## Academic Advising Strategies That Can Enable Job-Seeking College Students to Develop the Skills They Will Need to Be Hired, to Be Promoted, and to Keep Their Jobs

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill Category</th>
<th>Specific Skills Valued by Potential Employers During the Hiring Process</th>
<th>Specific Skills That Can Lead to Positive On-the-Job Consequences*</th>
<th>Specific Skill Deficits That Can Lead to Negative On-the-Job Consequences**</th>
<th>Strategies That Academic Advisors Can Share With Their Advisees to Enable Them to Develop the Skills Necessary to Gain Meaningful Employment and to Survive and Thrive in Their Places of Employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Communication (85)***         | writing  
• speaking  
• listening  
• reading                                                | presenting ideas well in written and oral form  
• ineffective verbal communication  
• ineffective written communication  
• failure to understand and follow written and verbal directions | It is crucially important for advisees to understand that people employed in the management positions to which most college graduates aspire must not only write and speak in a clear, coherent, and persuasive manner, but must also attend to, remember, understand, and act upon the information they read and hear.  
All students are required to take basic communication courses such as English Composition and Speech. Unfortunately, most students take these courses to "get them out of the way" rather than to learn from them. Advisors should urge students to take these courses very seriously, enroll in advanced courses in these areas (e.g., Technical Writing and Interpersonal Communication), and seek out classes in which they can strengthen their ability to read, listen, write, and speak (i.e., those requiring extensive reading assignments, information-rich lectures, demanding written assignments, and oral presentations).  
Avoid classes taught by instructors (a) whose classes are perceived as non-stressful because their subject matter is easy or that they do not require students to learn new skills, (b) who avoid classes taught by instructors (a) whose classes are perceived as non-stressful because their subject matter is easy or that they do not require students to learn new skills, (c) who do not seem to care if their students come to class late, leave class early, or miss class entirely. |
| **Critical Thinking and Research (78)** | applying information to solve organizational problems  
• using statistical skills to summarize, organize, and analyze data  
• finding, gathering, and organizing information from a variety of sources  
• creating new knowledge by integrating existing information | thinking analytically  
• evaluating data  
• remaining open-minded  
• being creative  | The best way for advisors to help their advisees develop critical thinking and research skills is to encourage them to engage in research projects that will require the following six critical thinking skills.  
The retention and comprehension of information about the subject of the research.  
The analysis and evaluation of the body of research upon which the research is based.  
The creation and testing of new hypotheses and the application of research findings to advance knowledge and/or improve the quality of human life.  
(Please note that research is defined here as any systematic and organized method of asking questions and finding answers to these questions. It is not limited to the research method(s) of any particular academic discipline.) |
| **Collaboration (74)**         | working effectively in groups  
• dealing sensitively and effectively with diverse populations  
• exhibiting various forms of leadership, including supervising, influencing, and motivating others | leadership (e.g., management skills, employee development, consensus building, and goal accomplishment)  
• organizational savvy (e.g., working well with others and adapting to new organizational settings)  
• followership (i.e., helping leaders accomplish their goals) | being ineffective in teams  
Advisors should make sure their advisees clearly understand that employers require employees to perform complex tasks that require teamwork; no one works alone and almost all teams are composed of different types of people.  
The skills necessary to be a productive member of a diverse team must be acquired through practice and the best place to practice these skills is in course-based group projects or extracurricular activities that involve working with groups composed of diverse members where mistakes are far less costly than in the work place.  
The worst thing students can do is to isolate themselves from diversity by living, working, and spending their time with only those people who are like themselves. |
| **Self-Management (53)**      | being flexible and adaptable  
• learning new skills and information  
• managing time, stress, and conflict successfully | setting priorities to regulate work  
• understanding quality indicators of work  
• managing stress successfully  
• behaving in an accountable manner  
• completing work on schedule | missing assignments or deadlines  
• being late for work  | The best advice advisors can provide is the following, which advisees with weak self-management skills will not want to hear.  
