of a 360-degree assessment based upon the competencies, a team project, a 180-hour internship, the creation of an individual development plan, written reflections internship experiences, etc.

Problem Statement

Trulaske invests significant resources each academic year to provide professional development education to its students. Trulaske has anecdotal evidence from its

employers, who routinely recruit business students from public institutions of higher education in the Midwest, that Trulaske students exhibit professional competencies at a rate greater than other university students. This anecdotal evidence has been acquired from recruiters who have provided informal comments to Trulaske's Business Career Services Department staff during career fairs and other recruitment and selection events (M. Reiske, personal communication, 2016). The professional development program created and implemented by Trulaske has not been fully evaluated to determine if the intended outcomes of this program, such as the acquisition and exhibition of professional competencies by its undergraduate students, are being met.

The program has implemented some evaluation assessments but needs broader evaluation and assessment to determine if the program is helping to prepare students for business careers and whether Trulaske should continue to invest in it. Although Trulaske needs to evaluate the program's ability to meet the needs of the stakeholder groups— students, alumni, and employment recruiters—this case study will focus specifically on employment recruiters. Policy makers must conduct program evaluations to ensure that interventions are being implemented well and the intended services are being provided (Ross, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004).

The Trulaske professional development program evaluation has included the administration of a questionnaire designed to assess student knowledge of competencies and how competencies are applied in a business setting. The questionnaire was designed by MU's Assessment Resource Center and was first administered during summer welcome of 2014 before students began their freshmen year to obtain baseline data on student knowledge. The questionnaire was administered again during students' junior

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year after having taken the first three-hour credit course to determine if student

knowledge had improved. The questionnaire continues to be administered annually to

pre-freshmen during summer welcome and each fall and spring semesters to Trulaske

upper-level business students. Student evaluations are administered in a three-credit

junior-level professional development course and a three-credit practicum, or internship,

course. Employers who supervise students during the practicum also complete

evaluations. The information collected from these evaluations is used when updating and

revising course curriculum.

Placement rate and starting salary data is collected each semester near the time of

graduation by Trulaske's Business Career Services department. This information is

utilized to determine if there are significant differences in the placement rates and starting

salaries of Trulaske students compared to students graduating from competitor

universities that do not include professional development as a part of their curriculum.

This analysis is ongoing each academic year. Data are collected in the semester of

graduating students, one month after graduation, three months after graduation, six

months after graduation, and one year after graduation. This process complies with the

National Association of Colleges and Employers. Data on Trulaske student placement

rates and starting salaries are listed in Appendix C.

A fourth program evaluation element was the development and administration of

a questionnaire designed to collect information from alumni. The purpose of the

questionnaire was to evaluate the perceptions of the alumni with regard to how the

professional development program prepared them for their careers. Trulaske administers

this survey to alumni one year, three years, and five years after graduation to determine if

academic coursework in professional business competency development helps alumni succeed.

A fifth program evaluation element, and the goal of this study was determination of the perceptions of the employment recruiters as they assess the competency level of Trulaske students. Employment recruiters that recruit and hire Trulaske students for internships and full-time professional positions were interviewed to determine if they view Trulaske students as more professional than students that do not receive professional development education. In the 2019 fall semester, 207 employment recruiters participated in the Trulaske Business Services Career Fair. The Career Fair is an annual one-day event whereby employers exhibit information about their company to prospective student applicants. Students prepare to participate in the Career Fair by developing a resume, reviewing employer information, practicing interview questions, and participating in online and face-to-face mock interviews.

Purpose of the Study

Although employers have been identifying business competencies of candidates and employees for many years, colleges and universities have not been providing business curriculum focused on this subject. In 2015, the Society for Human Recourses Management—the leading international human resources association—restructured their learning system to a competency-based format to better align with employer human resource systems. The purpose of this study was to determine if participation in a professional development program makes candidates more desirable to employment recruiters. This study utilized employment recruiters' perceptions of the differences between business competencies of Trulaske juniors and seniors and students who

complete business studies at universities that do not require nor offer professional development content. This program evaluation element will provide Trulaske with information needed to determine if their original goal for implementing the professional development program is being met.

Research Question and Objective

The guiding research question for this study is: How do employment recruiters perceive University of Missouri Trulaske College of Business students, who complete education requirements in a unique professional development program? Trulaske uses fifteen professional competencies as the foundation of their professional development program curriculum, and a secondary question will be what professional competencies are exhibited by Trulaske students and what competencies are valued by the recruiters.

Definition of Terms

An employment recruiter is an individual who implements recruitment and selection strategies for the company for which he or she works. Recruitment strategies for identifying qualified candidates for current or potential job openings include conducting job analyses, posting open positions, marketing job openings, and participating in career fairs to source potential employment candidates. Selection strategies include reviewing candidate resumes, conducting interviews, administering tests or simulations, arranging for short-term internships or job-shadowing opportunities, identifying candidates for hire, and conducting salary negotiations with candidates that have been offered an employment position. This study included interviews with employment recruiters that participated in college recruiting and interviewed for short-term internships and full-time employment opportunities.

A critical element of this study was to establish a working definition of professional business competencies. Klemp's (1980) definition states: "the competence of a person is judged by his or her performance. It does not matter whether the individual is a lawyer, skilled worker or philosopher; a competent worker is one who can meet or surpass performance standards either implicit or explicit" (p. 11). Carroll & McCrackin (1998) define competencies as "knowledge, skills, capabilities, attitudes, or behaviors that characterize excellent performance within a specific context" (p. 48) A tentative definition at this time for this study simplifies the definition of professional business competencies as observable knowledge, skills, abilities, and behaviors critical to successful job performance.

Undergraduate business students in Trulaske are classified by two levels: lower-level or upper-level. Lower-level business students are typically freshmen and sophomores and have indicated an interest in taking business courses with the intent of obtaining a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration. Upper-level business students have completed course requirements, maintained a 2.7 grade point average on all university course work, acquired 70 points by attending professional development workshops, applied to the upper-level, and have been accepted into the Trulaske College of Business.

Assumptions

One assumption was that the employment recruiters understood the concept of professional business competencies and have identified a set of competencies for their organization that they use when making selection and hiring decisions. I worked with Trulaske Business Career Services department to help identify recruiters who have

participated in the Trulaske Career Fair for inclusion in the study. A definition of professional competencies, and each individual Trulaske competency used in the study, was provided to the participants of the study.

A second assumption was that the employment recruiters would be able to assess the possession of professional business competencies in the undergraduates that they have recruited and interviewed during the Career Fair and be able to compare this assessment to students from competing universities. The interview protocol was designed to allow for flexible interviewing in the event that additional questions were required to help the recruiters understand the context of the study.

Trulaske developed its professional competencies model after having conducted research on the competencies that are most frequently desired by US Fortune 500 companies. A third assumption was that the Trulaske competencies used in this study are desirable characteristics to the employment recruiters participating in this study.

Significance

This study aimed to help the Trulaske College of Business understand one component of its professional development program and whether the goal of helping business students gain professional competencies is seen as desirable by employment recruiters. If there is a difference in the perception of the recruiters that Trulaske students possess a greater number of competencies that employers desire than students who do not receive professional development education, then the need for the program will be substantiated. If recruiters do not perceive Trulaske students as possessing a greater number of competencies than students who do not complete professional development education, then the College should reassess the curriculum of the Professional

Development Program and the amount of time, energy, and funding allocated to this program. If the study findings indicate a positive difference, this information can be shared with prospective students and potential employers. This may increase the demand for Trulaske's programs by students and the demand for its graduates by employers. If the study findings indicate a negative difference, Trulaske may utilize this information in reevaluating its curriculum.

The Trulaske College of Business was the first university college of business in the United States to require its students to complete credit and non-credit programming in professional development. Many universities have made inquiries to Trulaske about the details and success of the Professional Development program. This study may help to inform universities that are considering instituting a professional development program on the value of the program.

Summary

This study is one component of a larger program evaluation of Trulaske's professional development program. Given that the program is in its eleventh year of implementation, it is paramount that the Trulaske College measures the intended outcomes of the program and evaluates if this program is satisfying stakeholder needs. The Trulaske College will be evaluated for recertification by the Association to Advance College Schools of Business (AACSB), and this program evaluation will help to substantiate recertification by AACSB.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of how employment recruiters view the professional competencies of Trulaske College of Business undergraduate students to determine if the goals of an innovative new professional development program are being met and to identify potential curricular changes needed to better prepare business students for their careers. A rationalist-constructivist view was used to investigate how prepared students were for the recruitment and selection process for internships and full-time employment opportunities, the professional competencies that recruiters observed while interacting with students and the likelihood that students who had received professional development course instruction would perform their job duties successfully if hired.

The study provides an opportunity to consider how employment recruiters evaluate the job fit of undergraduate students as they apply for positions at college recruitment fairs and continue to participate in the employment selection process. The theoretical framework for this study is based upon:

1. <u>Recruiter assessment practices and methods</u> used by employment recruiters as they determine which candidates to move to the second round of their company's recruitment and selection processes. The focus is on providing information on two forms of the selection process; the resume and the interview. Both of these are included in college recruiting. This sets the foundation for how recruiters perceive applicants.

2. <u>Professional business competencies</u> and how recruiters integrate the assessment of desired behaviors and attributes into their evaluation of

employment candidates. This provided information for comparison purposes

to employer-identified organizational business competencies and those

defined by the Trulaske College of Business and incorporated into their

professional development courses.

3. <u>Attribution theory and cognitive schemas</u> as they applied to the employment

selection process.

Recruiter Assessment Practices and Methods

Hiring the right employees is a critical component to the success of all

organizations, and it is difficult to overstate the importance of effective recruiting

(Dessler, 2008). The average hiring costs per employee incurred by organizations in the

United States in 2017 was $4,425 (SHRM, 2017). Furthermore, when evaluating the

quality of the hiring decisions, it is important to note that only 45% of those new hires

were retained; and for those employees that were retained long enough to have a

performance evaluation completed, the average score for all new employees was 62%

(SHRM, 2017). Staffing costs for organization are high, and human resources

professionals have designed recruitment and selection systems to improve their likelihood

of hiring employees that not only have the requisite skills but also fit the culture of the

organization. By improving selection of employees that fit the jobs and the

organizations, employment recruiters can reduce unplanned turnover of employees and

thus reduce recruitment and hiring costs.

Recruitment and selection systems are two distinct functions that are combined to

hire employees. Recruitment includes where and how companies will market their job

openings, i.e., online job platforms, employee referrals, newspapers and magazines, and

participation at college career fairs, which is the focus of this study. Selection systems are used to evaluate the skills of job candidates and their ability to fit within the organization. Company selection methods include resume and application review; interviews, in-person and via technology; tests, skills-based and personality; job simulations; and reference checking (Piotrowski and Armstrong, 2006). The selection methods that are utilized at career fairs are resume review and in-person interviews, albeit these interviews are normally shorter than interviews conducted at the organization and usually not structured.

Although there is a great deal of research on different selection systems and tools used to determine whether candidates meet job requirements, this study approached the topic by examining how recruiters assess candidates on the basis of their resumes and in-person interviews, which is what is used by college recruiters of business students. For professional positions in business, recruiters rely heavily on resumes (Cole, Rubin, Field, & Giles, 2007) as they begin evaluating candidates for open positions. Furthermore, virtually all organizations review resumes as their first step in screening applicants (Schmidt & Zimmerman, 2004) to determine which candidates will progress to the next stage of the recruitment and selection process. This reliance on the resume by recruiters makes the document crucial for undergraduate business students in their attempt at securing an invitation to interview.

Given the importance of the resume, the question of what should be included on the resume must be asked. In a 2001 study, Gabric and McFadden identified desirable entry-level skills for operations management students and categorized them as general business skills, technical business skills, and personality characteristics. Their findings

showed that employers highly value general business skills such as communication (verbal, listening, and written skills); problem-solving; organization; and time management. Technical skills, such as utilizing spreadsheets and managing data, were valued but to a lesser degree than many general business skills. Personality traits, such as being ethical and responsible, ranked higher than both general business and technical skills while other personality traits such as being motivated, conscientious, and personal were ranked higher than technical business skills. In a study conducted in four countries in Europe, Andrews and Higson (2008) found that recruiters expected graduates to possess hard business knowledge and skills, interpersonal competencies or soft skills, and work experience. Recruiters in this study echoed those in the Gabric and McFadden study by identifying the following important attributes: analytical and problem-solving skills; ability to analyze data; strong communication skills; and the ability to work without supervision. Andrews and Higson also found that recruiters considered graduates who had completed business internships to be more desirable than those that had not worked in college or had only worked in part-time jobs.

Gault, Redinton, and Schlager (2000) found that business students who had completed internships obtained jobs in less than two months whereas students who had not interned took more than four months to find full-time employment. Also, graduates that interned received higher starting salaries and maintained an increased salary advantage throughout the early stage of their career. In a study focused on how employment recruiters perceive the effects of business internships on marketability, Gault, Leach, and Duey (2010) made several discoveries: an overwhelming majority of employers believed that the internship helped business students perform better once in

full-time positions; most recruiters wanted to hire the students that interned for them and would continue to recruit at the intern's university; and most employers stated a preference of hiring students that had interned over those that had not completed a professional internship.

Despite the importance of the resume, (Breaugh, 2009) recruiters spend less than one minute reviewing each resume they receive due to the sheer volume (Arnulf, Tegner, & Larssen, 2010). Applicants must construct a resume that represents their knowledge and work experience in a way that will capture the attention of the recruiter. In a study focused on how resume content affected recruiters hiring recommendations, Tsai, Chi, Huang, and Hsu (2011) found that the information reviewed first by recruiters to determine if the applicant meets the job requirements is (in order of importance): contact information, job responsibilities, field of study, previous employers, and position titles including internships. If the key elements of an applicant's resume align with the position opening, recruiters take more time to review the applicant's resume and cover letter to determine if the applicant will be invited to the next step of the selection process which is often a phone screen or a face-to-face interview.

The recruitment interview is a required element by nearly all recruiters as they are challenged with selecting the best candidates for their job openings (Ryan, McFarland, Baron, & Page, 1999; Wilk & Cappelli, 2003). Due to the popularity of the interview, there has been a great deal of research conducted on the structure of the interview, the questions asked, the interviewer, the applicant, and the validity and reliability of interviews. Posthuma, Morgenson, and Campion (2002) developed five broad categories to analyze research on the employment interview: social, cognitive, individual

difference, measurement, and outcomes. Three categories of research apply to this case study: social, cognitive, and individual difference factors. The social category applies to this study in that research in this area includes applicant fit for job, verbal and non-verbal behavior, and the exchange of information between the applicant and the recruiter. Applicable research that fits the cognitive category is recruiter decision-making, pre-interview impression, and confirmatory bias. Individual difference factors, which focuses on research conducted on applicant characteristics, include factors that apply to this study such as applicant appearance, demographics, training, and personality. Research on the following categories, which fit the focus of this case study are explored further:

Social Factors (applicant fit, non-verbal communication, the exchange of information)

Employment interviews are conducted within a social framework. Interviews may occur face-to-face, in a phone screen, or via video conferencing. When evaluating the selection process of recruiters, research has been conducted on how well candidates either fit the job (P-J) or fit the organization (P-O) (Judge &Ferris, 1992; Rynes & Gerhart, 1990). P-J fit is utilized when recruiters assess the candidates' knowledge, skills, and abilities as they apply to the demands of specific positions within their organization (Caldwell & O'Reilly, 1990; O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991). P-O fit is assessed as recruiters determine the alignment of candidates' values to those of the organization (Adkins, Russel, & Werbel, 1994; Cable & Judge, 1997; Chatman, 1989; Posner, 1992) by assessing candidates' personalities. Because this case study is focused on undergraduate business students who possess little work experience, understanding how recruiters assess P-O fit (how applicants fit with the values and mission of the

organization) is applicable. Although assessing congruent values and candidate personality traits is difficult and may be made even more difficult by the short duration of interviews and phone screens, employment recruiters do make extensive personality assessment of candidates even after very brief interactions (Kristoff-Brown, 2000). Short discussion during career fairs, limited on-campus interviews, and phone and/or video screens are all examples of brief interactions whereby recruiters determine if the values of candidates align with those of their organization and is a determining factor in moving the candidate to the next stage of the selection process: the in-house interview.

