



# It Takes More Than A Major:

## *Employer Priorities for College Learning and Student Success*

Key findings from survey among 318 employers

Conducted January 9 – 13, 2013

*for*



*Association of American Colleges and Universities*

# Methodology

- ◆ Online survey among 318 executives at private-sector and nonprofit organizations that have 25 or more employees
- ◆ Each reports that 25% or more of their new hires hold an associate degree from a two-year college or a bachelor's degree from a four-year college.

# Key Findings

- ◆ **Innovation is a priority** for employers, and they report that the challenges their employees face today are more complex and require a broader skill set than in the past.
- ◆ Employers recognize **capacities that cut across majors** as critical to a candidate's potential for career success, and they view these skills as **more important than a student's choice of undergraduate major**.
- ◆ Employers recognize the **importance of a liberal education** and the liberal arts. The majority agree that having both field-specific knowledge and skills and a broad range of skills and knowledge is most important for long-term career success.
- ◆ Employers endorse education practices that involve students in active, effortful work and the **application of skills**.
- ◆ Employers express **interest in e-portfolios** and **partnerships** with colleges to ensure college graduates' successful transition to the workplace.

# Consensus among employers is that innovation, critical thinking, and a broad skill set are important for taking on complex challenges in the workplace.

■ Strongly agree with this statement about employees/future hires    ■ Somewhat agree

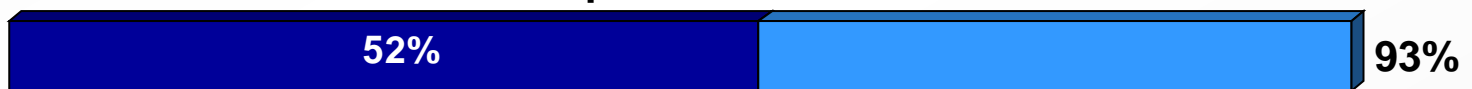
**Our company puts a priority on hiring people with the intellectual and interpersonal skills that will help them contribute to innovation in the workplace**



**Candidates' demonstrated capacity to think critically, communicate clearly, & solve complex problems is more important than their undergraduate major**



**Our company is asking employees to take on more responsibilities and to use a broader set of skills than in the past**



**Innovation is essential to our company/organization's continued success**



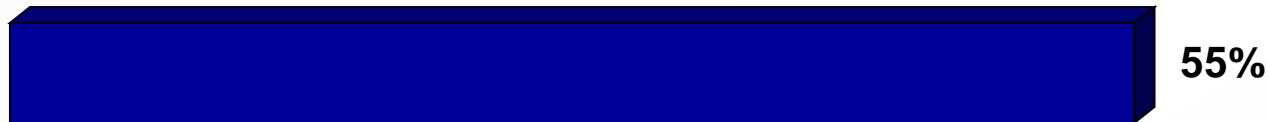
**The challenges employees face within our company are more complex today than they were in the past**



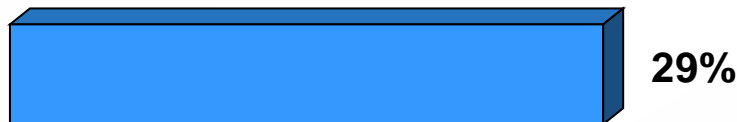
**A majority of employers agree that both specific knowledge and a broad range of skills are necessary for advancement and long-term career success.**

***Which is more important for recent college graduates who want to pursue advancement and long-term career success at your company?***