Intentionally seek out challenging courses whose instructors expect students to perform in the same responsible ways that their future employers will demand.  
Avoid classes taught by instructors (a) whose classes are perceived as non-stressful because their subject matter is easy or that they do not require students to learn new skills, (b) who reinforce procrastination and irresponsible behavior by accepting late assignments or allowing students to make up missed tests, and (c) who do not seem to care if their students come to class late, leave class early, or miss class entirely. |
| Professional (24) | • organizing, planning, and carrying out projects  
| • managing resources  
| • acting and dressing in a professional manner  
| • taking initiative (e.g., being self-motivated, volunteering for additional activities, and being a self-starter)  
| • displaying commitment and passion for the job  
| • demonstrating competence acquired during internships and co-ops  
| • displaying desirable professional attributes (e.g., being dependable, patient, flexible, reliable, and friendly)  
| • lack of motivation or work ethic  
| • failure to take initiative | • Advisors should encourage students to choose classes taught by instructors who have the same high expectations as employers, such as those who (a) help their students develop a strong work ethic by providing them with opportunities to work hard and receive high grades only for excellent work; (b) do not allow students to make up for low performance on assignments or tests with extra credit; (c) require students to create, plan, organize, and carry out complex projects; (d) promote professional behavior and appearance by modeling it themselves; and (e) do not tolerate the kinds of behaviors in their classrooms that are unacceptable on-the-job (e.g., texting, surfing the Web, or receiving cell phone calls; coming to class unprepared to participate; falling asleep, or behaving and dressing in a distracting manner that disrupts the learning process). |
| Technological (18) | • computer literacy  
| • word processing  
| • email  
| • technical competence | • inappropriate use of technology | • Although undergraduates often appear to be technologically savvy, advisors must make them aware that texting their friends, checking their Facebook page, and shopping online are not skills valued by employers. In fact, the presence of these actions on-the-job can lead to highly undesirable outcomes.  
| • Employers expect their employees to choose and use appropriate technological tools to identify, locate, acquire, store, organize, display, analyze, and evaluate verbal, numerical, and visual information. Therefore, advisors should urge students to enroll in classes that require (a) papers written with word-processing programs, (b) the organization of information with databases, (c) the manipulation of numbers with spreadsheets, (d) the analysis of data with statistical programs, (e) the location of information with search engines, (f) the enhancement of speeches with presentation software, and (g) communication with their instructors and fellow students via the Internet. |
| Ethical (9) | • the ability to make ethical decisions based on appropriate ethical knowledge  
| • the willingness and ability to act on these decisions | • unethical behaviors | • Although this was the least often mentioned skill by employers during the hiring process, it is a crucially important skill for advisors to emphasize because of the dire consequences for new hires who fail to demonstrate appropriate ethical behaviors on-the-job.  
| • Advisors should make advisees aware that job interviews can include questions designed to evaluate the ability to think and act in an ethical manner, such as “Tell me about a project you worked on that required you to be aware of and act in accordance with a set of ethical principles.” The only way to answer this question in a credible manner is to have actually participated in such a project.  
| • Advisors can recommend engaging in research projects that require the creation of IRB protocols, writing assignments that must conform to APA- or MLA-style guidelines that prohibit plagiarism, or internships that involve the solicitation of informed consent from clients who may be exposed to potentially risky treatments.  
| • It is also absolutely essential for faculty who serve as academic advisors to model ethical behavior for their advisees by being fair, honest, and professional with all of their students both in and out of the classroom. |

*Positive on-the-job consequences occur when supervisors promote new college hires or give them new assignments.  

**Negative on-the-job consequences occur when supervisors reprimand, discipline, or fire new college hires.  

***The number in parenthesis after each skill category represents the total number of times that category’s component skills appeared in Appleby’s (2009) meta-analytic data set.  

The information in columns 1 and 2 comes from: Appleby, D. C. (2009, August). The skills we believe psychology majors possess and the skills employers value in potential employees. In R. E. Landrum (Chair), *Essential work skills for psychology majors: Do out students actually acquire them?* Symposium conducted at annual meeting of the American Psychological Association convention, Toronto, Canada.  