Cognitive Factors *(recruiter decision-making, pre-interview impression, and confirmatory bias)*

A typical interview lasts for thirty to sixty minutes. Many organizations schedule multiple interview sessions to be conducted by human resources personnel and functional managers. At college career fairs, the interview may be a matter of only five to fifteen minutes and may be conducted by dedicated college recruiters, human resource generalists, and/or functional, line managers seeking to hire candidates for specific positions in their functional units. This shortened version of an interview begs the question of whether recruiters are able to successfully assess the candidates that they meet. Although recruiters may meet with ten to one hundred students at a career fair, spending only five to fifteen minutes per student, the recruiter and candidates are able to exchange useful information for both to determine if they are interested in moving to the second stage of the interview process (Powell, Goulet, 1996).

Prepared students present resumes to employment recruiters at career fairs even though recruiters spend little time reviewing resumes (Dipboye & Jackson, 1999). This is

an effective process for quickly obtaining basic information about a prospective candidate such as: academic qualifications, work experiences, and extracurricular activities which are frequently listed on resumes (Cole et al, 2003, 2007: Cole, Field, Giles, & Harris, 2009) and used as a screening tool. This information allows employers to begin determining if applicants possess the P-J and P-O fit necessary to perform well in their organization (Hunter & Hunter, 1984; Owens 1976), Student resumes are not only reviewed for content but are also evaluated on the visual appeal of the resume, i.e. style, format, and overall appearance. For candidates that possess minimal work experience, such as college students, recruiters may rely heavily on the visual appeal of the resume at the beginning of the recruitment process (Gordon, McKeage & Fox, 1998). Chen, Huang, & Lee (2011) conducted a study that found that recruiters utilize resumes to assess candidates' job knowledge, interpersonal skills, general intelligence, and conscientiousness to determine candidates' worthiness for continued assessment in the selection process.

Individual Difference Factors *(*applicant appearance, demographics, training, and personality)

Many factors determine the success of an interview, including the ability of the recruiter to successfully assess candidate characteristics, traits, and even personalities in a brief meeting or interview. (Mast, Bangerter, Bulliard, & Aerni, 2011). Tay, Ang, and Van Dyne (2006) examined how personality and biographical history contributed to success in an interview from the perspective of college senior accounting students. Their research indicated that an applicant's extroversion, conscientiousness, and leadership experience played a significant role in contributing to success in an interview. They also

found that when applicants believed the outcome of the interview was influenced by their own behavior, the relationship between success in an interview and self-efficacy was stronger.

Studies on the demographics of the interviewers and the interviewees have been conducted to determine whether factors such as gender, race, age, appearance, disability status, etc. have been conducted. Small and inconsistent effects due to various demographic factors have been found (Postuma, Morgeson, & Campion, 2002).

Although there is little research on interview training provided to undergraduate business students, there is research focused on how adults, underemployed adults, and minority adults fare in interviews after they experience job interview coaching. In general, there is a positive relationship between interview skills training and interviewee performance (Maurer, Solamon, and Lippstreau, 2008).

Recruiters may structure the interview in a variety of ways, (structured vs. non-structured interviews, panel interviews, stress interviews, etc.); and despite different interview formats, recruiters attempt to assess applicant personality. Huffcutt, Conway, Roth, and Stone (2001) learned that personality traits and social skills were the most frequently assessed traits during the interview. Other applicant attributes, such as emotional intelligence, teamwork, empathy, self-discipline, and cross-cultural awareness, are assessed by recruiters during the interview (Sue-Chan & Latham, 2004; Allen, Facteau, & Facteau, 2004; Lievens, Harris, Van Keer, & Bisqueret, 2003).

Professional Business Competencies

David McClelland (1973) wrote a seminal paper arguing that employment recruiters should test for competence rather than intelligence. This paper created a stir in

the field of industrial psychology given that McClelland indicated that although traditional tests of knowledge and skill were good predictors of performance, better predictors of outstanding on-the-job performance were personal characteristics that he referred to as competencies. The terms "competence, competencies, competency-based curriculum, and competency-based human resource systems" have been used interchangeably, and were not universally understood until Boyatzis (1982) defined competency as an "underlying characteristic of a person which results in effective and/or superior performance in a job."   Page and Wilson further illustrated the term "competency" by defining it as the skills, abilities, and personal characteristics required by an effective or good manager (1994).

Competency models are descriptive tools developed to identify the competencies necessary to successfully fulfill the work requirements of a specific job or position (Vazirani, 2010), which have been developed to provide employment recruiters specific criteria for hiring candidates. Dubois states that competency models provide the adhesion or glue that is necessary among the various elements of an organization's human resource management system (1993). The addition of competencies into the employment selection process has improved the ability of employment recruiters to positively identify and select candidates that perform well once hired (Lievens & Wesseling, 2015).

In an effort to identify generic competencies needed for success in the workplace, several studies have been conducted recently. In a collaborative effort, The Conference Board, Corporate Voices for Working Families, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, and the Society for Human Resource Management conducted a study focused on the

identification of competencies needed for successful employment and evaluated the

readiness of high school and college graduates for the workforce based on these

competencies (2006). In many instances, researchers have identified a skills gap, i.e.

employers are seeking specific attributes and find candidates are lacking in the necessary

skills and attributes (Ingbretsen, 2009; Kemp, 2009; Stevens, 2007).

Although employers are identifying and assessing competencies in the

recruitment and selection process and studies have been conducted that indicate there is a

gap between the competencies possessed by undergraduate students and what employers

require, little research is available on modifications to business school curriculum.

Competency-based instruction is present in medical school programing (Gueorguieva et

al., 2016), and has been proposed for military settings (Chyung, Stepich, & Cox, 2006),

and Masters in Business Administration programs (Dodd, Brown, & Benham, 2002), but

competency-based instruction in undergraduate programs is currently evolving.

Summary

The literature review focused on recruiter assessment practices and methods and

professional business competencies and competency models to understand how

employment recruiters assess attributes and behaviors of Trulaske business students as

they apply for internships and full-time positions. The review substantiated that

employment recruiters utilize a variety of tools and techniques to assess prospective

employment candidates: resume reviews, phone screens, face-to-face interviews,

employment tests, and background screens. Although recruiters utilize most, if not all, of

the selection methods listed above, there is no preferred process for evaluating and

assessing candidates. Professional business competencies were developed and utilized in

the employment selection process by employment recruiters beginning in the 1980s in an

effort to hire candidates that not only possessed technical business knowledge and

competence but also possessed soft skills of management that allowed them to achieve

more success in the workplace.

Chapter 3: Research Design

I used a case study approach for conducting research (Stake, 1995). A case in educational research is based upon people and programs and can be bounded by the researcher's focus on individual entities or units (Merriam, 1988). The Trulaske Professional Development program was the case that I studied. The Trulaske Professional Development Program was implemented in 2008 at the University of Missouri's Trulaske College of Business, and there have been several elements of the program that have been assessed and continue to be assessed annually.

When evaluating program outcomes, the College assesses student understanding of competencies using a variety of methods. First, the College collects data from incoming freshmen on their knowledge of 15 professional competencies (see *Appendix A*) and how these competencies are applied to establish a baseline of knowledge. This assessment is repeated at the junior level once students have completed three years of professional development coursework and a field experience (see *Appendix B*) to determine the student level of competency comprehension. Second, the students at the junior level are evaluated on their knowledge and application of these15 professional competencies in a 360-degree assessment (see *Appendix D*) whereby students identify peers, supervisors or managers, and subordinates if they have worked as a supervisor to obtain external feedback on their knowledge and application of professional business competencies. Third, placement rates and starting salaries for graduating seniors (see *Appendix C*) are collected using National Association of Colleges and Employers standards to determine graduate outcomes. Fourth, a survey is deployed to graduates after three years of employment to obtain their reflection on the professional development

program and to assess their rates of promotion and salary increases (see *Appendix F*).

Although the College assesses the knowledge that students possess on professional

competencies, assesses placement rates, and obtains information from alumni of the

professional development program, it does not collect data from recruiters that hire

students that graduate from the Trulaske College. This case study will focus on the

recruiters' perceptions of the students that participate in the Trulaske Professional

Development Program. The number of recruiters that regularly attend Trulaske career

fairs held each fall and spring semesters has increased since the inception of the

Professional Development Program (see *Appendix G*).

The guiding research question for this study is: How do employment recruiters

perceive University of Missouri Trulaske College of Business students, who complete

education requirements in a unique professional development program? Trulaske uses

fifteen professional competencies as the foundation of their professional development

program curriculum, and a secondary question will be what professional competencies

are exhibited by Trulaske students and what competencies are valued by the recruiters.

By researching these questions, I am attempting to evaluate a component of the Trulaske

Professional Development program that has not yet been studied and obtain information

that may inform the Trulaske curriculum so that Trulaske students receive professional

development in areas that are valued by employment recruiters.

As discussed in chapter two, there may be similarities in how recruiters perform

the selection process; however, there is no prescribed method that is shared by all

recruiters. Robert Stake distinguishes the rationale for selecting a quantitative or a

qualitative research methodology by focusing on what is expected to be learned by the

study. He explains that quantitative research methods should be used when the researcher can control the experience and explain results in comparison to a control group, and that qualitative research methods should be used when the researcher is attempting to understand complex interrelationships among all that exist (Stake, 1995).

This case study aligns with the particularistic type of case study identified by Merriam (1988) because the Trulaske Professional Development Program is a defined curriculum component of an undergraduate business program; and the focus of this case will be gathering data on how employment recruiters view the behaviors, attributes, and skills Trulaske students possess. The use of case study methods allowed me to question employment recruiters on the complex formation of their perceptions of Trulaske students, the flexibility necessary to explore follow up questions, and the ability to verify the information through recording and transcription (Stenhouse, 1978). Given the numerous recruitment selection processes used by each company that recruits Trulaske students and the structured and non-structured selection processes used by each recruiter, and the 15 professional competencies embedded in the curriculum of the Trulaske Professional Development Program, a qualitative case student approach allowed for a better understanding of how recruiters perceive Trulaske students.

The 15 professional competencies selected by Trulaske as a foundation for the Professional Development Program curriculum and the competency definitions have not changed since the program began in 2008. However, the method for teaching, explaining, describing, and providing practical application learning exercises for the competencies has changed. Qualitative methodologies were used so that a framework for exploring how the recruiter perceives the possession of these competencies by

undergraduate Trulaske students was developed. This framework allowed for discussion and exploration to ensure that there is mutual understanding of terms and processes. Flexibility in the research process allowed for a collection of data that was symbolically constructed rather than objectively collected (Hatch, 1985).

Although the 15 professional business competencies identified by the Trulaske Professional Development Program were used as a basis for understanding how recruiters perceive student applicants, the selection of recruiters for the study was not dependent upon their use of competency systems in their organization. Competency-based selection processes were first created in the 1970s, but not all companies use this structured approach to assessing employment candidates. "A clearly defined competency-based selection process can aid in recruiting, demonstrate fairness, encourage diversity, and simplify the process of filling new openings. But creating or refining your selection process requires time and effort" (Katz, 2015, p. 57). Recruiters were asked a series of questions related to their perceptions of the behaviors exhibited by Trulaske students. The recruiter responses were then coded utilizing their connection and alignment to the 15 Trulaske professional competencies. Recruiter responses that did not connect to any of the 15 Trulaske professional competencies were also be collected to help determine if the Trulaske competencies need to be modified.

Population and Sample Studied

The population for this study was comprised of employment recruiters, who are line managers and human resources professionals seeking to meet prospective candidates for open positions at their company. To sample recruiters that have experiences with Trulaske business students, I obtained a list of recruiters from the Trulaske Business

Career Services department who have attended the Trulaske Career fair. Business Career

Services currently works with 160-220 companies each semester, and approximately 30%

of these companies are Fortune 500 companies (M. Reiske, personal communication,

December 2018). The employers send multiple recruiters to campus each semester to

participate in a career fair, conduct recruitment events, and interview students. The

employers represent all industries and recruit students from all Trulaske emphasis areas:

Accountancy, Economics, Finance, International Business, Management, and Marketing.

Approximately seven hundred Trulaske students complete internships each year. Forty

percent (approximately 280) of Trulaske students receive an internship from the

employers they meet at the career fair. The goal of the study was to interview 12-15

recruiters to ensure an appropriate amount of data was collected.

Sampling Procedures

The study included a list of 190 employers that were identified by the Trulaske

Business Career Services department as having recently recruited at a Trulaske Career

Fair. I emailed recruiters to determine their interest in participation in the study, and 37

employers responded that they were interested in participating in the study. Based upon

the responses, I followed with employers to schedule appointments for interviews. I

confirmed appointments with 17 recruiters after checking on the availability of each

recruiter who responded positively.

The recruiters represented small, medium, and large organizations (Appendix J).

They worked for companies in the following industries: one worked in global real estate,

three worked in retail, five worked in banking and finance, and eight worked in

manufacturing of products. Only five of the recruiters were human resources

professionals. The remaining 12 recruiters held positions in the following areas: 1 worked in logistics, 3 worked in customer service, 3 worked in operations, and 5 worked in sales. Of the 17 study participants, 5 recruiters were University of Missouri alumni, and 3 of those alumni were Trulaske College of Business students that completed coursework in the Professional Development Program.

Data Gathering Tools and Procedures

The study was conducted after recruiters had reviewed student employment documents, met students at career fairs, interviewed students they are interested in hiring, conducted specific organizational tests, and chosen candidates for either internships or full-time employment.

An informed consent document was used that informed participants that their responses would be confidential and that the information they provided would be used only in making improvements to the program. It was clearly explained to study participants that, although I am a faculty member of the Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. College of Business, I am conducting this study as part of a doctoral dissertation.

One-on-one interviews were conducted and the length of the interviews ranged from 25 to 75 minutes in length, with the average of all interviews lasting for 29.7 minutes. Interviews were held at the convenience of the recruiters. The interviews occurred at a variety of locations: 1 was conducted via video conferencing, 2 were held in the recruiters' company office, 3 were conducted in public meeting spaces, and 11 were conducted on the University of Missouri campus. All interviews were recorded, and I took hand-written notes during the interview. All data was maintained by me in my

personal university office in a locked file cabinet. All notes and transcriptions will be maintained for a minimum of seven years.

A list of 13 questions was developed to guide the interview process (Appendix I). The questions were designed to obtain information on the recruiters' history in recruiting and selecting employees; the organizations recruitment and selection processes to determine if the company used a competency model and what employment selection tools and assessments are being used; the recruiters' processes for assessing candidates; what skills, attributes, and behaviors are observed when meeting and working with Trulaske students; what skills, attributes, and behaviors are valued; how prepared Trulaske students are for the job search process; and recommendations for changes to the Trulaske Professional Development Program.

When analyzing the interview transcripts, I used the conceptual framework of the Trulaske competency model to determine if Trulaske competencies were mentioned by recruiters. I coded the attributes, skills, and traits that were mentioned by the recruiters using the Trulaske competency model definitions. I used open coding for recruiter-identified attributes, skills, and traits that did not align with the Trulaske competency model.

Protection of Human Subjects

Informed consent documents were presented to the participants selected for the study. The document explained the purpose of the study (*Appendix H)*. My role as researcher, was communicated to participants to minimize the positive bias of the research subjects who may have felt it necessary to provide positive answers about Trulaske students to continue their working relationship with the Trulaske Career

Services Department. Study participants regularly work with the Business Career

Services Department in Cornell Hall.

No compensation or incentives were provided to participants, and they were

allowed to skip any questions they did not wish to answer or to withdraw from the study

at any point. However, no recruiters withdrew from the study, or ended the interview

early, or asked not to answer any questions. There were no tangible benefits to

participating in the study for recruiters. Current and future Trulaske students may benefit

by developing professional competencies to a great extent from possible improvements to

the curriculum of the professional development program, which would provide an

intangible benefit to the recruiters.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data supporting the possession and exhibition of professional competencies, or

the lack thereof, was analyzed and compared to the definitions of the 15 professional

Trulaske competencies used to create the foundation of the Trulaske professional

development program. Typological analysis strategies developed by Hatch (2002) were

used to evaluate the data. The 15 professional competencies were the classifications for

which the data was analyzed. The data was coded according to the behaviors, traits and

attributes identified by the recruiters, and I organized the data by each of the 15

professional competencies, or classifications. Patterns, themes, relationships, critiques,

explanation, and interpretations of the data were identified. Any data that did not fit a

pre-existing pattern or theme—in other words, did not align with the 15 competencies—

was also identified and analyzed. The data was reexamined by analyzing one typology at

a time and cross referencing each classification with the others. Relationships between the themes were identified and analyzed.