**Having both field-specific knowledge and skills AND a broad range of skills and knowledge**



**Having a range of skills and knowledge that apply to a range of fields or positions**

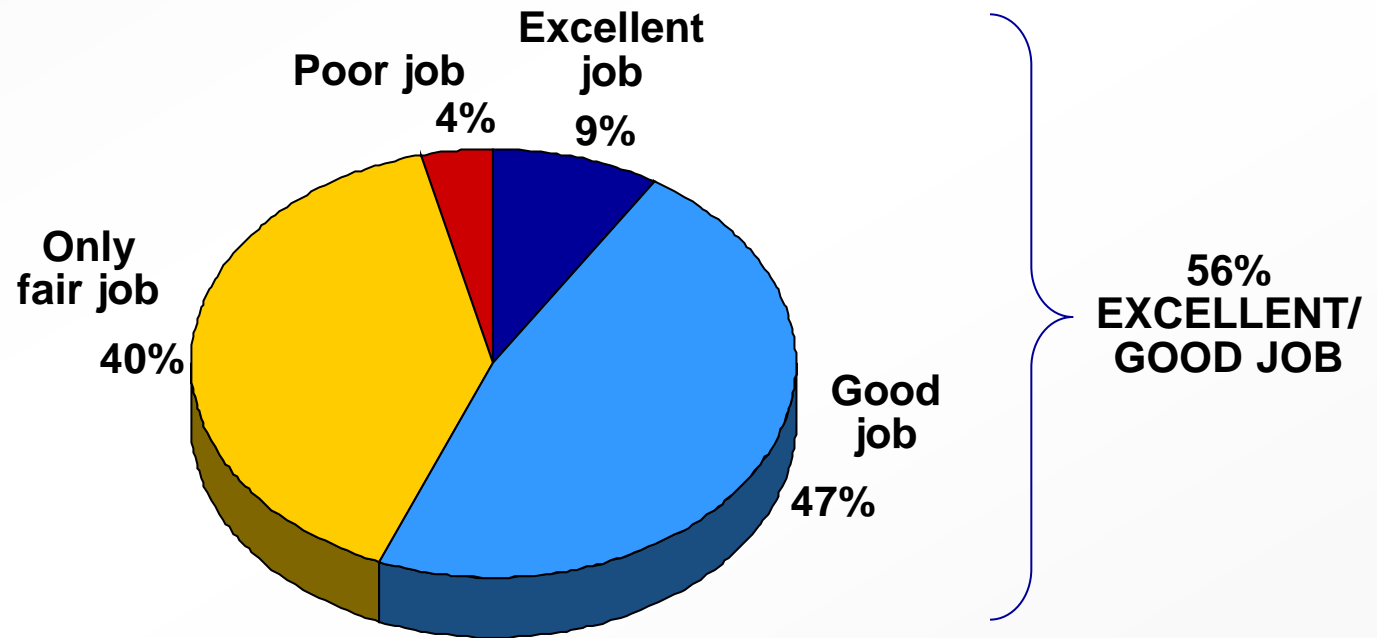


**Having knowledge and skills that apply to a specific field or position**



**The majority of employers think that higher education is doing at least a good job in preparing students for success.**

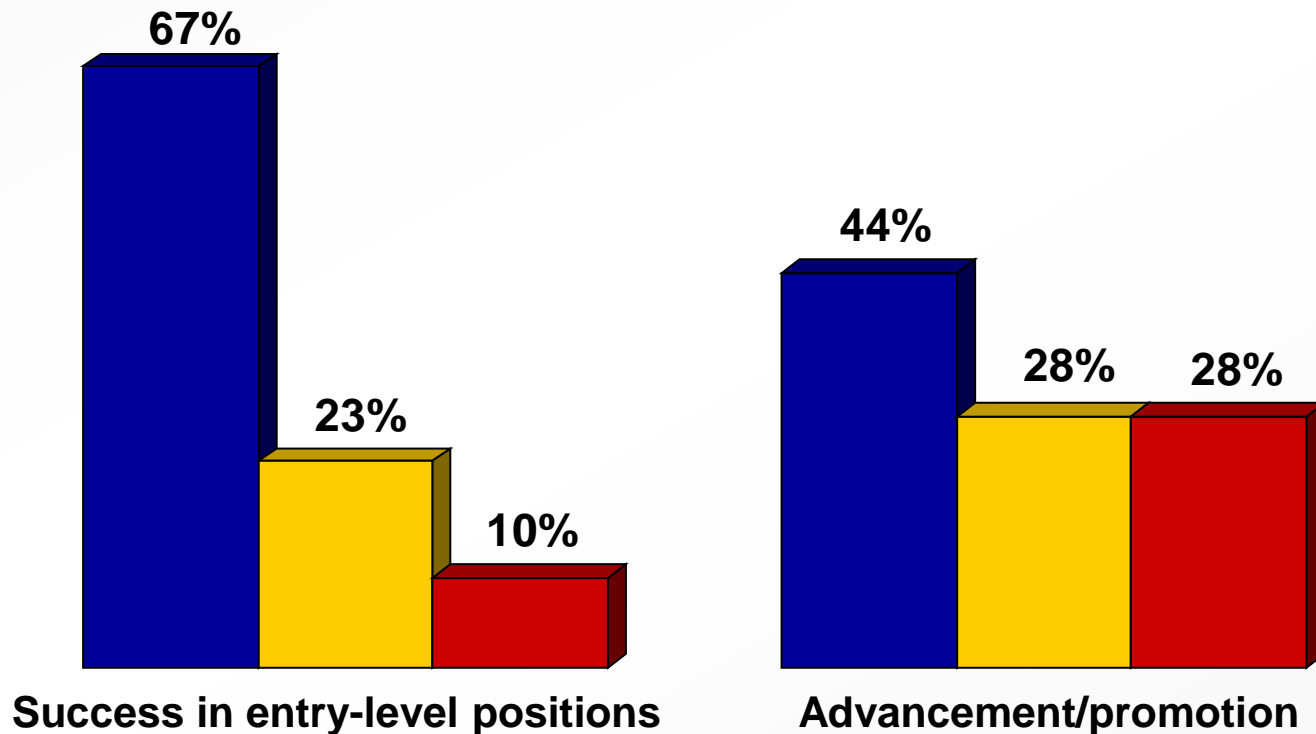
*Thinking about the economy overall, and not just about your own company or organization, how good a job do you think higher education is doing in preparing graduates to succeed and contribute in this economy?*



**Two in three employers believe most college graduates have the skills/knowledge to succeed in entry-level positions; they feel fewer graduates have what it takes to advance.**

*What proportion of applicants for positions at your company in the past few years possess the full set of skills and knowledge needed for this?*

■ All/most college grads    ■ About half of college grads    ■ Only some/very few college grads



# Employers value cross-cutting skills and qualities when hiring.

■ Very important that our employees have this quality/skill    ■ Fairly important

## Ethical judgment and integrity



## Comfortable working with colleagues, customers, and/or clients from diverse cultural backgrounds



## Demonstrated capacity for professional development and continued new learning



## Interest in giving back to the communities in which our company is located or those that it serves



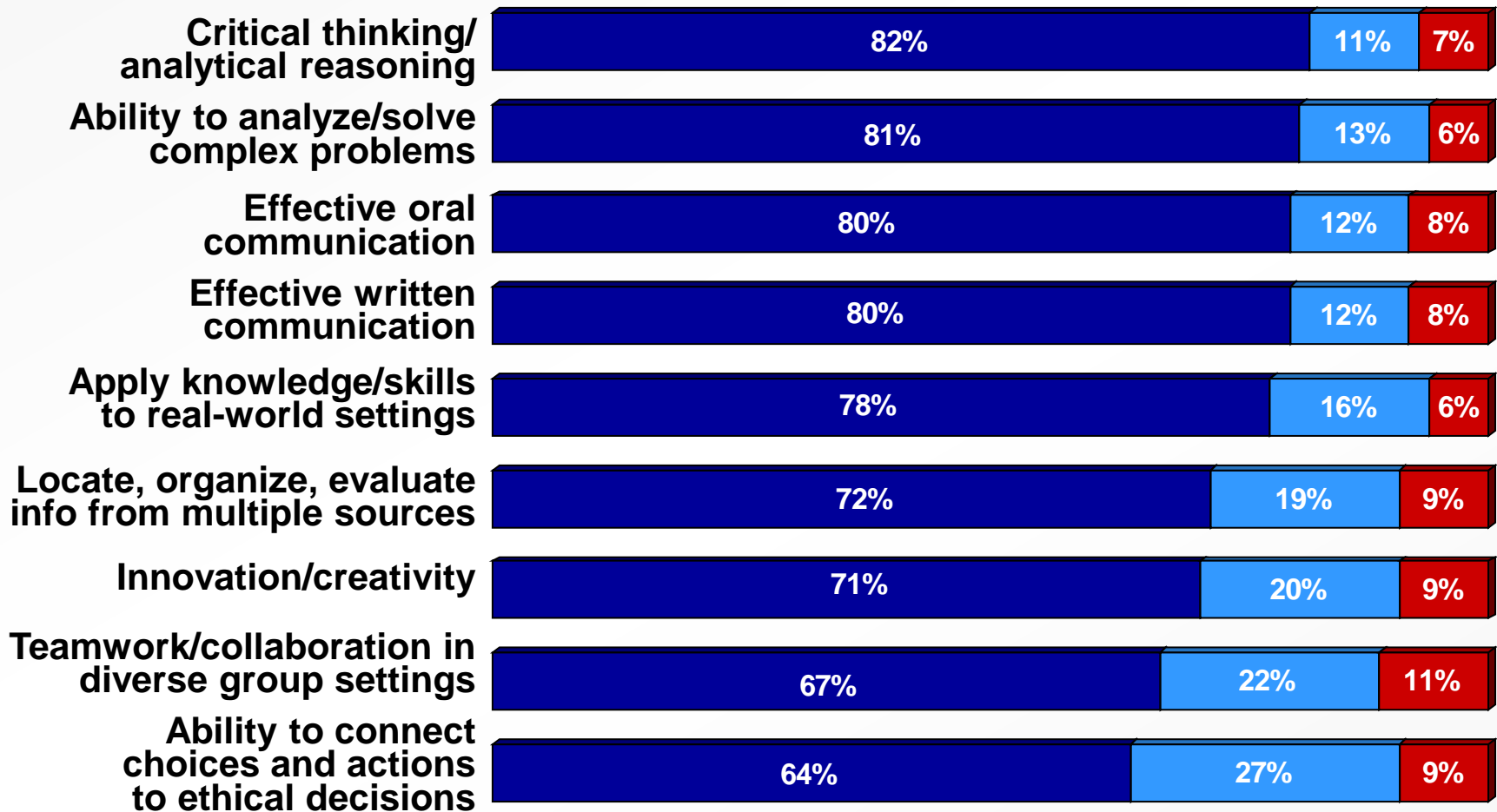
## Knowledge of global cultures, histories, values, religions, and social systems