Strategies to Address Issues of Quality

One quality element of this study was that employment recruiters understand the concept of professional business competencies and have identified a set of competencies for their organization that they use when making selection and hiring decisions. The use of competency models has not been universally adopted by all organizations; and, therefore, there may have been recruiters interviewed who were unfamiliar with competency models and the terminology associated with competency systems. At the beginning of each interview, I asked recruiters how they assessed candidates during the selection process to determine if they should advance in the process and potentially be given a job offer in order to determine if the recruiter utilizes a competency model as part of their candidate assessment process. However, if the recruiter did not utilize a competency-based recruitment process, that was noted and the interview proceeded. The lack of an organizational competency-based system did not preclude the recruiter from identifying traits and behaviors similar to the professional competencies identified by the Trulaske College.

A second element was that employment recruiters are able to assess the possession of professional business competencies in the undergraduates they have recruited and interviewed at Trulaske and compare this assessment to students from competing universities. I asked participants if they used structured interview and if the structured interview included behavioral-based interview questions. If the recruiter had included behavioral-based interview questions, that may have been an indication that the

employer evaluates prospective employees on the basis of work experience, job specifications, and competencies specific to their organization. The interview protocol was designed to allow for flexible interviewing in the event that additional questions were required to help the recruiters understand the context of the study.

A third quality element dealt with the selection of competencies used in the study. Trulaske has identified 15 professional business competencies. Trulaske developed its list of professional competencies after having conducted research on the competencies that are most frequently desired by US Fortune 500 companies. I asked questions based upon the three areas in which Trulaske has grouped their competencies: emotional performance; individual performance; inspiring others, and allowed the recruiter to provide additional knowledge, skills, attributes, and behaviors that may not be contained in Trulaske's 15 competencies.

A fourth quality element was ensuring the study is transferable and trustworthy. To ensure transferability of the study, I utilized the interview protocol for each interview and designated when protocol deviations were made to help the study participants understand the purpose of the study, review transcripts for errors, and ensure that codes are used properly when analyzing data. To ensure trustworthiness, I had study participants check specific themes and conclusions made regarding their input.

A fifth quality element of the study was my role as researcher. As a management professor that taught the foundational professional development course and had responsibility for the curriculum used in the internship course and all professional development workshops for five years, the study participants may have had difficulty providing negative information regarding the professionalism of Trulaske students. I no

longer have academic oversight of the program and have not taught in the program for three years. Study participants were informed of this. Participants were also informed that the information they shared was part of a dissertation and was to be used to make programmatic changes to Trulaske curriculum. They were encouraged to be forthcoming with negative as well as positive comments about Trulaske students that they have encountered and the professional development program as a whole.

Limitations

A limitation of this study was that employment recruiters that work with Trulaske regularly were asked their perceptions of its students. Given that the recruiters have continued to participate in career fairs and hire graduates of this university, they might naturally have been predisposed to think highly of the undergraduate business students. However, I asked about specific knowledge, skills, attributes, and behaviors that employers are looking for in prospective employees and how they assess Trulaske students.

A second limitation of this study might have been the recruiters who volunteered to participate in the study. The interviews were expected to last approximately 20-45 minutes. Some recruiters, who may have had valuable information to share, may have declined the opportunity to participate.

A third limitation of this study was that I was asking for recruiter perceptions that may or may not have aligned with the 15 competencies included in the Trulaske Professional Development Program. I analyzed the statements of the recruiters to determine if they included any of the Trulaske competencies in their interviews. This data was valuable but may not have provided specific information on each of the 15

competencies utilized by Trulaske to develop curriculum for their program. To obtain a complete understanding of how recruiters perceive the competency possession and exhibition by Trulaske students, all 15 competencies will need to be studied.

A fourth limitation of the study is that recruiters were asked about the skills, attributes and behaviors they observed of Trulaske students in their recruitment and selection process as undergraduate students expressed interest in internships and full-time positions. The time allotted during career fairs and follow-interviews is limited and may not provide recruiters with the adequate amount of time to properly assess the professional competencies of students.

Summary

This study is one component of a larger program evaluation of the Trulaske professional development program. Given that the program is in its eleventh year of implementation, it is paramount that Trulaske measures the intended outcomes of the program and evaluates whether or not this program is satisfying stakeholder needs. Trulaske recently completed a recertification process of the Association to Advance College Schools of Business (AACSB). This program evaluation will help to substantiate recertification by AACSB. The faculty and staff of Trulaske are very dedicated and strive to provide the best education to their students. Obtaining data on recruiter's perceptions of Trulaske students may allow for improvements in its professional development curriculum.

Chapter Four: Results

As stated in Chapter 1, this case study focused on the perceptions of employment recruiters of business students that complete professional development course requirements at the Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. College of Business, University of Missouri. The case study was bounded by the perspectives of employment recruiters with regard to the professionalism of Trulaske business students. The guiding research question for this study is: How do employment recruiters perceive University of Missouri Trulaske College of Business students, who complete education requirements in a unique professional development program? Trulaske uses fifteen professional competencies as the foundation of their professional development program curriculum, and a secondary question is what professional competencies are exhibited by Trulaske students and what competencies are valued by the recruiters.

A conceptual framework of the fifteen Trulaske professional competencies was used to analyze the data. The professional competencies are: self-awareness, self-control, value differences, empathy, establish relationships, manage conflict, learning agility, critical thinking, achievement orientation, decision making, teamwork, communicate effectively, integrity, influence others, and leadership. The definition of each competency is provided in the data analysis section. The process used to analyze the transcripts of 17 recruiters included a priori coding and open coding, as explained fully in Chapter 3.

Sample

Seventeen employment recruiters were interviewed for this case study. All seventeen of the recruiters have previously participated in the Trulaske College of

Business career fair to identify prospective candidates for internships or full-time employment opportunities. Appendix J lists participant demographics, which includes gender (8 men and 9 women), age (ages 25 to 65), and University of Missouri alumni status (5 alumni). Of the five alumni, three participated in the Trulaske Professional Development Program as undergraduate students; and all three had three to six years of work experience. I have designated the employment positions of the recruiters as "human resources" (5 recruiters) to indicate full-time recruiters or holding other human resource positions and "line managers" (12 recruiters) for recruiters that work in operational functions of their companies. I have used pseudonyms for each recruiter to ensure their anonymity, and their companies are only listed by the size of the organization with respect to the number of full-time employees: small, medium, and large-enterprise as defined by the United States Small Business Administration ("Small Business Administration," 2019).

The years of work experience of the recruiters varied. Nine of the recruiters had fewer than ten years of work experience, four recruiters had ten to twenty-five years of work experience, and two recruiters had more than twenty-five years of work experience. All of the recruiters work for businesses; no non-profits, government agencies, or educational institutions were represented by the recruiters in the case study. Five of the recruiters were employed locally and twelve were not.

Data Collection

The interview protocol was designed for employers that recruit Trulaske business students for internships and/or full-time positions. The study participants were selected from a list of recruiters who have participated in the career fair hosted by the Trulaske

Business Career Services department. The length of interviews were not capped at a specific amount of time but ranged in length from 25 minutes to 90, and each interview was semi-structured in that they started with the same questions and the answers of the recruiters provoked different follow-up and probing questions.

I asked recruiters what they look for in prospective employees; about the skills, behaviors, and attributes of Trulaske students that they have observed; to compare Trulaske students with other students that they have recruited and hired; what skills, behaviors, and attributes they desire in new hires; and what knowledge and skills are needed but not necessarily seen in the Trulaske students they have interviewed or worked with. See Appendix I for the list of standard questions. I recorded and transcribed all interviews, and I also took field notes during each interview.

Findings

An inductive data analysis approach was used. I gathered data, coded participants' responses, analyzed the data by looking for patterns, and identified patterns that emerged. I also used the conceptual framework of Trulaske competencies to analyze the recruiter responses to determine if recruiters expressed perceptions of student behaviors that aligned with the Trulaske competencies. All recruiter observations about knowledge, skills, attributes, and competencies that did not align with the Trulaske competencies were also captured.

Trulaske Competencies as Identified by Recruiters

After asking study participants about what they look for in candidates and what their process is for assessing candidates, I asked about their observations of Trulaske students. I specifically asked what behaviors, attributes, knowledge, and skills they had

observed of students in the recruitment process or while working for them during an internship. Professional business competencies are defined as "the skills and traits that employees need to be successful in a job" (Mansfield, 1996, p. 9). The recruiters interviewed rarely used the word *competency*, and although a couple of recruiters referred to the role or job description, only one recruiter described a structured human resources system built upon competencies. Participant Adam, a Human Resources manager, stated, "All managers are trained on behavioral based interviewing, and HR assesses each position and identifies key competencies of the position." The lack of regular reference to competencies could stem from an organization not having a structured recruitment process based upon competencies, and it could stem from my selection of study participants that included more line managers than human resources professionals. Nonetheless, the recruiters did identify behaviors, attributes, skills, and knowledge.

Although only one study participant, a Human Resource Manager, used the term *competency* without prompting from me, the actual names of the competencies or the skills, behaviors, and attributes of 12 of the 15 Trulaske competencies were commented upon by the recruiters. Having 12 of the 15 competencies commented upon is noteworthy and may confirm that the competencies selected by Trulaske faculty to be used as the foundation for the professional development program are appropriate for the program. The three that were not mentioned by the recruiters were integrity, self control, and leadership. It should not be assumed that these three competencies are not valued by employment recruiters. These competencies may not have been mentioned by recruiters because they are unable to observe them in the short recruitment and selection process used for hiring entry-level positions in college recruitment programs.

The Trulaske competencies are described as distinct skills, behaviors, and attitudes, but when discussed by the recruiters they frequently combined elements of different competencies together. Networking, communicating effectively, and establishing relationships were discussed in a manner which indicates that there is overlap in the competencies. Critical thinking, decision making, and initiative were also discussed in combination. This overlap may indicate to Trulaske faculty that the order in which the competencies are delivered to students should be grouped to promote an understanding how there are intersections and commonalities across the competencies.

Two Trulaske competencies were discussed by several recruiters: critical thinking and communicate effectively. Recruiters provided examples of behaviors observed by Trulaske students, which are listed below, but also emphasized how important these competencies are for success in their organizations. This may signal to Trulaske faculty that not only should these two competencies remain in the Trulaske Professional Development Program competency model, but how the competencies are dealt with in the curriculum should be reviewed to determine if the curriculum provides a similar amount of emphasis to these competencies as the employers do.

The competencies of valuing differences and teamwork were discussed by study participants, but no observations were made of how Trulaske students value differences of others or work in teams. The recruiters discussed these two competencies in relationship to their company values and organizational structure. When discussed, the recruiters stated that they value differences and seek to hire a diverse workforce and that their companies are organized into teams. Like the three Trulaske competencies that employers did not discuss (integrity, self control, and leadership), employers may not

have been able to observe behaviors of Trulaske students with regard to these two competencies during the short recruitment process. However, their comments indicate that valuing differences and teamwork are important to employers and should continue to be included in the Trulaske Professional Development program curriculum.

The following lists the Trulaske competencies and observation, or lack of observations and comments, by the recruiters for each competency. The Trulaske Professional Development Program curriculum model groups competencies into three categories: emotional and social skills (self-awareness, self-control, value differences, empathy, establish relationships, and establishing relationships), individual performance (learning agility, critical thinking, achievement orientation, decision making, and teamwork) and inspire others (communicate effectively, integrity, influence others, and leadership).

Emotional and Social Skills Competencies. Trulaske groups competencies in three categories: emotional and social skills, individual performance competencies, and inspires other competencies. In this category the competencies are grouped to include self-awareness, value differences, empathy, establish relationships, and self-control. All competencies in the category, except for self-control were identified by recruiters. It is clear by the recruiter comments listed below that employers value skills, attributes, and behaviors that align with emotional and social skills competencies.

Self-awareness. The term "self-awareness" was only used by one recruiter in the study. However, several recruiters made comments about students being aware of their internship aspirations, locations where they would like to work, etc. Participant Francine, who works as a corporate recruiter for a mid-size company stated the following:

I think one thing that really helps in when a candidate locks into their own identity and is able to present in a confident manner. Our interns aren't cookie-cutter versions of each other. We want them to be their own individual, and the reason they were offered the position is because they were able to represent that confidence in knowing themselves and what they have to bring. It's really about being able to identify your strengths and weaknesses and being able to present those to a future employer even if it is quirky. Identify you and bring that forth, and set yourself apart from the crowd.

As identified in chapter two, when evaluating the selection process of recruiters, research has been conducted on how well candidates either fit the job (P-J) or fit the organization (P-O) (Judge & Ferris, 1992; Rynes & Gerhart, 1990). Having employment candidates with the self-awareness to self-select positions, companies, and industries that they are interested in, improves the recruiters' opportunities for selecting candidates that fit the position and organization to a greater extent.

Grace, a recruiter who also works for a mid-sized company, referred to the competency of self-awareness in the context of students developing from facing ambiguous work situations:

Being thrown into uncomfortable settings is how you learn self-awareness and interpersonal skills. Thinking I don't want to do that, but I have to because it's my job. It would be great if you could get them out and about and make them uncomfortable because they're going to face that a lot when they're out of college.

Grace's comments are indicative of other study participants' comments, which identified an interest in provide students with stretch assignments in courses and in their internships, which require students to deal with ambiguity.

   Stretch assignments can be described as assignments that push students out of the comfort zone, such as the organizational field experience that Trulaske includes in their Professional Development Program. This stretch assignment is anchored in the developing and reflection upon professional competencies, but the nature of the assignment is somewhat unknown because of the variability of each field experience at different non-profit organizations. This concept was directly tied to the competency of self-awareness in that recruiters believed that these kinds of assignments help students learn what they do and do not like, which helps them make decisions about the kind of full-time work in which they are interested. The nature of the employers' comments indicates their preference in hiring students and recent graduates that have developed self-awareness to the level to help them select employment positions in which they are interested rather than just accepting a job offer without an understanding of whether they will like the kind of work done in this position.

   Value differences. This competency was addressed by three recruiters; however, the context of their remarks were about their company valuing differences. Isaac referenced his company's strategy on recruiting diverse candidates by stating, "We have a very big corporate push to build our diversity and inclusion." Recruiters stated that Trulaske students are culturally diverse and their companies are interested in recruiting diverse students for internships and full-time positions. The recruiters made no observations about seeing Trulaske students exhibit behaviors that reflected the valuing

of differences but the emphasis given by recruiters indicates their value in this competency.

Empathy. Only recruiters that either work in sales of products or financial services advice commented on the competency of empathy. Grace, who works for a financial advising company, identified the following attribute that she looks for when assessing candidates:

> So, um, for a production-oriented position, you would be looking for somebody who is internally motivated, driven, not afraid to close a sale, but also has the ability to um show empathy for clients, be able to communicate clearly with them.

> So interpersonal skills are huge for that role and for all of our roles really.

Grace identified empathy as a valuable competency for a sales employee who works directly with clients on a regular basis and need this attribute to successfully connect with clients for sales and customer relations.

The competency of empathy is one of these competencies that was discussed in an overlapping fashion by recruiters. It was discussed in the context with other competencies, such as communicate effectively, and it was paired with initiative and drive. It was clearly seen as an important competency, and one which can balance other competencies. It is also worth noting that this competency was discussed by recruiters that work with external clients. Recruiters working in the sale of products and financial services mentioned this competency, which may indicate the importance of the competency in the development of effective sales and customer management skills.

Establish relationships. Trulaske identifies this competency as the behavior to build or maintain friendly, reciprocal, and warm relationships or networks of contacts

with people; (see Appendix A). This competency was discussed by study participants using specific examples of work-related needs. One recruiter asked if the Trulaske Professional Development Program included curriculum content on building a relationship with one's boss, and several remarked about the need for candidates to be able to comfortably network and engage with clients. Another recruiter identified the importance in being able to work cross-functionally. And Brent stated that he expects interns and full-time employees to coordinate opportunities to job shadow more experienced employees in the organization as way to learn about the company and to establish working relationships.

Self-control. No comments or references were made about this competency.

Individual Performance Competencies. Trulaske groups the 15 professional competencies into three categories: emotional and social skills competencies, individual performance competencies, and inspires others competencies. The individual performance competencies include manage conflict, learning agility, critical thinking, achievement orientation, decision making, and teamwork. All of the competencies focused on how employees perform their jobs individually and when working with others were discussed as valuable competencies by employers. The critical thinking competencies was discussed in great detail as recruiters provided examples of behaviors that Trulaske students have exhibited in internships and how they value employees who identify problems in the organization, take the initiative to consider potential solutions to those problems, and then work with their supervisors to enact decisions to resolve problems.