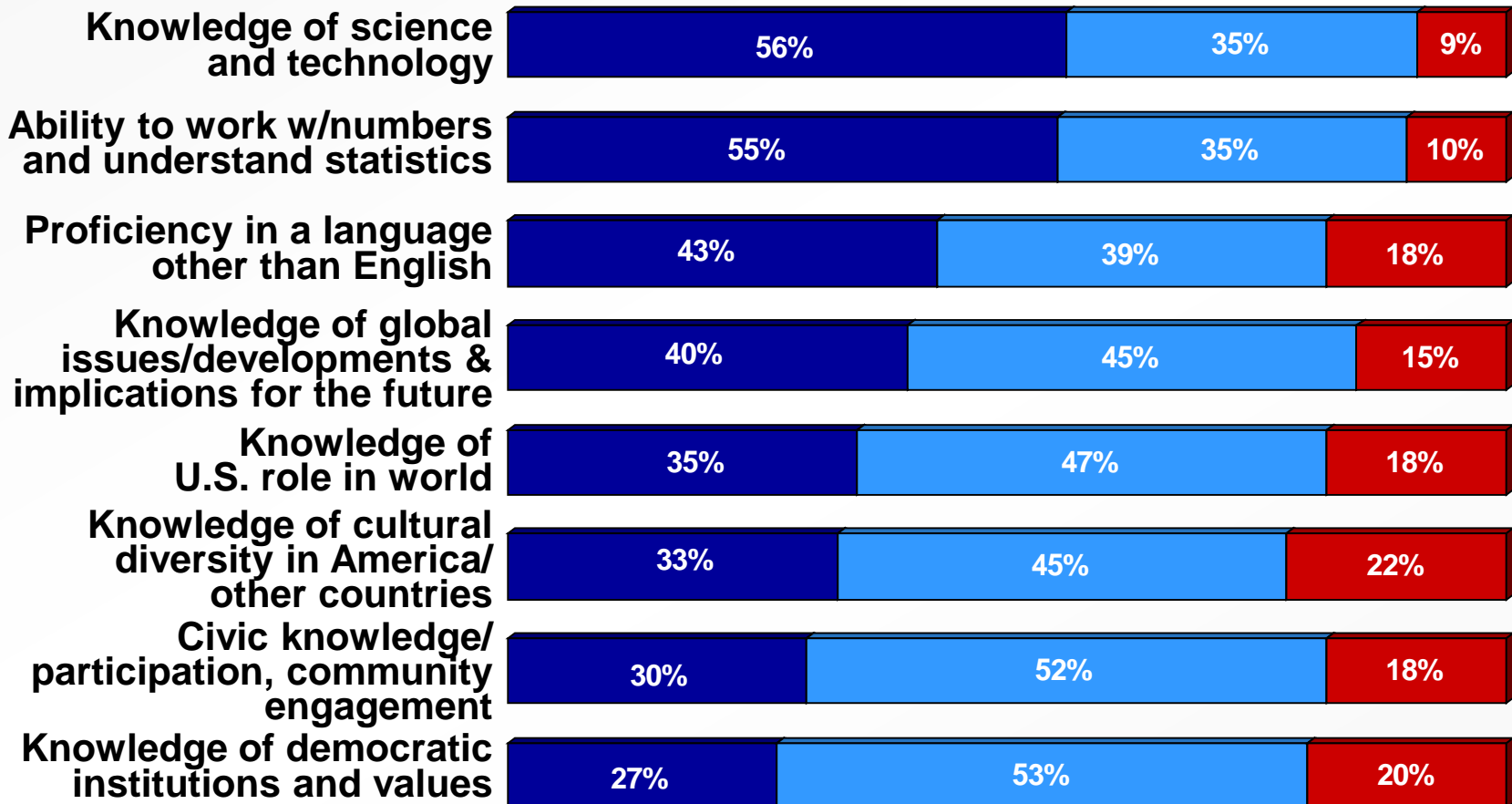
# Majorities of employers want colleges to place more emphasis on selected outcomes.

■ More emphasis than they do today
 ■ The same emphasis
 ■ Less emphasis



# Majorities of employers want colleges to place the same or more emphasis on other outcomes.

■ More emphasis than they do today
 ■ The same emphasis
 ■ Less emphasis



# Employers are in agreement with a broad set of college learning goals that extend beyond workplace preparation.

■ Strongly agree with this statement about the aims of college learning ■ Somewhat agree

All students should have educational experiences that teach them how to solve problems with people whose views are different from their own



All students should learn about ethical issues and public debates important in their field



All students should have direct learning experiences working with others to solve problems important in their communities



All should take courses that build knowledge, judgment, commitment to communities, ensure integrity/vitality of democracy



All students should acquire broad knowledge in liberal arts and sciences



All should learn about societies and cultures outside the U.S. and global issues and developments



# Employers believe a variety of emerging educational practices have the potential to help graduates succeed.

■ Will help a lot to prepare college students for success after graduation    ■ Will help a fair amount

Expecting students to develop the skills to research questions in their field and develop evidence-based analyses



Students complete significant project before graduation, demonstrating knowledge in major & analytical, problem-solving, communication skills



Students complete internship or community-based field project to connect classroom learning with real-world experiences



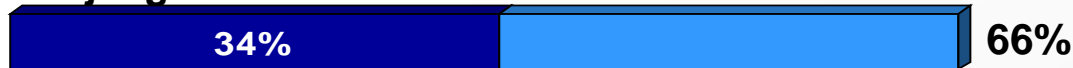
Expecting students to develop the skills to conduct research collaboratively with their peers



Students acquire hands-on experience with the methods of science to understand how scientific knowledge is developed