Manage conflict. This competency was remarked upon by only two recruiters. Participant Neal, who works for a large company, combined this concept with the competencies of problem solving and decision making.

> Problem solving is like a major thing we do, um, how do you get to the root cause quickly, how do you solve problems, um especially problems sets that you haven't faced before because that's what we run into every day, how do you deal with employees not getting along, etc. It's just like problems we haven't seen, um and how do you not just put a band aid on it but really know that you solved it. I mean the skill sets that we find are appealing are the general manager mindset.

Neal's comment is another example of how recruiters discussed the competencies in an overlapping fashion. Neal created his own framework for assessing candidates using what he referred to as a *general manager mindset.* When Neal interviews candidates he asks behavioral-based interview questions to determine if candidates identify problem, determine solutions for problems, and quickly resolve problems as a way to manage conflict in the organization.

One recruiter, a financial analyst and advisor, discussed working with clients when the market is down and dealing with families of deceased clients. Brent stated, "Conflict management, I mean obviously we're dealing with peoples' money, and so you're obviously going to have conflicts. The market moves like crazy, so managing conflict and the ability to adapt is huge." Both recruiters identified the need for employees to be able to manage conflict, but none of the study participants provided examples of observations of Trulaske students managing conflict and lacking skills in the ability to manage conflict.

Learning agility. Leaning agility was discussed by several recruiters. Their remarks centered around their perceived inability to teach soft skills of management and the need for employees to learn technology skills that help them adapt to a changing business environment. Kathleen stated, "I think the soft skills are the most important. The hard skills -- those are taught." David remarked upon how the Trulaske program is coordinated to focus on real-world business issues, "I love how they're [students] learning real life experiences with real companies and products. I think that's invaluable. Um, I think the more that you can do to simulate real world environments the better."

Information on data analytics, which was discussed by many study participants, is listed below in the section of competencies identified by recruiters that are not included in the Trulaske competency model.

Critical thinking. This competency was identified by many recruiters as a necessary skill for employees. Carla, who is a manager for a large company and is a Trulaske alum, stated the following:

> I would say critical thinking is the piece that I see when we hire Trulaske students
>
> as full-time employees. Um, I do see a little bit of a lack of them thinking that
>
> when they intern and have a problem or a situation thinking through it before they
>
> call for help. I don't necessarily see that in entry-level employees.

Carla's statement includes two interesting concepts; (1) the critical thinking competency is more easily observed in full-time employees rather than in interns, and (2) interns more frequently ask for supervisory or managerial help before thinking through potential solutions to problems.

David, who works in customer relations for a large company, commented about preferring employees who think through problems and identify potential solutions before discussing the problem with him:

I hear all the time, you know, 'Hey, I got myself into this situation," calling me and saying what do I do, versus saying all right let me come up with what I think we should do and then I'm going to call my manager and say, 'Hey, I got myself into a situation and here's what I think we should do. Then I can say yep or no. At least if they come to me with an idea, then I can help push them in the right direction or guide them.

David's comments reflect a definition of critical thinking as detecting a problem, thinking through potential solutions, and then consulting management on what action to take to solve the problem.

Participant Francine identified the competency of critical thinking as a differentiator in determining which interns she decides to offer full-time positions.

The students that show critical thinking skills are the students I lock onto and offer full-time positions. I had one Trulaske intern last summer; and he proved that he could take on harder, more challenging work assignments so I kept him on throughout the fall semester. During his summer internship, he contacted me and said, 'I'm looking past graduation. I talked with someone at a different company and they said to do this, this, and this. What can you do to help me obtain those skills?' And I said 'That's awesome. Challenge accepted.' Now he's getting his own sculpted internship program.

With this statement, Francine has not only stated that she uses the competency of critical thinking as a differentiator when hiring full-time employees from her pool of interns, but she has provided an example of how greatly she values this competency. In this example, she has a student who has demonstrated an ability to think through the needs he has as an intern for gaining specific skills that he has learned are valuable in full-time professionals. She values this to the extent that she has modified his internship to include the skills and experiences he has identified.

Study participant Isaac, works as a sales manager for large company, identified thinking skills as a hiring criteria differentiator as Francine did. However, he also raised a question about whether or not critical thinking can be developed or trained.

> I would say so having managed people for 18 years, when people ask me what I'm looking for I say two things: I look for somebody that thinks and somebody that cares. Because I can teach them to do anything else, but I can't teach them to stop and think and I can't teach them to care about their job, and their team, and all that.

By stating that he looks for candidates that "think and care" Isaac's comments reflect a connection between the competencies of critical thinking, empathy and establishing relationships. His comments alluding to his ability to teach job skills and his lack of ability to teach employees to *think and care* aligns with other employers who questioned their ability to teach soft skills to employees.

The competency of critical thinking was addressed by many recruiters in many different ways. Almost all of them defined critical thinking as analyzing a problem or a situation; evaluating the implications for the fellow team members, customers, and the

company; and developing a list of potential solutions. Given the number of recruiters that discussed the competency of critical thinking and the value they placed upon the competency, it was clear that this competency should remain in the Trulaske Professional Development Program curriculum. Faculty evaluating the program may determine if the way in which the competency is presented and treated in the curriculum is at the same level of importance that the employers placed upon this competency.

Achievement orientation. Although employers did not use the phrase "achievement orientation," they discussed the need for employment candidates to present evidence of business successes, speak to how they "drove" the business when interning, and "being driven." Recruiters expressed a desire to have students in the interviewing process share with them examples of when the work they completed as interns made a difference in the results of the business. This can be done by providing sales results, providing details of project completion, etc.

Decision making. Three recruiters discussed the competency of decision making. Their remarks included students taking initiative and making decisions; being able to assess a situation, evaluate alternatives, and make decision; and offering options to their managers for decisions. This competency was discussed in an overlapping fashion by the recruiters, which may indicate that the competencies should be presented to students in either a combination of competencies or in succession.

Teamwork. Although employers did not provide comments on how Trulaske business students work in teams or demonstrate their teamwork skills, many of them said that their organizations are structured in teams and that it is critical for employees to be

able to work in a team setting. The competency of teamwork is valued by recruiters, but they have limited opportunities to assess this in the interview process.

Inspire others competencies. Trulaske groups their competencies into the categories of emotional and social skills competencies, individual performance competencies, and inspire others competencies. Competencies that are included in the inspiring others category include communicate effectively, integrity, influence others, and leadership. Communicate effectively was a competency that was discussed by many recruiters and in a variety of ways. The competency of influence others was discussed in connection with other competencies, and the competencies of integrity and leadership was not discussed in detail by the study participants.

Communicate effectively. Nearly all recruiters discussed this competency. Included in their comments were different elements of communication skills: speaking, writing, and non-verbal skills. Brent, an older manager of transportation for a large company, stated, "First of all, the candidate has to be poised and has to be able to speak professionally um not be shy. Students here know how to look people in the eye and hold a conversation." Isaac, a sales manager for a large company, focused on how students need to be able to communicate their experiences during the interview process:

> Even if someone doesn't have the best work experience it's how you translate
> what you have done into how that applies to the role that you're applying for. So
> you may have had an internship that wasn't the best, well that's okay if you could
> say this is what I took away from it, this is what I learned, and this is how it's
> going to translate to the role that you're hiring for. And I think that a lot of times

that has stood out with students more than someone who had a fantastic

internship.

Isaac's comments identify two important concepts: first, that Trulaske students have and

should continue to connect their work experiences to job opening descriptions; and

second, that this ability of students to connect experiences that help employers identify

that they have skills and behaviors that can transfer from one employment experience to

another is more valuable than a perfectly structured or experienced internship.

Jennifer, a sales representative for a large Midwestern company and Trulaske

alum, relayed an example of when a professional commented on her writing skills and

how she attributed those to the Trulaske Professional Development Program:

I feel like the professional development, how to write, um emails specifically,

how to communicate in the business world, the way that we were taught here is

how we communicate at work. One time my boss said, 'How did you learn to

email like that?'

Similarly, David provided an example of when a Trulaske intern was able to assist

him with writing a summary of information to be used with a client:

I needed a one-pager on this item, and I need to pull out a few key talking points,

such as margin, price, does it fit my customer; and my intern put it in a one-pager;

and I was able to take it to my meeting with a client. So, I think if you could

continue to help them to learn about building a professional sell-story that is

condescended and really fits in our short sell-cycle, that would be a big help.

David identified the ability to write executive summaries in a concise and direct format as

a valuable skill for improving his ability to efficiently and effectively work with clients.

This fits within the professional competency of communicating effectively for the Trulaske Professional Development Program, but it also provides information that may inform how business communications curriculum is developed and delivered within the Trulaske College.

In addition to the focus on communication within the work environment, there was some attention given to communication within the job search and recruitment process. Brent, who stated that Trulaske students make eye-contact when in a conversation with him, said that several students walked past him at the last career fair without speaking or making eye contact:

> One of the big things that happens here is at the career fair kids are looking for internships, and I see 200 kids walk by and never even try because they are so afraid. Like I said the ones that walk by, their eyes are down to the ground walking by.

Here, Brent is making assumptions about students at the fair that might not be accurate.

The Trulaske career fair typically lasts five hours and is scheduled in the middle of the school day. Students schedule time in between classes to attend the career fair and have on average 200 employers that they may speak with while at the career fair. As included in the discussion on the self-awareness competency, it was identified as a valuable trait when students have enough self-awareness to apply for jobs that they know interest them. It does not seem unreasonable then that students may choose not to visit a recruiter's booth or take the time to speak with each employer as they walk through the fair to meet with employers that they have pre-identified an interest in contacting.

Certainly, eye contact is an important element in the communication process, but the lack of eye contact may not be a sign of students fear in speaking with an employer.

Almost all of the participants discussed the competency of communication as a necessary skill for working in business, and they provided positive comments on Trulaske students communicating effectively. This competency was discussed in a variety of ways by nearly all of the recruiters, which indicates its importance as a competency that Trulaske maintains in their curriculum. Concerns with students being able to respond to interview questions in depth is included in the job search preparedness section.

Integrity. Although no recruiters used the terms integrity, honesty, or ethics, many referred to their company's values and their efforts to identify employees who will fit with their corporate values.

Influence others. This competency was not referred to by name, but several recruiters, and all of the recruiters who work in the field of sales, made comments about students being confident, building networks, and being able to sell products and or services.

Leadership. The leadership competency was only referred to by recruiters in the context of the skills that Trulaske students gain when participating in student organizations in leadership roles. Several recruiters made reference to the large number of student organizations at Trulaske and how students may gain leadership experience while involved as an undergraduate student. Participant Jennifer stated, "We've seen some really good students here, and I think all of the organizations that are offered within the business school really do help prepare people."

Competencies Identified by Recruiters That Are Not Trulaske Competencies

The study participants identified skills, attributes, and behaviors that they value that are not a part of the Trulaske Professional Development Program competency model. Some could be seen as overlapping each other or overlapping the Trulaske competencies. *Caring for others* was commented upon, which could overlap with the Trulaske competencies of valuing differences and empathy. *Outgoing* and *confident* were also identified, which may overlap each other.

Data analytics is a skill mentioned by several recruiters and is not included in the Trulaske Professional Development program curriculum. Data analytics is included in other Trulaske courses, such as accounting and marketing analytics; however, because it was discussed frequently with a tremendous emphasis placed upon it, that Trulaske faculty should consider if the Professional Development Program should incorporate it into their curriculum.

The following lists the knowledge, skills, attributes, and competencies identified by the recruiters that do not align with the Trulaske competencies:

Caring for others. The value of caring for other people was identified by two employers, both of which stated that their corporate values statements included this concept. This competency could align with the Trulaske competencies of valuing differences and empathy. I included it in this section and did not connect it with the Trulaske competencies because both recruiters used the phrase *caring for others* and explained how this attribute is emphasized in their organizations and that they specifically check for this quality when assessing candidates in the recruitment process.

Outgoing. This competency can be defined as friendly and social. Several recruiters identified this as an attribute that is necessary for success in their organizations. Brent identified this as a criteria that he uses to determine if he will offer a full-time position to an intern:

> Working in the logistics and transportation part of the industry, you have to talk to people; and even when we hire people full-time from an internship, the ones that have gotten hired are the ones that have gotten their butts out of the seats and made the initiative to connect with people.

Brent also discussed the need for employees to be extraverts stating that, "Shyness makes people think 'uncertainty,' that you don't know. So I'm looking for personality. I need people to be able to come up and shake the hand strong and look you in the eyes and talk, to be able to present yourself."

> Participant Quincy, a young recent Trulaske alum now working in sales, also referenced the need for employees in his organization to be outgoing.

> For us it's definitely seeing if somebody can approach someone and be able to speak to them in a sales world. For us in our atmosphere, you have to be able to approach a complete stranger and speak to them and sell a product so that's a part of it.

Many of the recruiters agreed with Quincy that the attribute of being *outgoing* is valued in their organizations. It should be noted that many of the recruiters that participated in the study either worked in the sales departments of their organization, work in consumer and client relations, or work in human resources for consumer-products companies. This

could have contributed to the number of recruiters that expect prospective employees to be outgoing.

Confident. This competency was defined by the study participants as pushing back, meeting people, managing clients, and networking. This competency was mentioned my multiple recruiters. Neal, an older manager for a very large corporation, expressed the need for employees to be confident in themselves.

> At companies like [mine], the people that graduate have incredibly large responsibilities, and there's not like a training-wheels job. You'll have several hundred million dollars' worth of responsibility, and the more confidence they have, they're going to be able to appropriately push back like when they see a problem is really important because there isn't a safety net. I need them to be able to stand up, with facts, with logic, make a thoughtful decision, and explain why they're right.

Confidence is not one of the Trulaske competencies; however, the Professional Development Program curriculum does include content on networking. The program includes an organizational field experience, which requires 15 hours of work in a non-profit, government, or educational organization so that students develop professional competencies and gain work experience that will make them more confident in their internships.

Humble. One recruiter characterized Trulaske students as "down to earth" and "willing to do anything." Two others remarked on noting a difference between Mizzou students and other students stating that Mizzou students are humble and have Midwestern values. Ethan, a financial planner, stated:

I would definitely say that most kids that we have here at Mizzou have that, um, I don't know if this is the right way to say it but humble, driven attitude. They are people-people first, but they all have the intellectual side that goes along with it and they can connect with just about anybody. And I think that's because of the business school.

I asked follow-up questions to determine how the recruiters define *Midwestern values*. The words used to define this concept were hard-working, strong work ethic, kind, and easy to work with.

Data Analytics. When I asked what skills students needed, several recruiters discussed the need for students to have solid data analytics skills. Two recruiters expressed a need for students to have experience with specific software systems: Participant Jennifer referred to Tableau software, a system used to for data visualization:

Data interpretation, how you can leverage that for a bigger business purpose outside of just slicing data, is needed. We use Tableau. I think it's nice to see different data systems that are used in the working world, and having students with data analytics skills is helpful.

Similarly, Brent referenced pivot tables, which is a table of statistics representing a large data set, and is often used in Excel software:

What do I need? Analytics. I need them to be able to do a Pivot table. I can't do them, and I count on them and some of them struggle with it. When they leave our internship their Excel skills are off the charts.

Data Analytics was discussed by almost all recruiters. As listed above, recruiters value employment candidates that have proficiency in software systems used to manage data,

are able to draw appropriate conclusions from analyzing data that may be used to solve

business problems, and can visualize data so that others are able to easily understand the

information. This competency was discussed with great frequency by the study

participants, and Trulaske faculty should consider incorporating this into their

Professional Development Program.

Grit. Only one recruiter, Jennifer, discussed the concept of grit, but it was

powerful.

The buzz word we have is 'grit.' We're looking for people who are hard workers, they

can speak to their experiences, they're very resilient, and also very forward thinking; and

they think about their future from a big picture and building a career versus just trying to

get a job. We recruit at three universities, but Mizzou is our number one career fair

because of this.

While study participants identified specific competencies they look for in

recruitment candidates, they also commented on a candidate's ability to fit in the

organization, which was discussed in chapter two. "Fit" is a criteria used by recruiters to

determine if a candidate will likely fit their organizational culture. Participant Grace

explained that she uses the interview process to assess "fit:"

We're trying to project our culture in the way we talk to people. The recruitment

process is more personal now than it used to be. We want to get to know them.

I'll tell them as much as I can about the company and let them ask questions,

which is how we get the fit.

Also related to fit, Participant Harrison referenced asking questions about corporate

culture to determine fit from the student's perspective by stating, "I love when they ask

questions. It shows that they are prepared. When you get specific questions, like someone earlier asked me what the culture is like. That's great because they've thought about what culture fits for them."

Trulaske Professional Development Program Elements Discussed by Recruiters

Clearly the three recruiters that are graduates of the Trulaske College and completed coursework in the Professional Development Program understand the Trulaske Professional Development Program. Many of the other recruiters were very familiar with the program, and expressed that Trulaske students are better prepared for the employment recruitment process than students they meet with from other universities. Several recruiters stated that Trulaske students exhibited more poise in the interview process, presented more professional resumes, and had great conversation skills than students from other universities.

Recruiters also expressed an appreciation for the Trulaske Professional Development Program. Many knew that the program was designed to provide students with soft-skills development, and they knew that experiential assignments, such as the organizational field experience and the internship, were include to help students gain competency development intended to help prepare them for careers in business.

Job Search Skills and Preparedness. Although not listed as a Trulaske competency, job search skills and preparedness are included in the Trulaske Professional Development curriculum. There were many comments that fit into this theme. Job search skills and preparedness is a broad phrase that includes the development of a resume, which includes the look of a resume and the content; research on companies, their industries, their culture and values, employment locations, and the positions that

they are seeking to fill; rehearsal of an elevator speech, which is simply a way to introduce oneself and begin a conversation; anticipation of interview questions and formation of answers; and appropriate follow-up to thank recruiters and ask for interviews.

Several recruiters made positive comments about the preparedness of Trulaske students for the job search process. Adam, who works in human resources, stated "Trulaske students understand the career track, and they are poised and polished throughout the interview process." Participant Carla, who also works in human resources, focused on the resumes that Trulaske students develop and present.

Professionalism of the students is wonderful here. I think the biggest thing I notice here is the resume. They are outstanding. The resumes we see here are better than the majority of resumes that we get from what our HR is sending us.

Participant Neal, a merchandising analyst for a large company, commented on the process, known as an elevator speech, of preparing students to introduce themselves and begin a conversation.

We did the [school name deleted] career fair Tuesday, and we did interviews all day yesterday. The one thing, and I can't tell you if it's unique to MU, I came away with saying I wish the students at the other university told their story better. Mizzou students are confident when they introduce themselves, and they tell us who they are and what kind of work they are interested in.

In addition to these comments of praise of the students' professionalism, there were some comments made related to opportunities for improvement.

There were three comments made about improvement needed in the job search process. One comment was specific to the amount of company research is completed before the career fair, one comment was directed at improvement in how students tell their personal stories in an interview setting, and the third was on how students could improve their engagement with recruiters.

And this is kind of spotty, but the research they do on the company before they come in. We look for the STAR (behavior based interview technique using a formatted response which includes evaluating whether or not the candidate responses by describing a situation, describing the task or action taken, and then providing the result of their actions) and they do a great job of that but I feel that they lack an understanding of the company culture and they need to do a little more research before they come in. (Participant Carla)

The other thing I would say is it's funny when you do 10 or 12 interviews in a day and then you do 10 more the next day, the tell me a time you had a difficult experience, they are the same story with different names except the ones that stand out. So don't talk about the guy who didn't help on your group project. Be a little more incisive in answering those questions because you will stand out. (Participant Isaac)

Harrison, a recruiter from a small company, provided information on Trulaske students being able to deliver their elevator speeches but not being prepared for follow up questions to their introductory comments:

Mizzou students are prepared. They have their elevator pitches ready to go. I was talking to a guy, who said my name is such and such and I'm from Memphis,

Tennessee; and I was like okay that's good to know. They are definitely coming

prepared in that sense, but when we get into "what are you looking to do or what

are you looking to get out of an internship or a position that's where things tend to

fall off.

The Trulaske Professional Development Program includes course content on writing and

verbally practicing an elevator pitch. It is clear from Harrison's comments that additional

course content is needed to help student make the transition from the elevator pitch to the

start of the interview.

Professional Development Program Design. Comments were made by

recruiters in support of the entire professional development program, which includes

courses designed to develop professional competencies, experiential learning

opportunities via the organizational field experience and the internship, and seminars, or

workshops, which provide guest speakers presenting current business topics and their

professional experiences. David spoke of his appreciation of having the opportunity to

speak with students at career fairs, networking events, and in class presentations:

I love the fact that we see students multiple times. They are in a class that we

speak to, and the students come up after, and they go to our networking event. I

mean it registers with us and we think, 'Hey, this person is really interested in our

company, and they want to get to know us.' So when they come in [for an

interview] there is more of a relaxed interaction with them because we've already

met them, we already know them, we talked to them. It just makes it that much

easier. I love candidates that reach out to us or come to our networking event,

whatever it may be, um, just go to all of them. Test the companies to see what

you like, but I love to see that from them.

The inclusion of employers in multiple elements of the Professional Development

program, such as participating on employer panels in workshops, providing guest

lectures, conducting networking events, etc., is valued by employers because they have

an opportunity to see students in a variety of settings beyond just the career fair. Some

employers indicated that they prefer to hire students after they have completed their

sophomore and/or junior year but are interested in connecting with freshmen and

sophomores to build their pipeline of prospective student interns.

Paula, provided comments on each element of the Trulaske Professional

Development Program by stating:

Without being disrespectful to any school or program, um I will say that it is

obvious that Mizzou has the Professional Development program. It is obvious

that they get points [at seminars and workshops], and that they have to go, and

that they do go, and that they do hear great things in terms of giving them tips on

the job search, employment panels like at the Making Me Marketable, their lunch

and learns. And I think those are so valuable; and the fact that your students

actually attend them, again, is evidenced. It's not like every single Mizzou

student is a rock star, but a lot of them are; and when I go to an event, it's just

there are differences in terms of resume, in terms of how they present themselves

at the career fairs, it's a huge difference, I will say. Being able to walk up and,

you know, have that confidence and know how to start the conversation. It's

intimidating.

Paula's comments were echoed by other recruiters and confirm that the Trulaske

Professional Development Program is valued by employers and indicates that employers

perceive Trulaske students as possessing professional competencies that students at other

universities do not.

Conclusion

Based upon the comments of the recruiters, they perceive University of Missouri

Trulaske College of Business students, who complete education requirements in the

Trulaske Professional Development Program, as possessing unique attributes that align

with the Trulaske professional competency model. Despite rarely using the term

"professional competencies," recruiters that participated in the study identified the

behaviors, attributes, and skills that make up a large extent of the Trulaske Professional

Development Program competency model. This confirms that employers recognize that

Trulaske students possess many of the Trulaske competencies and that they are looking

for specific skills that can be incorporated into curriculum to prepare students for success

in the business world. The Trulaske College developed the Professional Development

Program to provide students with skills that are needed in addition to the business

knowledge they receive from their technical business courses. Study participant Paula,

commented on the importance of these skills: "Major is important, GPA is important; but

soft skills are probably more important for us because we're a global company."

The elements of the Professional Development Program were also confirmed as

being important to the recruiters. Brent, who provided many ideas for improving the

program, stated, "I love your program by the way. How the internship program is

structured. I've never seen anybody else do it like this. It's phenomenal. The follow-up, the structure, the format, um, it's formalized; and I do like this program."

Recruiters had difficulty defining how Trulaske students are different from other students that participate in their employment recruitment process; however, many stated that perceive there to be a difference between Trulaske students and other University of Missouri students as well as students from other universities.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Implications

This chapter summarizes the case study and the findings identified in Chapter 4. I will discuss implications for action and recommendations for further research. This case study focused on the perceptions of employment recruiters of business students that complete professional development course requirements at the Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. College of Business, University of Missouri. In 2006, Trulaske received information from employment recruiters who stated that recent Trulaske alumni possessed the requisite knowledge of accountancy, finance, management, and marketing for the positions for which they had been hired; but they did not possess the needed skills, attributes, and behaviors necessary to perform as business professionals. The feedback from employment recruiters included a need for undergraduates to obtain soft skills of management, known as interpersonal qualities (Robles, 2012), in addition to the hard skills they obtained through their traditional business classes.

In response to this expectation, Trulaske instituted a professional development program beginning in 2008 for all undergraduate business students. For degree completion, this program required students to complete two credit courses and attend non-credit workshops, guest lectures, and business field trips. The curriculum for both non-credit and credit courses utilizes fifteen professional competencies, or management soft skills, that were developed by Trulaske faculty and external human resource experts. (see *Appendix A*).

Employers define competencies as "the skills and traits that employees need to be successful in a job" (Mansfield, 1996, p. 8); however, the term *competency* has not been clearly defined or universally applied. There are two primary meanings that are used by

employers: one refers to the outputs resulting from educational and training programs, and one refers to the inputs required for an individual to achieve competent performance (Hoffman, 1999). When referring to the professional development program that Trulaske created, this case study will utilize the employers' definition of competencies. This should not be confused with a recent approach by some universities to make education affordable by instituting Competency-Based-Education systems that provide college credit for skills already obtained before matriculation (Johnstone & Soares, 2014).

Discussion

McClelland's recommendation that recruiters identify competencies needed for success on the job and recruit based upon a competency model instead of solely looking for knowledge and intelligence changed how human resource professionals structure recruitment and selection systems (1973). Hiring practices using competency models are intended to improve the likelihood that hiring managers hire employees that will become productive more quickly, will more easily work with existing company employees, and will be retained longer. The participants of this student have clearly adopted this approach to hiring despite not making references to competency models or structured interview processes.

Study participants also confirmed research listed in chapter two that their perceptions of business students seeking internships and full-time positions is formed through very brief reviews of resumes (Cole, Rubin, Field, & Giles, 2007) and from very brief conversations with employment applicants at career fairs, networking events, and face-to-face interviews. This supports Gabric and McFadden's (2001) findings that employers highly value general business skills, such as communication. This information

should be used by Trulaske to ensure that continued emphasis is placed on assisting undergraduate business students gain skills in developing high-quality resumes, communicating effectively about their work experiences and professional aspirations, and developing networking skills.

The Trulaske Professional Development Program is built on the foundation of 15 professional competencies. The study participants, employment recruiters who interview and potentially hire Trulaske business students, identified nearly all of the Trulaske competencies when stating their observations of Trulaske students or describing Trulaske competencies when articulating the attributes, skills, and behaviors they value; however, only one recruiter used the term *competency* when discussing what he looks for in prospective employees and how he viewed the Trulaske students. The lack of use of the term may indicate that the term is still not universally used by human resource professionals and employment recruiters as discussed in chapter one. It may also mean that the participants included in the study do not work for organizations that have adopted a competency model for their employment recruitment and selection systems.

When asked, study participants were able to state skills necessary for employment in their organization as well as the attributes and characteristics that they look for in employment candidates, but they had difficulty in reflecting upon positive and negative behaviors of Trulaske students that they have observed in the recruitment process. It helped if they had thought of a particular student and then described behaviors of that student that contributed to his or her success or failure in the recruitment process. When recruiters thought of interns or full-time employees from the Trulaske College of Business that they have worked with, they more easily identified behaviors. Exploring

the behaviors associated with attributes may inform the curriculum Trulaske develops for

their Professional Development Program. For example, *communicate effectively* was a

competency frequently discussed by recruiters. To better prepare students for careers in

business, it becomes necessary to identify what the behaviors are that allows one to

communicate effectively.

Research studies conducted by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, the Society

for Human Resource Management, and Ingbretsen (2009), Kemp (2009), and Stevens

(2007) have indicated that there is a skills gap between generic competencies needed by

employers in the workplace and the competencies possessed by high school and college

graduates. Several participants in this student made comments to the effect that they can

train new employees on certain skills, but attributes such as critical thinking and caring

for others are competencies that are not trainable.

Trulaske Competencies Identified by Recruiters

Study participants discussed many of the Trulaske Professional Development

Program competencies, but some were discussed in greater detail and with more

excitement than others. In this section, I will discuss the competencies that the recruiters

emphasized.

The competency of *self-awareness* was discussed as it related to students

understanding their own preferences in the kind of work they would experience in their

internships, the location of the open positions, and the industry and culture of the

company. Incorporating this competency in the Trulaske curriculum is beneficial to both

students and employers. The Professional Development course curriculum includes

several different assessments used to help students understand their own preferences

related to self-awareness, and it includes two highly-structured work experiences in the organizational field experience and the internship. These practical learning assignments help students learn what they do and do not like about different positions, organizations, and industries. When students have a heightened awareness of their job preferences, they self-select the positions for which they apply, which provides a pool of candidates for the employers who may have a better fit for the position and organization (Judge & Ferris, 1992; Rynes & Gerhart, 1990). Trulaske should continue to include this competency in their professional development program.

Two Trulaske competencies were discussed in great detail by a majority of the recruiters. The first competency is critical thinking. Trulaske defines critical thinking as:

A demonstrated understanding of a situation by breaking it apart into smaller pieces, or tracing the implications of a situation in a step-by-step process. Also involved, is the ability to identify patterns or connections between situations that are not obviously related, and to identify key or underlying issues in complex situations. This includes using creative, innovative, conceptual, or inductive reasoning. (Appendix A)

Recruiters identified the need for employees to be able to thinking critically as a part of the decision-making process, which speaks to the Trulaske competency of decision making. Several recruiters expressed an interest in having students identify the problem, independently identify potential solutions, evaluate those solutions, and then contact a supervisor or manager to discuss the issue before implementing a decision. Two recruiters remarked upon this competency as being something that may be developed once an employee understands the job, the processes and procedures used to

provide a product or service to customers, and the company's culture and expectations. They continued by stating that an 8-12 week internship may not provide students with enough time to allow them to have gained the necessary information to provide a good foundation for applying critical thinking to specific organizational problems and situations. No recruiters expressed a deficiency in the critical thinking skills of Trulaske students. They did, however, express a great need for hiring employees who possess this competency. Trulaske should not only retain this competency in their professional development program, they may also consider evaluating the curriculum for cultivating strength in the area of *critical thinking*.

The second Trulaske competency that was frequently remarked upon was *communicate effectively*, which Trulaske identifies as:

> The ability to articulate one's thoughts, concerns, ideas, feelings and knowledge succinctly. He or she understands and uses the appropriate channels for communication (i.e. verbal, written). The demonstrated ability to know one's audience (e.g., one person or more) and knows the right time to speak up.
> (Appendix A)

The study participants expressed that most Trulaske students communicate appropriately in the recruitment process, during internships, and when employed full-time. Study participants remarked upon Trulaske students communicating well and meeting their expectations for communicating, which included several forms of communication: non-verbal communication, oral communication, email communication, and presentations.

One recruiter did state that he would like to see students make eye-contact more frequently and speak to recruiters as they walked through the career fair. Recruiters may

not know that Trulaske Business Career Services provides students with an app for their phone that allows students to access a map of where the employers' booths are located, the list of positions for which the employer is recruiting, and a profile of the company. Students may be accessing the app as they walk through the career fair, which would reduce their eye-contact.

Managing conflict is a competency that was only discussed by two recruiters. One discussed the competency as a component of critical thinking and problem solving. He stated that when problems are not handled quickly and confidently, conflict may occur. The other recruiter, who works in financial advising referred to the need for students and employees to be able to manage the conflict that occurs when managing family portfolios. This competency may not have been discussed by more recruiters given that their contact with Trulaske students occurs during career fairs and interviews, which does not provide many opportunities for conflicts to arise. Students applying for internships and full-time job offers work to present themselves positively to recruiters and will be disinclined to become involved in conflict.

The need for students to possess learning agility was stated by several recruiters although no recruiters actually used the phrase *learning agility*. In most cases recruiters stated that they found it valuable for students to possess soft skills of management, which were developed over a number of years by working professionals. Recruiters also stated the need for students to learn different technology platforms and gain proficiency in assessing data, using data to inform decisions, and visualizing data to properly communicate information. The need for data analytics skills is discussed in greater detail below.

Only one recruiter identified the need for students to be empathetic, and several discussed the importance of students establishing relationships with co-workers and clients. No recruiters remarked upon observing students demonstrate the competencies of teamwork and valuing differences; however, recruiters did identify both as being important within their organizations. All four of these competencies relate to the skill of developing personal connections, and although recruiters did not provide strong evidence having observed students' behaviors in these areas, they did not provide any evidence that students were lacking in these areas.

The competencies of self-control, integrity, and leadership were not discussed by the recruiters. Self-control, like the competency of managing conflict, may not be observable in the short amount of time that recruiters spend with students at the career fair and during interviews. Although valuable attributes, neither integrity nor leadership were discussed by the recruiters.