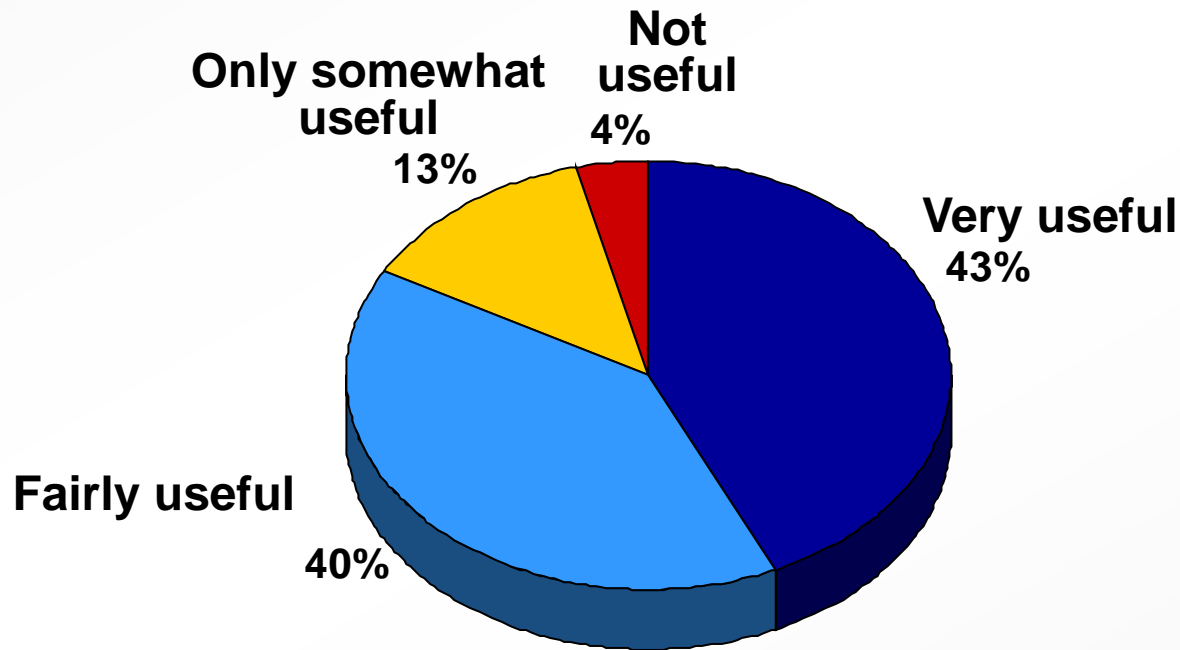


Expecting students to work through ethical issues and debates to form their own judgments about the issues at stake



**Employers say that an electronic portfolio of students' work and knowledge areas would be useful in evaluating candidates for hire.**

*In addition to a recent college graduate's résumé and college transcript . . . how useful would it be to see an electronic portfolio of student work that demonstrates accomplishment in key skill and knowledge areas (effective communication, knowledge in their field, evidence-based reasoning, ethical decision-making)?*



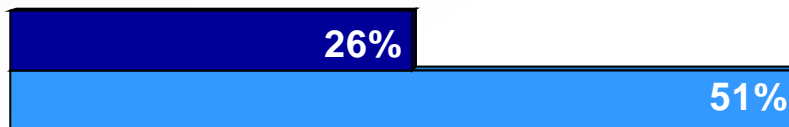
# A notable proportion of employers say that their company offers internships to college students; fewer partner with colleges in other ways tested but many express interest.

■ My company/organization does this    ■ Does not do this but have high/medium interest in doing

**Offer internships/apprenticeships in partnership with nearby college or university**



**Work closely with career services office of nearby college to help prepare students to transition into the workplace**



**Partner with two-/four-year college(s) in local area(s) to better align curriculum/learning outcomes with skills/knowledge you are looking for in new hires**



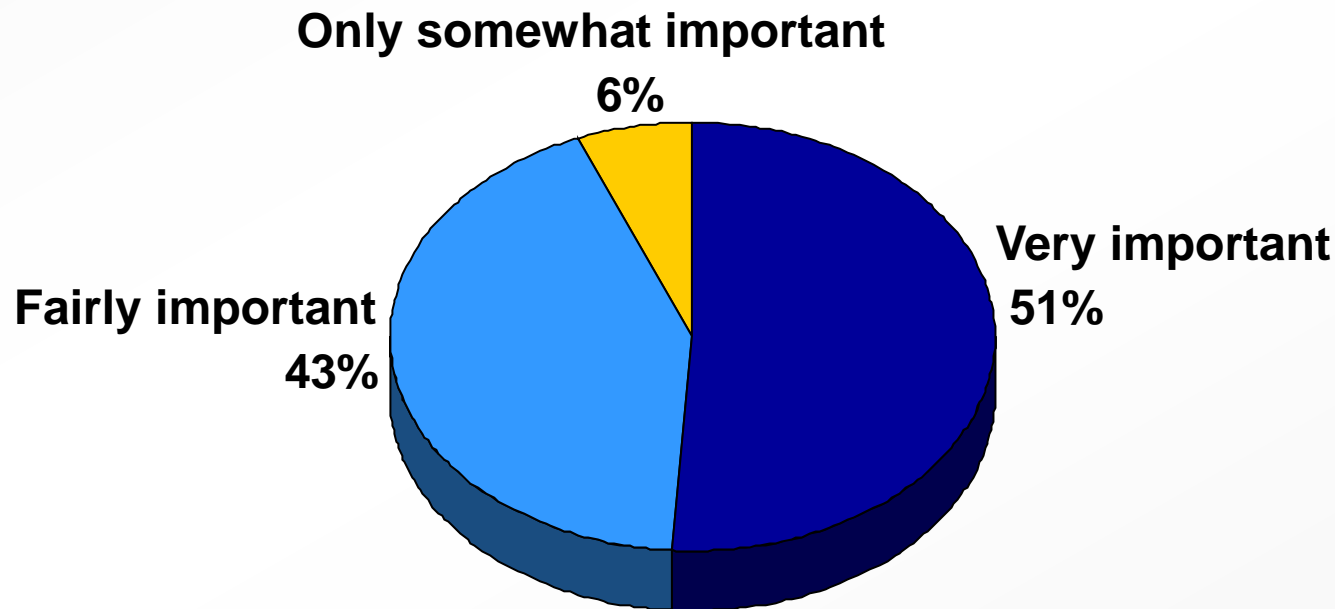
**Sponsor program at two-/four-year institution in local area to get students involved in more “real-world” or hands-on learning while they are still in college**