Fifteen professional competencies is a large number of competencies and several have overlapping content such as *teamwork* and *establish relationships*. Having the recruiters remark upon as many of the competencies that they did provides confirmation that the competency model used by Trulaske is valuable.

Competencies Valued by Recruiters That Are Not Trulaske Competencies

While asking recruiters questions, I asked them what attributes, knowledge, and skills they would like Trulaske and other students to possess. The majority of them mentioned data analytics. Although the term *data analytics* is still evolving (Power, Heavin, McDermott, & Daly, 2018), for business professionals it may be thought of as evaluating data in the context of different business situations, utilizing the data to inform

decision making, and to present data in a visually compelling manner (Chen, Chiang, & Storey, 2012). Competency in the field of data analytics usually includes being able to use one or more software systems proficiently. Data analytics is not included in the Trulaske 15 professional competencies. The information provided by the study participants clearly indicates a need for Trulaske to develop more curricular offerings that advance the data analytics competency. Gabric and McFadden, in 2001, identified the attributes of analytical and problem solving skills, ability to analyze data, strong communication skills, and the ability to work without supervision as being valued by employers. This study confirms that employers continue to value effective communication skills, a Trulaske competency, and data analytics skills, which is not a Trulaske competency.

Several recruiters either specifically used the term *confidence* or alluded to it when identifying characteristics they look for in employment candidates and when describing their perceptions of Trulaske students. Several participants stated that Trulaske students are more confident than other students. Students gain confidence from many experiences in and out of the classroom. Although the Trulaske professional development program includes several opportunities for students to gain real work experience, which may contribute to their confidence when searching for employment opportunities. Students learn how to develop a resume, create an elevator pitch for introducing themselves, practice interviewing, and learn appropriate interview follow-up etiquette. Students are also encouraged to visit the career fair each semester so that they improving their networking skills.

The Trulaske program curriculum includes an organizational field experience whereby students work for a non-profit organization, governmental agency, or higher education department to develop professional competencies. Trulaske students also complete an eight-week internship to gain hands-on work experience. These things may contribute to the confidence of Trulaske students. One employer did express an interest in seeing students who had greater levels of confidence than he observed. All levels of business students, freshman through graduate student, attend the Trulaske career fairs and non-business students are allowed to attend the Trulaske career fair. This employer's may have seen all upper-level business students; however, other employers believed students exhibiting appropriate levels of confidence. Or this employer could have been meeting lower-level business students who had little to no exposure to the Trulaske professional development program curriculum or non-business students who do not take these courses.

Trulaske Program Elements

An additional finding from this study is that all participants in the study concluded that Trulaske students were well prepared with job search skills and behaved in a professional manner. The majority of them noted a difference between the preparedness of Trulaske students and students from other universities where they recruit and they attributed this to the professional development coursework the Trulaske students complete. The recruiters attend career fairs and hire students from other similar universities – large, public Midwestern universities with similar accreditation. That being said, there were recommendations by the study participants on ways in which students could improve. Improvements were identified in the area of connecting the student's

interests with the open positions of the company and the company's profile and culture

and teaching students to share more of their personal interests, experiences, and

aspirations with recruiters in the recruitment process. Recruiters also noted that students

should expand upon their work experiences and how their work contributed to a positive

outcome in the workplace.

Several recruiters indicated knowledge of the Trulaske Professional Development

Program. One stated that he liked that the program includes scheduling guest lecturers,

professional seminars with working professionals, and networking opportunities. He uses

these kinds of activities as a way to meet with students throughout their four years in

college, which allows him to better asses a student's fit within his organization. Another

recruiter stated that she believes that Trulaske students are more professional and

prepared for internships and full-time positions because of the Professional Development

curriculum including not only coursework but workshops, seminars, and company visits.

The Trulaske Professional Development Program includes a requirement that all

students complete an internship that is a minimum of 8 weeks long whereby students

work a minimum of 150 hours during the internship. Gault, Redinton, and Schlager

(2000) found that business students who completed internships found full-time

professional positions more quickly than students that did not intern. Gault, Leach, and

Duey (2010) learned that the majority of employers believe that internship help students

perform better once in full-time positions and that recruiters prefer to hire business

students that have completed internships. The Trulaske program internship requirement

is seen by recruiters as preparing students for full-time professional business positions

and could be a contributor to the increase in college-wide placement rates for Trulaske business students.

Implications

Practice and Policy

This research provides opportunities for the Trulaske College to modify their professional development program curriculum by changing the competency model, altering the way in which course content is delivered, and revising experiential assignments. Information was gleaned from the recruiters that may be used to improve the procedures for conducting the Trulaske business career fair.

First, the professional development program faculty should evaluate their professional competencies to determine if modifications are needed in the specific competencies used as the curriculum foundation. It is significant that the study participants discussed 12 of the 15 Trulaske competencies. The skills, attributes, and behaviors identified by the recruiters that were not contained in the Trulaske competency model should also be considered for inclusion in the curriculum. For example, should data analytics be added to the list of competencies for the professional development program, or should data analytics be added to the curriculum in other ways? It could be added as a course element in other required courses; a data analytics certificate could be developed, which would typically include four to five courses focused on different data analytics elements such as learning specific software, analyzing problems using data, and visualizing data; or a minor or major in data analytics could be developed.

Also the competency descriptions should be reviewed to address the overlapping content from multiple competencies, which may allow Trulaske to delete similar

competencies. The frequency in which the employers spoke of the competencies in an overlapping fashion should be considered by Trulaske faculty as they consider how and when they present the competencies to students. Trulaske groups the competencies in three different categories: emotional and social skills, individual performance, and inspiring others. This should be evaluated along with the employer comments to determine if the competencies need to be regrouped. Trulaske faculty should consider the process of course mapping to help determine if the courses contain the appropriate amount of content and assignments on the specific competencies which they want to emphasize.

Second, the Trulaske Professional Development program should attempt to gather information on recruiter perceptions of their students at the end of the internship and after their first year of full-time employment. Recruiters had difficulty identifying behaviors that would indicate students possessed specific professional competencies during the recruitment and selection process. By collecting data at the end of the internship, employers will have worked with students for a minimum of eight weeks, which should provide them more opportunities to assess the competencies of students. Some studies have found that the addition of competencies into the employment selection process has improved the ability of employment recruiters to positively identify and select candidates that perform well once hired (Lievens & Wesseling, 2015); however, the recruiters in this study stated that for some competencies, they were not observable until students were hired as interns or full-time employees. Collecting data on recruiter perspectives at the end of the internship will allow recruiters more time with students to properly assess the skill levels.

Third, the Trulaske Professional Development program should consider regularly obtaining data to determine skills, attributes, behaviors, and knowledge employers expect of recent business college graduates. This will help ensure the curriculum stays current with employer expectations. As the research evolves in the area of identified competencies for business professionals, the Trulaske program should identify what competencies are being identified as valuable by employers to help bridge the gap between what is being taught in their Professional Development Program and what skills, attributes, behaviors, and knowledge are expected for successful employment (Ingbretsen, 2009; Kemp, 2009; Stevens, 2007).

Trulaske faculty may also consider a broader approach to professional competency development. Currently, the competency model course content is contained in the Trulaske Professional Development Program and is not intentionally disseminated across the entire business administration curriculum. The data collected regularly from employees could be used to enrich all Trulaske curriculum. Additionally, the Trulaske Faculty could conduct course mapping across undergraduate business programs to determine which courses beyond the Professional Development Program courses currently include the delivery of the professional competencies and what courses might be a good fit for including the competencies. This would provide students with a more holistic approach to competency development.

Fourth, the Business Career Services Department should inform the employment recruiters of the elements of the professional development program so that they will understand the professional development coursework students obtain in the lower level (freshmen and sophomore) and the upper level (junior and senior) of their undergraduate

degree. Students currently receive competency development in the freshmen and sophomore years that focuses on emotional and social skills (self-awareness, self-control, establish relationships, value differences, empathy, and managing conflict). In the upper-level classes, students obtain competency development in the areas of individual performance (learning agility, critical thinking, decision making, teamwork, and achievement orientation) and inspiration (integrity, communicate effectively, influence others, and leadership). This will help recruiters assess students against the framework of the professional development curriculum.

Given that only one recruiter mentioned *competency model*, it may also be helpful to share the Trulaske competency model with employers so that they see the elements of the Trulaske Professional Development program. This may provide a framework for recruiters to more accurately evaluate the skills, attributes, and behaviors of Trulaske students.

Fifth, the Business Career Services Department which coordinates the Trulaske career fair could help manage recruiter perceptions of students by providing name tags for students that include on them the academic level of the student, the major area of study, and if a student has already completed an internship. This would easily inform recruiters of the amount of professional development curriculum that students have experienced so that they can factor that into their assessment of students' confidence levels.

Sixth, the Business Career Services Department should ensure that recruiters know that phone app exists for students that includes a map of recruiter booths, positions for which companies are recruiting, and organizational profiles. The app may perpetuate

a bias against the students who may be perceived as not making eye-contact and speaking to recruiters as they walk through the fair.

It was clear from the data that the study participants perceived the Trulaske students positively and as viable candidates for employment opportunities with their companies. The study also clearly identified competencies and characteristics that employers valued in all employment candidates and observed in Trulaske students.

Research

First, little research has been done on the identification of professional competencies for business professionals. The field of heath care has identified competencies that are necessary to ensure patient satisfaction, which is referred to as *good bed-side manner* by patients. These competencies in health care are used to inform curriculum of medical students. There is a lack of research on this topic in the field of business, and the Trulaske College was the first college of business to institute required coursework in soft skills development by undergraduate students.

More research is needed in the area of professional business competencies and how to develop them. The identification of the behaviors necessary to effectively perform a skill or competency is needed so that curriculum may be created to foster the development of these behaviors by undergraduate business students. Research that moves beyond the identification and observation of competencies and includes the description of competencies would help to inform business curriculum.

This research will not only be helpful for schools and colleges of business interested in using data to inform its curriculum, but it will also be helpful for working business professionals interested in creating training and development programs and

identifying supervisory and managerial practices that help to develop professional competencies.

Second, this case study focused on the Trulaske program and how employers perceive Trulaske business students. Several recruiters stated that Trulaske students are better prepared for the job search process, are more poised, and are able to engage with recruiters at a greater extent than students from other universities. To determine if the Trulaske Professional Development Program is contributing to this noticeable difference, future research should be conducted that allows for the comparison of Trulaske students and business students at universities that do not offer professional development curriculum.

Third, more extensive research is needed that will allow for the collection of data after employment recruiters have had greater exposure to students. This case study used the college career fair and interviews as the foundation for collecting data from recruiters on their perceptions of Trulaske business students. To gain more detailed information, research conducted at the conclusion of the eight-week internship and after Trulaske students have worked in full-time positions may provide additional data needed to understand how recruiters perceive the professional development competencies of employees that have received undergraduate coursework in professional development.

Fourth, research is needed to determine at what extent undergraduate students can develop professional competencies in undergraduate business courses. The Trulaske Professional Development program is designed to foster the development of professional competencies of undergraduate business students and does so by incorporating course content on the Trulaske competency model, assigning experiential assignments, and

providing opportunities for students to assess and reflect on their competency strengths and weaknesses. This assumes that competencies may be developed in a classroom setting. It also assumes that students do not already possess an adequate level of professional competencies when they enter into the program.

Fourth, as more companies adopt the use of competencies to provide a framework for assessing employment candidates, additional research needs to be conducted on how employment recruiters make the quick connection between the attributes and behaviors of candidates to determine who will be successful in their organizations. Breaugh (2009) asserted that recruiters spend less than one minute reviewing resumes. Employers who conduct college recruiting spend only minutes with students at career fairs to determine who they will invite to the next step of their selection process.

In an attempt to understand more about how recruiters evaluate employment candidates and make hiring decisions, often based upon little information and brief encounters with candidates, researchers in the 1980s began to evaluate employment systems in the context of Attribution Theory: recruitment and selection decisions (Harvey & Weary, 1981, 1984; Kelley & Michela, 1980); performance evaluation (Brown, 1984); leadership (Martinko & Gardner, 1987); conflict management (Baron, 1985); and decision making (Ford, 1985). A formal definition of Attribution Theory is provided by Fiske and Taylor (1991) as dealing with how the social perceiver uses information to arrive at causal explanation of events.

Weiner (1972, 2018) expanded upon the theory by positing that (1) people desire to know why events have occurred; (2) people ascribe a variety of broad or specific, vague or concrete, ability and effort or lack thereof to causes and events; and (3) causes

share similar properties and characteristics. In many subsequent studies, researchers have assessed how employment recruiters have evaluated employment candidates based upon their resumes, phone screens, interviews, and employment tests as they consider whether or not employment candidates will be successful if hired for open positions within their companies (Carless & Waterworth, 2011; Chen, Huang, & Lee, 2011).

As more research is needed in identifying the behaviors that create a foundation for professional business competencies, more research is needed in how Attribution Theory affects recruiters as they evaluate candidates in the recruitment and selection processes and base employment decisions on the competencies witnessed and observed. Does the use of a competency model by a recruiter, which includes identification of behaviors, improve the likelihood that the candidate fits the organization and performs to expectations once hired? If desirable employment behaviors are identified, which surpasses the identification of naming characteristics, does that provide a better foundation for which the recruiter will determine employability attributes and therefore improve their hiring decisions?

For the Trulaske Professional Development Program to continue to improve upon its curriculum to prepare students for the workforce, an understanding of how the social perceiver, the recruiter, uses information, resumes, and interviews to arrive at hiring conclusions is needed (Fiske & Taylor, 1991).

Conclusion

The Trulaske College of Business responded to feedback from recent alumni and employment recruiters in 2010 to provide additional education to business undergraduates in soft skills of management, or professional competencies. The purpose

of this study was to determine if participation in a professional development program makes candidates more desirable to employment recruiters. This study obtained employment recruiters' perceptions of Trulaske business students using a conceptual framework of the 15 Trulaske professional competencies and gathered information on what additional attributes, skills, and behaviors are valued by employers. This study also was conducted to inform the Trulaske Professional Development program if their original goal for implementing the professional development is being met.

The data collected indicates that employers identified professional behaviors exhibited by Trulaske students and that these behaviors were valued by the recruiters. Many recruiters expressed seeing a positive difference in Trulaske students and students from other colleges and universities where they recruit, which indicates that the Trulaske Professional Development program is meeting its original purpose.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A – Trulaske Competency Model

Appendix B – Competency Assessment Results

Appendix C – Placement and Salary Data

Appendix D – 360-degree Competency Assessment

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Appendix A – Trulaske Competency Model

Individual Performance:

ACHIEVEMENT ORIENTATION: A demonstrated internal drive to succeed and an expressed concern for surpassing a standard of excellence. The standard may be one's current performance, an objective measure, outperforming others, unique accomplishments, challenging and realistic goals one has set or been set by external requirements.

CRITICAL THINKING: A demonstrated understanding of a situation by breaking it apart into smaller pieces, or tracing the implications of a situation in a step-by-step process. Also involved, is the ability to identify patterns or connections between situations that are not obviously related, and to identify key or underlying issues in complex situations. This includes using creative, innovative, conceptual or inductive reasoning.

DECISION MAKING: The ability to use one's 'gut' and/or appropriate information to make sound decisions.

TEAMWORK: A demonstrated sacrifice for others; to work cooperatively with others; to enjoy shared responsibility and rewards for accomplishments; being part of a team and working together.

LEARNING AGILITY: The engagement in a continuous learning process by focusing on top-priority learning objectives; spends time each day on learning and development; reflects on both successful and unsuccessful experiences; is passionate about life-long learning and development.

Emotional and Social Skills:

SELF CONTROL: The ability to keep one's emotions under control and restrain negative reactions when provoked, when faced with opposition, or when working under stressful conditions. The ability to maintain focus and avoid distraction under continuing stress or after setbacks.

ESTABLISH RELATIONSHIPS: The behavior to build or maintain friendly, reciprocal, and warm relationships or networks of contacts with people; treats people with respect; maintains positive relationships under difficult situations.

MANAGE CONFLICT: The ability to handle difficult individuals, groups of people, or tense situations with diplomacy and tact. This involves coming face-to-face with the conflict rather than trying to avoid it. It entails focusing on the issues rather than the people and working to de-escalate negative feelings.

SELF AWARENESS: The ability to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, concerns and their effects.

EMPATHY: The ability to hear and accurately understand the unspoken or partly expressed thoughts, feelings and concerns of others; can pick up emotional cues from the other person; can appreciate not only what people are saying, but also why they are saying it.

VALUE DIFFERENCES: The integration and transformation of knowledge about diverse individuals, culture, and world views in everyday life.

Inspire Others:

LEADERSHIP: The ability to take on the role of leader in a group or team. It implies a desire to lead others. Leadership does not need to come from a position of formal authority. It is about bringing people together to get the job done. It is the ability to build a strong sense of belonging within the group, leading others to feel that they are part of something bigger than themselves.

INFLUENCE OTHERS: The ability to persuade, convince, or influence others, in order to achieve consensus or to support a given agenda; maintains open and frequent communication between individuals, groups, teams, and community organizations.

INTEGRITY: The demonstrated behavior that actions are consistent with what one says is important, i.e. walks the talk. He or she communicates intentions, ideas and feelings openly and directly, and welcomes openness and honesty, even in difficult negotiations. This also includes treating others in an accepting and respectful manner regardless of background.

COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY: The ability to articulate one's thoughts, concerns, ideas, feelings and knowledge succinctly. He or she understands and uses the appropriate channels for communication, i.e. verbal, written. The demonstrated ability to know one's audience (e.g. one person or more) and knows the right time to speak up.

Appendix B – Competency Assessment Results

The following sections are organized by skill set, Emotional and Social Skills, Individual Performance, and Inspire Others. For each competency, the scored results for freshman and junior students are presented item-by-item. The results are also aggregated by competency to provide an overall score for multiple choice items, true-false items, and both types combined.
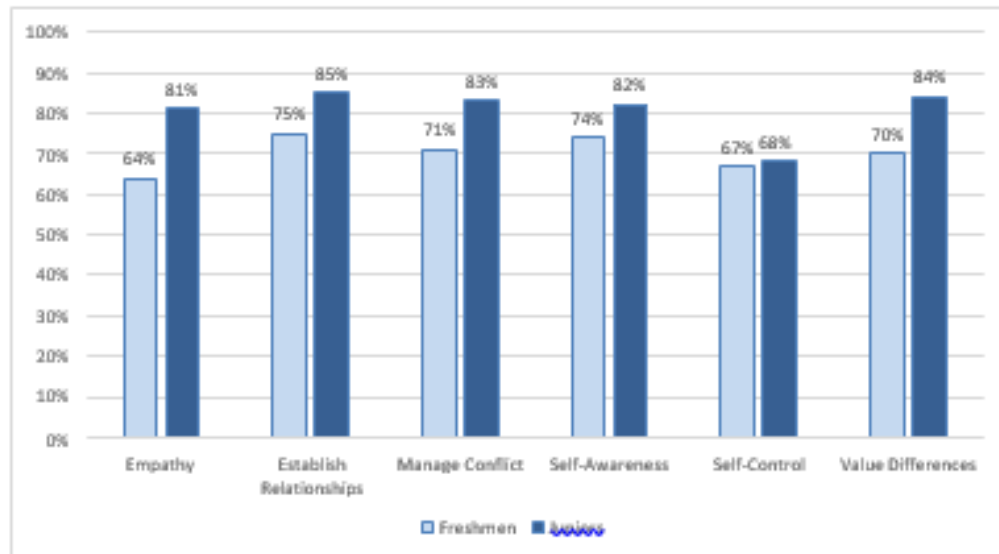
Emotional and Social Skills

Six competencies are included under the umbrella of Emotional and Social Skills:

- Empathy
- Establish Relationships
- Manage Conflict
- Self-Awareness
- Self-Control
- Value Differences

As shown in Graph 1, juniors who had just completed BA3500, answered a higher percentage of items correctly across all six competencies than did incoming freshman students. For incoming freshman students, the combined scores for each of the competency items representing Emotional and Social ranged from 64% to 75%; scores for juniors ranged from 68% to 85%.

Graph 1: Emotional and Social Skills: Percentage Correct by Competency

Tables 9 – 14 and their accompanying graphs provide more detailed results for each of the Emotional and Social Skills competencies, including item-by-item results and combined results for multiple choice and true-false items.

Appendix C – Salary and Placement Data

MIZ BIZ
Business Career Services

2017-2018 Facts & Figures

Placement Data

- 93.9% of December 2017 and May 2018 graduates reported at least one full-time offer, will be attending graduate school, professional school, pursuing a military or service career.
  *Data captured from 95.7% of December 2017 and May 2018 TCoB graduates

- TCoB average salary $49,445

- TCoB median salary $50,000

- 55.8% of TCoB graduates identified employment in Missouri followed by: Illinois 17.9%, Kansas 3.5%, Texas 3.5% and Colorado 2.2%

- TCoB graduates identified receiving full-time offers in 32 states, District of Columbia and 6 International Countries

Top Hiring Companies

Aldi	General Mills
Altria	Grant Thornton
Amazon	Hallmark
American Century Inv.	KPMG
Anheuser-Busch	Kraft Heinz
Arthur J. Gallagher	Liberty Mutual Ins.
AT&T	Monsanto
Boeing	NISA Investment Adv.
Cerner	PepsiCo
Commerce Bank	PwC
Cushman & Wakefield	Stanley B. & D.
Deloitte	Target
DISH Network	TEKsystems
Edward Jones	U.S. Bank
Enterprise	Veterans United
Enterprise Holdings	Wells Fargo
Ernst & Young	World Wide Tech.

Salary Data by Emphasis

- Accounting
  - Average Salary: $53,750
  - Salary Range: $39,000-$75,000
- Economics
  - Average Salary: $51,174
  - Salary Range: $35,000-$70,000
- Finance
  - Average Salary: $51,080
  - Salary Range: $20,000-$100,000
  -
- International Business
  - Average Salary: $44,938
  - Salary Range: $20,000-$63,600
- Management
  - Average Salary: $47,394
  - Salary Range: $24,960-$100,000
- Marketing
  - Average Salary: $47,208
  - Salary Range: $24,000-$80,000

By the Numbers

- 193 Companies attended the 2018 Fall Business Career Fair

- 44 Companies attended the 2018 Fall Accountancy Career Fair

- The 2017-2018 TCoB graduates averaged 1.5 internships

- 42% of TCoB graduates reported receiving a bonus with their FT offer. The average bonus was $5,550.

- 100% of BS BA students complete an internship

Business Career Services Contact Information

Office Location: 104 Cornell Hall
Phone Number: 573-882-6898 / 573-882-2565
Fax Number: 573-884-1198
Hours: 8:00 am – 5:00 pm
Email: recruiting@missouri.edu

Appendix D – 360-degree Competency Assessment

Overview

This report provides summary interpretation for a group of individuals measured against the Trulaske Professional Competency Assessment.

Data description

This report summarizes the results of 356 individuals. In addition to their self-ratings, this report includes the following perspectives:

- Leaders
- Direct Reports
- Peers

The responses were collected between 2/16/2015 and 3/30/2015.

How this report is organized

This report presents competency data in a number of ways, allowing you to identify the overall strengths and development needs for a group of participants.

Overview— presents a brief explanation of the data collected

Summary results— shows an overview of the strengths and development needs of the group by competency

Competency results by rater group— shows the perspectives of each rater group on competency strength

Highest scoring items— shows what the group does best

Lowest scoring items— shows what the group does least well

Item results by competency— shows the group's strengths and development needs in detail

Response rate by rater group

The table below presents information for participants who are included in this report. It shows the number and types of raters who provided feedback and the status of these surveys.

- The 'Distributed' column shows the total number of surveys sent out to each rater group
- The 'Received' column indicates how many surveys were returned at the time this report was generated
- The 'Processed' column shows the actual number of surveys included in the report after passing a reliability screen (surveys may be omitted if the designated threshold was not met, if a rater indicated a lack of familiarity with a participant, or if a low response rate might reveal the identity of a rater in a protected category)
- The 'Percent' column shows the final percentage of surveys that were included in this report compared to the number of surveys originally distributed

Rater group	Distributed	Received	Processed	Percent
Self	356	329	329	92 %
Leaders	472	361	361	76 %
Direct Reports	219	127	127	58 %
Peers	1,832	1,078	1,077	59 %
Total Others	2,523	1,566	1,565	62 %

A CASE STUDY OF RECRUITER PERCEPTIONS

Summary results

The summary results help you to understand the strengths and development needs of the group.

The chart below based on the Total Others' scores represents the degree of consistency with which participants in the group demonstrate each competency.

A check next to a competency indicates that it is a strength across the group; 75% or more of the participants demonstrate the competency as a personal strength.
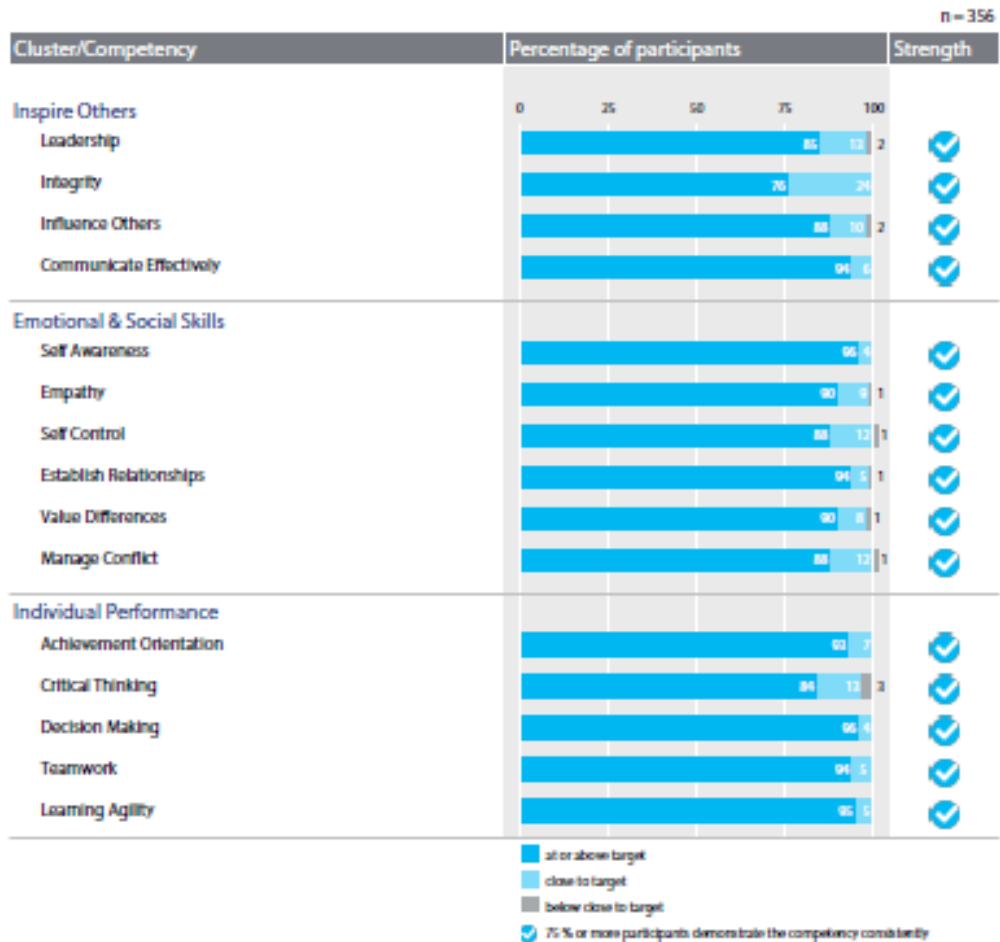
Competency results by rater group

The charts below show how the group is perceived, overall, by the different types of raters listed. Use these charts to focus on any perspectives that are particularly important to understand.

Total Others shows the average across all perspectives, excluding self ratings.

Leadership

The ability to build a strong sense of belonging within the group, leading others to feel that they are part of something bigger than themselves.
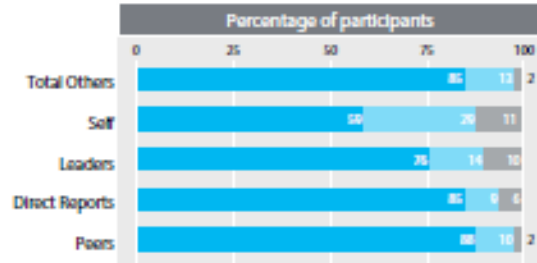
Integrity

Communicates intentions, ideas and feelings openly and directly, and welcomes openness and honesty, even in difficult negotiations. Treats others in an accepting and respectful manner regardless of background.
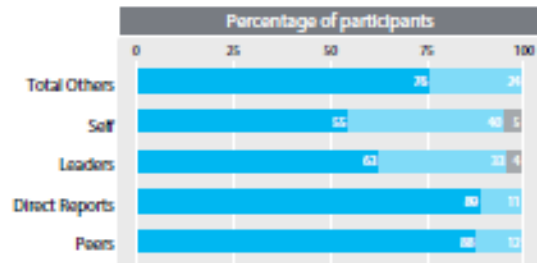
Influence Others

Implies an intention to persuade, convince, or influence others, in order to achieve consensus or to support a given agenda; maintains open and frequent communication between individuals, groups, and teams.

- at or above target
- close to target
- below close to target
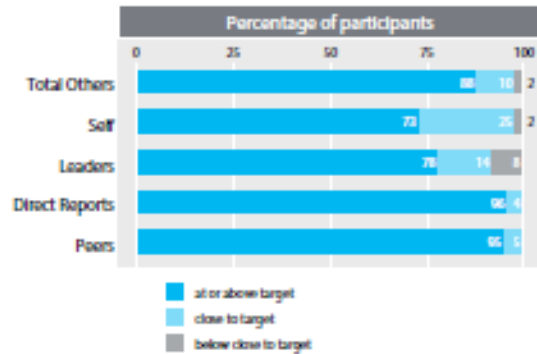
Appendix E – Trulaske Placement Rates

The Professional Development Program (PDP) appears to have caused an increase in the number of graduates placed in jobs at the time of graduation. This increase likely ranges somewhere between 21.9 and 34.7%. This relationship appears to be causal and not simply correlational. The first evidence of this is the timing of the graduate/employer relationship. An employer, on average, is not going to put students through an undergraduate program, but will rather look for students completing an undergraduate program to hire. Additionally, the methods used here remove much of the biases associated with labor market conditions.

The variable of interest is the percentage of graduates who reported having a job at graduation. This is averaged for the years before the PDP program had a chance to take effect (2003-2012) and the years after (2012-2014).

The table below shows the averages for Trulaske and its comparison groups (further discussion about who is in each group is found later).

Academic Years	Trulaske	AAU Publics(a)	AAU Publics(b)	MO Border	Peers
2003-2012	40.6%	39.6%	38.8%	31.8%	38.1%
2012-2014	66.5%	43.6%	37.7%	33.5%	29.4%

The graph below highlights the trends from which the averages are drawn. The thick red line highlights the divide before and after the first group of 4-year graduates would have finished having experienced the full PDP.
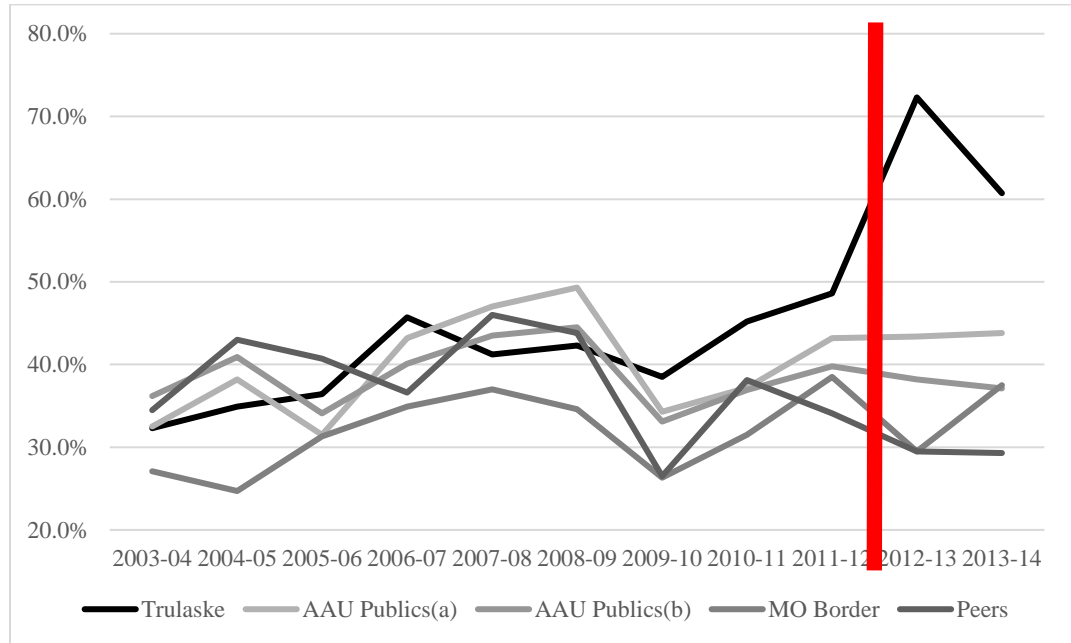
The Difference-In-Difference tables below show the average differences from pre-PDP to post-PDP and the differences between Trulaske and its comparison groups.

	2003-2012	2012-2014	Difference
Trulaske	40.6%	66.5%	25.9%
AAU Publics(a)	39.6%	43.6%	4.0%
Difference	1.0%	22.9%	21.9%

	2003-2012	2012-2014	Difference
Trulaske	40.6%	66.5%	25.9%
AAU Publics(b)	38.8%	37.7%	-1.1%
Difference	1.8%	28.9%	27.1%

	2003-2012	2012-2014	Difference
Trulaske	40.6%	66.5%	25.9%
MO Border	31.8%	33.5%	1.7%
Difference	1.7%	33.0%	24.2%

	2003-2012	2012-2014	Difference
Trulaske	40.6%	66.5%	25.9%
Peers	38.1%	29.4%	-8.7%
Difference	1.7%	37.1%	34.7%

Appendix F – Post-graduation survey

ALUMNI SURVEY

Recommendations and Perspectives

Recommendations for PDP

MS Office/Analytics Training

Business Writing

Job Search Strategy (non-CSO)

Current Employment

Future Considerations

Review of PDP

Most Helpful

Resume/Cover Letter Writing

Mock Interviews

Least Helpful

Dress for Success
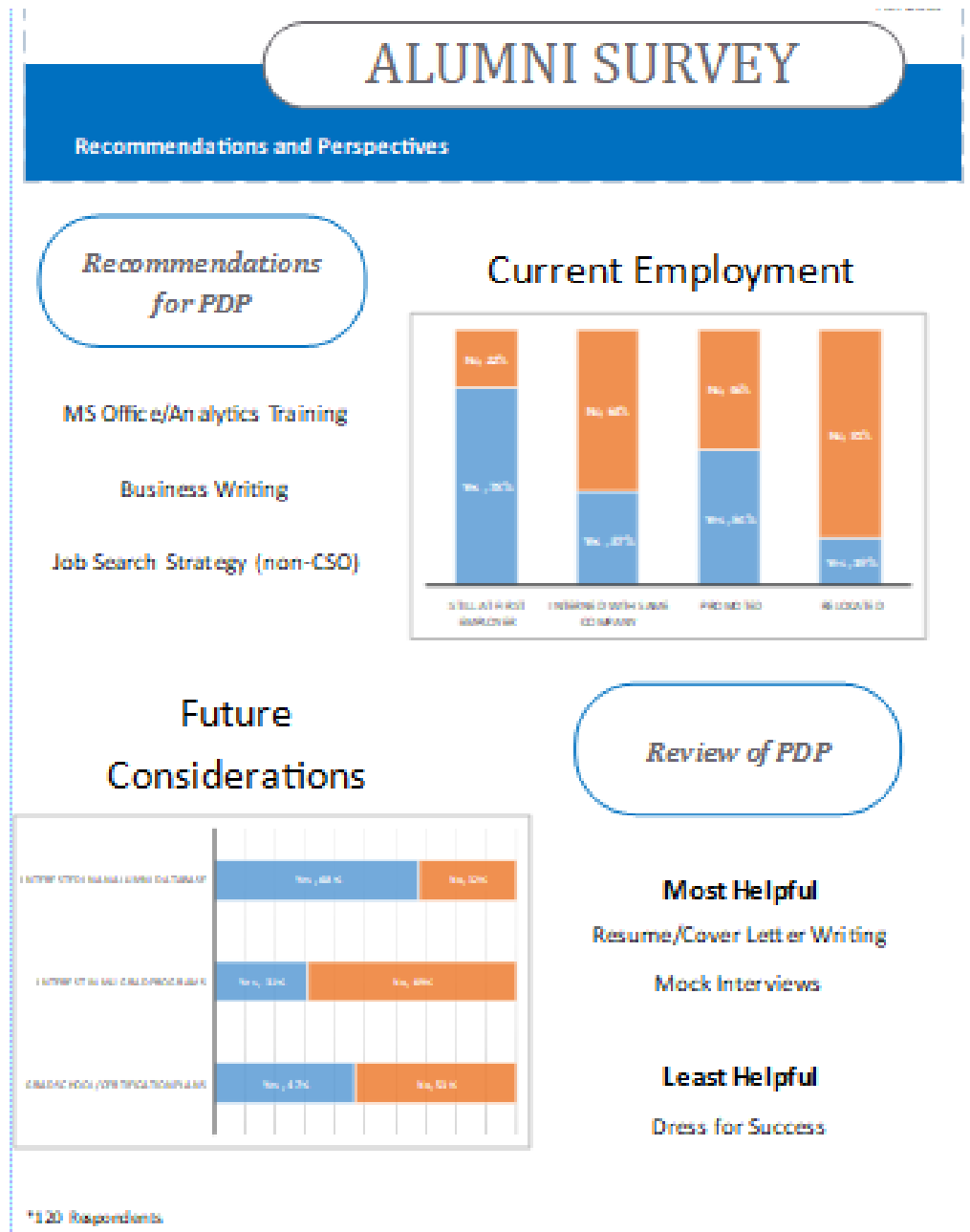
*120 Respondents

Appendix G – BCS Career Fair Recruiter Companies

Abstrakt Marketing Group
Adaptive Solutions Group
Advantage Solutions
Aerotek
Aflac
ALDI, Inc.
Altria
Ameren
American Century Investments
American Junior Golf Association
American Outdoor Brands Corporation
Anheuser-Busch
Apex Systems
ArcBest
Archer Daniels Midland Company (ADM)
AssuredPartners, Inc.
AT&T
Auto-Owners Insurance Company
AXA Advisors, LLC Kansas Branch
Bayer U.S. LLC
Beacon Hill Staffing Group
BMM Logistics, Inc.
BNSF Railway
Boom Lab
Boone County Fire Protection District
Bowlero Corporation
Buckeye International, Inc.
Bunzl Processor Division
BWI COMPANIES INC
Byrne and Jones
C.H. Robinson
Caterpillar Inc.
CDW
Centene Corporation
Central Bank of Boone County
Cerner Corporation
Cigna
Cintas Corporation
Coegi
Collabera

Columbia Safety and Supply / GME Supply
Commerce Bank
Consolidated Electrical Distributors, Inc.
Coyote Logistics
CREW
Cushman & Wakefield
Dayton Freight
DEG Digital
Deloitte
DHL Supply Chain
Dillard's, Inc.
DISH Network
Division-D
Dot Foods
E. & J. Gallo Winery
Echo Marketing Group
Ecolab
Edgewell Personal Care
Edward Jones Investments
Eight Eleven Group - Parent Company of Brooksource, Medasource & Calculated Hire
Energizer Holdings, Inc.
Enterprise Holdings
Ethos Group
EY
Falcon Technologies, Inc.
FCS Financial
FDIC - Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation
Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City
Federal Reserve Bank of St Louis
Freightquote
Gallagher
General Mills
GlobalTranz
Great Southern Bank
Grimco, Inc.
H&R Block
Hallmark Cards, Inc.
Heart of America Council, Boy Scouts of America
Hempstead Financial Group- Northwestern Mutual
HIBU
Hormel Foods
Hubbell Incorporated
Huhtamaki, Inc.

IES Internships
igus, Inc.
Imagenet Consulting
Imperial PFS
Independent Stave Company
Insight Global
J.W. Terrill, a Marsh & McLennan Agency LLC company
JCPenney
JES Holdings
Jimmy John's
KellyMitchell Group, Inc
KeyBank
KEYENCE Corporation of America
Kohl's Corporation
L.J. Hart & Company
LEAF Commercial Capital
Leggett & Platt
LMI Aerospace
Load Delivered Logistics
Lockton Companies, LLC
Major Brands
Marco
Mars, Inc.
Mediacom Communications Corporation
Medix
Menards, Inc.
MFA Oil Company
Missouri Solar Applications
Moneta
Morgan Hunter Corporate Search
MU Alumni Mentor Program
MU Department of Personal Financial Planning
MU International Trade Center
MU Leadership Conference
MU Office of Advancement
MU Summer Internships in France
Nanova Inc.
NextEra Energy, Inc.
NISA Investment Advisors, LLC
Northwestern Mutual - Clayton
Northwestern Mutual - Lee's Summit
OEC Group

Office of the Comptroller of the Currency
Office of the Missouri State Auditor
OneMain Financial
Peace Corps
Pella Corporation
Penske Truck Leasing
PepsiCo
Phillips Property Management
Public School & Education Employees Retirement Systems of Missouri
Randstad USA
Reinsurance Group of America
Renaissance Financial
Reynolds American Inc.
Rise on 9th Apartments
RubinBrown
Ryan Specialty Group
Save-A-Lot Food Stores
Schnuck Markets, Inc.
Securian Financial
Senior Marketing Specialists
Shamrock Trading Corporation
Sheer
Shelter Insurance
Sherwin-Williams Company
Signature Consultants
Sinclair Broadcast Group, Inc.
SMG (Service Management Group)
SPM Marketing & Communications
Spring Venture Group
Sprint
SS&C DST
Stanley Black & Decker
Starcom Worldwide
State Street Corporation
Stifel Financial
Sunbelt Rentals
SuretyBonds.com
Swank Motion Pictures
Synergy Wealth Solutions, a MassMutual Firm
Target Corporation
TEKsystems - IT Staffing
Textron Aviation

The America Group, LLC.
The Boeing Company
The Hershey Company
The Kraft Heinz Company
The Resource Group
Tortoise
Total Quality Logistics
Tower Loan
TOYOTA
Tradebot
Travelers
True Manufacturing
U.S. Bank
United Rentals, Inc.
United States Marine Corps Officer Selection Station - Springfield, MO
Veterans United Home Loans
Vivint SmartHome
Wallis Oil Companies
Walmart Corp.
YRC Freight

Appendix H – Informed Consent Document

Title of Study: A Case Study of Recruiter Perceptions

Principal Investigator: J. Gay Albright, 213F Cornell Hall, 573-882-2403, albrightj@missouri.edu

Background: You are invited to participate in a research study. Before you deciding to participate, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what the study will entail. Please read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if you have any questions.

The purpose of this study is: To assess competencies of Trulaske business students in comparison to students that complete business studies at universities that do not require professional development program content as perceived by employment recruiters.

Study Procedure: Participants were asked to complete an interview that will last approximately 20 to 45 minutes.

Risks: The risks of this study are minimal. These risks are similar to those you experience when disclosing work-related information to others. You may decline to answer any or all questions and you may terminate your involvement in the study at any time.

Benefits: No compensation were provided to the participants of this study. There were no direct benefit to you for your participation in this study. However, the information obtained from this study may be used to improve the undergraduate curriculum of its students specifically with regard to the professional development program.

Confidentiality: Every effort were made by the researcher to preserve your confidentiality including the following:
- Assigning code names/numbers for each participant that were used on all notes and documents.
- Notes and interview transcriptions were kept in a locked file cabinet in the personal possession of the researcher. When no longer necessary for research, all materials were destroyed.
- The researcher and the members of the researcher's committee will review the researcher's collected data.
- Each participant has the opportunity to obtain a transcribed copy of their interview. Participants should tell the researcher if a copy of the interview is desired.

Institutional Review Board: If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, or if problems arise which you do not feel you can discuss with the Investigator, please contact the Institutional Review Board Office at (573) 882-3181.

Consent: By signing this consent form, I confirm that I have read and understood the information and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without cost. I understand that I were given a copy of this consent form. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

Printed Name

_____

Signature _____ Date _____

Email Address _____

Appendix I: Interview Questions

Interview Questions
1. Please tell me about your history as a recruiter and your work experience in human resources?
2. Please describe your organization's recruitment and selection process.
3. How does your organization want you to evaluate candidates? What have you found to be helpful in referring to or keeping in mind when you evaluate candidates (anything in addition to what the company requires)? Areas to probe if not mentioned: job description, job analysis, competencies.
4. What is your process for assessing candidates from their resume, at the career fair, in an interview?
5. Are there skills/competencies that you think are important but are more difficult to assess in the recruitment process and do you approach that in a different way or just don't assess it pre-hire?
6. What specific knowledge, skills, attributes, and/or behaviors are you looking for when assessing job candidates?
7. How would you describe the preparedness of Trulaske students for your positions/organization? (Obtain examples and on soft skills and hard skills)
8. What knowledge, skills, attributes, and/or behaviors have you observed in Trulaske students? (Obtain examples on soft skills and hard skills)
9. How do you compare MU students to business students at other universities/colleges in the recruitment process?
10. Do you hire Trulaske students for full-time positions after they have interned for your organization? If not, why not? Is the conversion rate the same for other universities?
11. If you hire interns/full-time employees from multiple universities, do you see a difference in the professional behavior of MU students/grads compared to others?
12. What behaviors/skills would you like to see in college students that you hire? (Tie into Trulaske competencies if possible and obtain information on competencies not in Trulaske's PDP)
13. If you could make changes to our professional development program and strengthen our students' skills in one or two areas, what would they be?

Appendix J – Case Study Participants

Case Study Participants	Pseudonym	Gender	Age Range	Human Resources or Line Manager	Size of Company	Industry	MU Alumni
#1	Adam	Male	55-65	Human Resources	Medium	Banking	Yes
#2	Brent	Male	55-65	Line Manager	Large	Manufacturing	No
#3	Carla	Female	25-35	Line Manager	Large	Manufacturing	Yes
#4	David	Male	25-35	Line Manager	Large	Manufacturing	No
#5	Ethan	Male	25-35	Line Manager	Small	Finance	No
#6	Francine	Female	25-35	Human Resources	Small	Finance	No
#7	Grace	Female	25-35	Human Resources	Small	Finance	No
#8	Harrison	Male	25-35	Human Resources	Small	Finance	No
#9	Isaac	Male	35-45	Line Manager	Large	Manufacturing	No
#10	Jennifer	Female	25-35	Line Manager	Large	Manufacturing	Yes
#11	Kathleen	Female	25-35	Line Manager	Large	Manufacturing	Yes
#12	Laura	Female	25-35	Line Manager	Large	Manufacturing	No
#13	Mary	Female	25-35	Line Manager	Large	Retail	No
#14	Neal	Male	25-35	Line Manager	Large	Retail	No
#15	Olivia	Female	25-35	Line Manager	Large	Retail	No
#16	Paula	Female	35-45	Human Resources	Large	Real Estate	No
#17	Quincy	Male	25-35	Line Manager	Large	Manufacturing	Yes

VITA

Dr. Joyce Gay Albright is a professional in the field of educational leadership and management. She received her doctorate in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis from the University of Missouri in December 2019. She received a masters degree in business administration from Saint Louis University.

Dr. Albright serves as the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Programs for the Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. College of Business, overseeing recruitment, advising, Business Career Services, the Professional EDGE program, Business Administration courses, on-line course initiatives, and assessment. As Director of Global Initiatives, she also provides leadership for 10 study abroad programs, the MU International Trade Center, and academic programs in collaboration with international universities. As a co-founder of the MU International Trade Center, Gay represented the MU International Trade Center when it received the US Presidential E-Award in 2016 for Excellence in Exporting Services.

Dr. Albright is a member of the Trulaske Management Department Faculty and has been teaching undergraduate classes at the University of Missouri full-time since 2006, routinely teaching Managing across Cultures, Organizational Behavior, and International Business and developing students' cultural competence to prepare them to work in international business. She also teaches the Society for Human Resources certification exam preparation course, and her students regularly out-perform the national average pass rate.

Prior to joining the Missouri Training Institute at the University of Missouri, Gay worked in industry for 15 years and obtained Human Resources Management experience working for companies such as Colgate-Palmolive, The Dial Corp, and Arch Coal. In that capacity, she managed all functional areas of HR while implementing organizational redesign and continuous improvement strategies. She continues to work with employers by consulting on strategic development processes, human resources systems, employee training and development programs, and executive coaching.