# Employers endorse the concept of a liberal education.

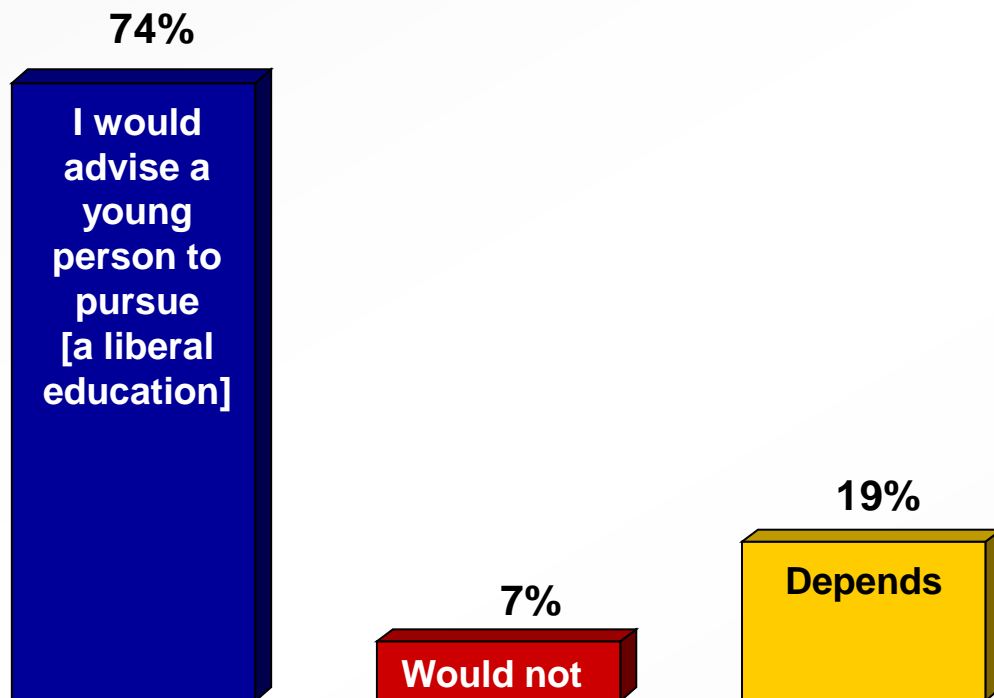
## *How important is it for today's colleges to provide this type of education?*

"This approach to a college education provides both broad knowledge in a variety of areas of study and knowledge in a specific major or field of interest. It also helps students develop a sense of social responsibility, as well as intellectual and practical skills that span all areas of study, such as communication, analytical, and problem-solving skills, and a demonstrated ability to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings."



# Three in four would recommend the concept of a liberal education to their own child or a young person they know.

*If you were advising your child or a young person you know about the type of college education they should seek to achieve in order to achieve professional and career success in today's global economy, would you recommend they pursue an education like the one described below?*



"This approach to a college education provides both broad knowledge in a variety of areas of study and knowledge in a specific major or field of interest. It also helps students develop a sense of social responsibility, as well as intellectual and practical skills that span all areas of study, such as communication, analytical, and problem-solving skills, and a demonstrated ability to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings."