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Employer Perceptions An Exploratory Study Of Employability Skills Expected Of New Graduates In The Hospitality Industry

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EMPLOYER PERCEPTIONS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY
OF EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS EXPECTED
OF NEW GRADUATES IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

by

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ABSTRACT

Graduate employability skills have become one of the most important topics on the higher education agenda in the first decade of the 21st century. In the United States, and throughout the world, global competition, growth of a knowledge-based economy, technological advances, and the multigenerational workforce have combined to substantially alter the contemporary workplace (Gedye & Chalkey, 2006). Whether by choice or circumstance, the expectation of a secure lifelong position with one employer and the opportunity for linear career progression are no longer typical nor practical in the contemporary workplace (Harvey, Locke, & Morey, 2002). Employability skills are those skills, attributes, and behaviors, e.g., communication skills, problem-solving, organization, and planning, that bridge most disciplines, industries, and employing organizations. They have the greatest impact on the sustained, productive, successful employment of graduates (Cranmer, 2006; Gedye, Fender, & Chalkey, 2004). The purpose of this study was to (a) identify the employability skills employers perceive to be important for entry-level management/management-in-training positions in the hospitality industry, (b) to establish employability skills competency levels employers expect for these positions, and (c) to garner employer perceptions of Rosen College of Hospitality Management (RCHM) interns' and new graduates' employability skills competence for entry-level management/management-in-training positions in the hospitality industry.

The findings add to the body of literature and provide insight into the need for further employability skills development of students prior to graduation and entrance into

the workforce. Additionally, the study provides information and insight for faculty,

career services, and experiential learning professionals regarding the skills students

currently possess, the need for further skills development, and those skills employers

deem most important.

"Other things may change us, but we start and end with family." Anthony Brandt

Dedicated with love to the Parker and Kleeman families.

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"*Education is simply the soul of a society as it passes from one generation to another.*" With this quote from Chesterton in mind, I extend my gratitude to my parents,

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

x

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Background

The employment of college graduates has emerged as a central issue for most

institutions of higher education as well as the employers and communities they serve.

Terms such as "knowledge economy," "globalization," "global economy," and "human

capital" pervade conversations regarding the contemporary workplace, signaling that

traditional means of preparing students for careers may not appropriately address the

shifting workforce and economic development imperatives of the nation (Porter & van

Opstal, 2001; Robst, 2007; Sandia National Laboratories, 1993; Shivpuri & Kim, 2004).

Furthermore, in the recessional economy of 2011, with unemployment at a record high,

daily layoffs, downsizing, business closings, and minimal open employment

opportunities, it has become more important than ever for most individuals to retain their

current employment (Robst, 2007; Uhalde & Strohl, 2006). The condition of the

economy and labor market has drawn increasingly greater attention to the issue of

graduate employment. However, this attention has also revealed what many employers,

and past graduates have long contended. The central issue regarding graduate

employment is not only in securing jobs for graduates but also in their preparation to

perform and excel once employed (Cranmer, 2006; Raybould & Sheedy, 2005). By

ensuring that academic programs, courses, and curriculum align to provide the required

technical and functional content, universities teach students how to perform the

responsibilities of the defined job. For example, accounting students take courses such as

financial accounting, taxation, law and ethics of accounting, auditing, accounting technology systems, and reporting, all of which provide the technical knowledge and skills to function as an accountant. However, there are other important aspects of the accounting role, and all other professions and careers, that, although less explicit and not contributing to the functional ability to perform the technical requirements of the job, are nonetheless imperative to being successful in it. Employability skills, often termed "soft skills" or "core competencies" are those skills, attributes, and behaviors such as communication skills, problem-solving, and initiative, that bridge most disciplines, industry, and employing organizations (Bridgstock, 2009; Gedye, Fender, & Chalkey, 2004; Harkin, 2003; Packer, 1992). Additionally, according to Cranmer (2006) and Nunan (1999), it is those employability skills that truly address on-the-job behaviors and performance factors that have the greatest impact on the sustained, productive, successful employment of graduates.

Statement of the Problem

Researchers (Cox & King, 2006; O'Neil, 1997) have indicated that entering the professional workplace without the expected employability skills often leads to limited promotional opportunities, job hopping, underemployment, and unemployment. All of these conditions further impact the graduates' earning potential and long-term career prospects. The repercussions of the "skills gap" have not been limited to graduates, however. Employers experience substantial financial burdens and lost productivity due to the need for extensive staff training, poor performance, and turnover. Similarly, higher

2

education also suffers the effects of graduates' poor workplace performance evaluations which damage institutional reputations and erode employer interest in recruiting an institution's graduates.

Cranmer (2006) stated, "Dating back to 1989 there has been a steady stream of reports and papers urging the higher education sector to take key, core, transferable and employability skills into the heart of students' learning experience" (p. 172). Two decades later, contemporary researchers (Cox & King, 2006; Cranmer, 2006; Gedye et al., 2003; Holmes, 1991, 2001; Tas, 1983, 1988) echoed the same sentiment, indicating that the skills gap continued to exist and represented an ongoing disconnect between employer expectations and postsecondary institutions' preparation of graduates (Moreau & Leathwood, 2006).

Institutions of higher education dedicate four, and often more, years to the education, guidance and development of individual students. Under the assumption that they have fully equipped graduates for a lifetime of accomplishment and fulfillment both professionally and personally, institutions release these graduates into the "real" world and, for many, into their first professional career experience. However, graduates possessing the technical skills to fulfill the functional responsibilities of their positions, but lacking requisite employability skills, quickly realize that they are not equipped to deal with the realities of the workplace (Crawford, Brungardt & Maughan, 2000; Gewertz, 2007; Tomlinson, 2007).

Although academic colleges may have excelled in imparting theoretical, subject, and technical knowledge in their disciplines and career services may have prepared

students to execute job searches, few institutions have committed resources to employability skills development. Students have often not received guidance on how to keep, and succeed in, their new employment positions (Cranmer, 2006; Harkin, 2003; Wise, Chia, & Rudner, 1990).

Thus, it was evident that employability skills development is an important concern for higher education and the workplace. Further, it was apparent that additional study was necessary to uncover and clarify the situation, especially considering employers' perceptions as to required employability skills and performance expectations.

Significance of the Problem

Employability skills of graduates are one of the most important topics on the higher education agenda in the 21st century. In the United States, and throughout the world, global competition, growth of knowledge-based economy, technological advances, and the multigenerational workforce have combined to substantially alter the contemporary workplace (Dunne & Rawlins, 2000; Gedye & Chalkey, 2006). As opined by Overtoom in 2000, "the volume of major studies undertaken in the past two decades to identify and describe employability skills underscores their criticality" (p. 2). Today's organizations are going lean by trimming staff and less productive units, and at the same time accelerating operations to respond to globalization, technology, and competitive pressures (Arnold et al.; Bridgstock, 2009). As organizations flatten and vertical hierarchies have diminished in the professional workplace, the concept of career progression has evolved (Cappelli, 1996; Friedman, 2006; Loscertales, 2007). Thus,

whether by choice or circumstance, the expectations of secure, lifelong positions with one employer and the opportunities for linear career progression have become unrealistic (Harvey, Locke, & Morey, 2002; Robst, 2007; Sandia National Laboratories, 1993). This is appreciated in the shift from the concept of job security to that of employability security. Employability security does not reside in the position one holds but in the premise, and promise, that one has the skills needed to quickly adapt to a new position, workplace, employer or industry, as opportunity dictates (Bridgstock, 2007; Butterwick & Benjamin, 2006; Miranda, 1999). The global recession and record levels of unemployment have resulted in significant competition for the scant open employment opportunities. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, unemployment hit 11.6 million in January 2009 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2009). In this environment, it has become essential that graduates possess both the technical and employability skills required by prospective employers.

As access to postsecondary education has expanded, researchers have shown that the primary motivation for students to attend college is to realize better employment opportunities and compensation (Chung-Herrera, Enz, & Lankau, 2003; Coplin, 2003; Green, Hammer, & Star, 2009). Additionally, as governmental and personal funding of higher education has grown, so, too, have the demands of constituents for greater institutional accountability regarding the use of funds and graduate outcomes (McQuaid (2006). For these reasons, the study of employability skills and employment of graduates was of paramount interest for further study (Duzer, 2006; U.S. Department of Education, 1983).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into the employability skills of the new graduates of the University of Central Florida (UCF) Rosen College of Hospitality Management (RCHM) and to determine if the graduates were prepared to meet the expectations of hospitality industry employers in the professional workplace. Employers who recruited RCHM students for internships and new graduates for entry-level management/management-in-training positions were asked to identify skills important in the workplace and evaluate students' employability skills.

More specifically, the multiple purposes of the study were: to (a) identify the employability skills employers perceive to be important for entry-level management/management-in-training positions in the hospitality industry, (b) to establish employability skills competency levels employers expect for these positions, and (c) to garner employer perceptions of Rosen College of Hospitality Management (RCHM) interns' and new graduates' employability skills competence for entry-level management/management-in-training positions in the hospitality industry.

Ultimately, it was expected that the information generated in this study would reveal opportunities to better align curricular/co-curricular program content with the performance expectations of employers. Furthermore, the study had the potential to reveal information to assist graduates in making more successful transitions to the professional workplace.

Research Questions

The research questions enumerated below were addressed in this study. The employability skills considered in this study include communication, work culture, leadership, professional qualities (ethics and self-management), teamwork, conceptual/analytic skills, learning theory and practice, and organization/planning. What employability skills do employers perceive to be important for entry-level management/management-in-training positions in the hospitality industry?

1. What employability skills competency levels do employers expect for entry-level management/management-in-training positions in the hospitality industry?

2. To what extent do employers perceive Rosen College of Hospitality Management interns and new graduates to demonstrate the employability skills competence expected for entry-level management/management-in-training positions in the hospitality industry?

Conceptual Framework

As conceptualized by social scientists, identity is a dynamic process of formation and reformation as one travels through life (Boyer, 1996). Numerous theories were reviewed in arriving at a conceptual framework for the present study. Included were Becker and Schultze's Human Capital Theory (Schofer & Meyor, 2005), Parson's Functionalist Approach (Yorke & Knight, 2006), Weber's Theories of Transactional and

Transformational Leadership (Senge, 1990), and Goleman's Theory of Emotional

Intelligence (Goleman, 2006).

Two theories were selected to serve as the conceptual frames for this study:

Chickering's Theory of Student Development (Chickering, 1969; Chickering & Reisser,

1993) and Holmes' Graduate Identity Approach (Holmes, 2001). The concept of identity

development most accurately aligned with the context and intent of this study as higher

education is recognized as an environment that fosters and contributes to an individual's

sense of identity as a student and a graduate (Bowen, 1997; Chickering & Reisser, 1993;

Holmes, 2001). Therefore, concept of identity for both the student and graduate based on

Chickering's Theory of Student Development and Holmes' Graduate Identity Approach,

respectively, served as the frame for this study.

Student Identity Formulation

In considering employability skills development of students, Chickering's Theory

of Student Development (1969) serves as an appropriate conceptual frame. In the theory,

the interplay of intellectual growth and varied dimensions of psychosocial development

contribute to the formulation of student identity (Chickering, 1969). Chickering's theory

was especially relevant to this study for several reasons. First, the theory espouses the

value of holistic student development, recognizing the interdependence of intellectual and

psychosocial development and its contribution to the success of students. In this study, it

is employability skills development, i.e., psychosocial and cognitive competencies, being

explored because employers consider these skills more important than intelligence or

discipline-specific knowledge to graduate performance in the workplace (Bowen, 1997; Boyer, 1996, 1987; Chickering, 1969; Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Second, Chickering (1993) reasoned that much of the learning and development that contribute to students' identity formulation occurs through experience and practice outside of classrooms. As such, he acknowledged that experiential learning, a forum for this study, is a program that fosters student growth and maturation (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Dewey, 1916).

Graduate Identity Formulation

In considering the employability skills of graduates, the Graduate Identity Approach as proposed by Holmes (1999, 2000, 2001), serves as a conceptual frame. The Graduate Identity Approach focuses on the transitional phase from student to employee during which the previously established student identity is somewhat deconstructed and replaced by a graduate identity (Holmes, 2001). In a state of social limbo, the only stable, defined criteria to which graduates can relate are those ascribed to their degrees. However, according to Holmes (1999, 2000), it is only through affirmation of those credentials by employers that meaning and legitimacy are awarded to graduates and their identities are established. The affirmation of the employer may be granted after witnessing the graduate "practice" the skills or as a value judgment of potential based on an interview (Holmes, 2001, 2000; Holmes, Green, & Egan, 1998). As such, the Graduate Identity Approach provides a rationale for engaging employers in curricular and co-curricular program design to accurately reflect the defined knowledge, skills, and abilities expected of graduates by virtue of the degrees they hold.

9

The Graduate Identity Approach was particularly meaningful to this study for several reasons. First, it has been recognized that a central issue in the debate between higher education and employers relates to skills needed in the workplace and the extent to which graduates possess them when they enter the workforce. According to the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) (2008) in its study of critical skill needs and resources in the workplace,

> employers have not clearly stated the skills and capabilities they desire and the US educational system is not producing the quantity and quality of graduates needed. Understanding what employers need is imperative for making useful recommendations or changes to US education policy and curriculum in order to produce graduates that are well equipped for the workplace (Society for Human, 2008, p. 8).

This approach may inform on these challenges and reveal opportunities to mitigate the disagreement. Second, the approach, which speaks to the value of experiential learning opportunities, addresses the need for practice to demonstrate skill acquisition. An experiential learning opportunity allows students to practice and have their emerging graduate identities evaluated prior to graduation. This formative evaluation provides students with opportunities to address or redress skills that do not meet employers' workplace expectations (Holmes, 2001, 2000; Holmes et al., 1998). A primary reason for conducting this study within a hospitality management program was the consistent commitment of those in the hospitality field to experiential learning (Dittman, 1997; Sigala & Baum, 2003; Walker, 2007, 2004). Further, partnering with experiential learning in this study was intended to improve the alignment of the institution's model. The Graduate Identity Approach of experience/practice, evaluation,

reflection, and attention to further learning and development, encouraged the researcher in her belief that the study findings and proposed interventions would be given serious consideration in addressing any skills gaps identified. In summary, the concepts of identity formulation, specific to students and graduates, combine to serve as an appropriate framework upon which to build this study.

<div align="center">Definitions of Terms</div>

Competence: As defined for the 5-point Likert-type scale used on the study instrument regarding level of skill ability, competence refers to one who demonstrates an adequate capability in performing the skill.

Employability Skills: The term employability skills is synonymous with the terms of transferable skills, core competencies, soft skills, non-technical skills, interpersonal skills, and refers to a set of skills, knowledge, and personal values that positively impact an individual's ability to gain employment, succeed, and advance professionally. These core competencies, beyond subject and technical knowledge and skills, are required in the contemporary workplace and influence career success and satisfaction (Bok, 2006; Gedye et al., 2004; U.S. Department of Labor, 1991). For the purpose of this study, the following skills on which the survey instrument was focused are: communication, conceptual/analytic skills, professional qualities (ethics and self-management), work culture, teamwork, organization/planning, learning theory and practice, and leadership (Pacheco & UCF, 2008).

Employers: Employers are immediate supervisors or other human resources/recruiting staff member responsible for selecting, hiring, supervising, and evaluating the internship students or graduates.

Experiential Learning: Experiential Learning is a model of education in which the learner begins with an experience, follows it with reflection, develops a theory to explain the experience, and finally, tests this theory in new situations (Holmes, 2001; Kolb, 1984). Specifically, experiential learning is a partnership between students, faculty, and the community that promotes development of student professional, personal, and academic skills in an applied learning environment (Dyer & Schumann, 1993). Experiential Learning includes cooperative education, internships, service-learning, externships, job shadowing, practicum, and service-learning (UCF Office of Experiential Learning, n.d.). Within this study, the terms experiential learning, internship, and cooperative education/co-op may be assumed to refer to the same activity/program, unless otherwise specified.

Expert: As defined for the 5-point Likert-type scale used on the study instrument regarding level of skill ability, expert refers to one who demonstrates a consummate command in performing the skill.

Functional/Technical Skills: Functional/Technical Skills are defined as those skills specific to fulfilling the prescribed discipline-specific requirements of a position. Examples include a marketing manager knowing what topics are addressed in a marketing plan, a hotel front office manager knowing how to calculate average room rate,

and a restaurant manager establishing menu pricing using cost analysis (Casner-Lotto, Rosenblum, & Wright, 2009; Gewertz, 2007).

Globalization: Globalization refers to the integrated economy characterized by free exchange/trade between world markets (Friedman, 2006; Uhalde & Strohl, 2006).

Graduates/New Graduates: Graduates/New Graduates are defined as baccalaureate degree recipients who are seeking their first professional employment experience upon graduation.

Hospitality Industry: Hospitality is a service industry divided into sectors including lodging, food and beverage, conference, meeting, and events, recreation, travel and tourism, and transportation. The hospitality industry is a multi-billion dollar a year enterprise (Walker, 2004, 2007).

Internships: "Internships are structured educational strategy, integrating classroom studies with learning through productive work experiences in a field related to a student's academic or career goals" (The National Commission for Cooperative Education (NCCE) website, n.d.). Internships are academic courses that allow students to apply classroom theory in a practical work setting and gain personal, academic, and work competencies. Internships are further defined, as being one semester, major-related, either paid or unpaid, typically for credit, and offering structured learning (Carlson, 1999; Drucker, 1999; Kolb, 1984; Sovilla, 1998; University of Central Florida, 2005). For the purpose of this study, internships may be defined, unless otherwise clarified, as co-ops and/or experiential learning.

Novice: As defined for the 5-point Likert-type scale used on the study instrument regarding level of skill ability, novice refers to one who is new to the skill and performs them at a beginner level.

Proficient: As defined for the 5-point Likert-type scale used on the study instrument regarding level of skill ability, proficient refers to one who demonstrates an advanced degree of competence in performing the skill.

Psychosocial Theory: Psychosocial Theory pertains to the interaction between social and psychological factors and serves as a basis for many theories of student and identity development (Mentkowski, Astin, Ewell, & Moran, 1991)

Limitations of the Study

According to Fraenkel & Wallen (2006), limitations explain challenges that restrict generalizability or complicate data collection. The following limitations are acknowledged in this study:

1. Data were generated at the University of Central Florida, Rosen College of Hospitality Management; therefore, the generalization of results should be considered only for this population.

2. Data were generated through informants (employers) using a single survey instrument at one specific point in time.

3. Data were comprised of responses provided by the informants that reflected attitudes and perceptions.

14

4. The informants' ratings on each employability skill dimension were specific to the definition of the skill as provided by the researcher and, therefore, may not be applicable to other definitions of the skill employed in subsequent studies.

5. The researcher's experience as a career services professional and hospitality management adjunct instructor may create unintended researcher bias.

<u>Organization of the Study</u>

Chapter 1 has provided an introduction to the study. Included were the background, statement and significance of the problem, purpose of the study, conceptual framework, research questions, definitions of terms, and finally limitations of the study. Chapter 2 features the review of literature on topics relevant to this study, including employability skills, conceptual frameworks of student identity and graduate identity, experiential learning, the hospitality industry, and hospitality management degree programs. In Chapter 3, the research design, methodology, data collection, and data analysis are detailed. Chapters 4 presents the analysis of the data, and Chapter 5 concludes the dissertation with a summary and discussion of the findings

CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The following review of literature introduces the topics that form the basis for this study. Included are: employability skills, economic issues, experiential learning, hospitality industry, hospitality management degree programs, and conceptual frameworks of student identity and graduate identity.

Employability Skills Studies

Employability skills have been a consistent topic of concern, and as such, a research agenda item of educators, employers, government, and workforce and economic development agencies, since the 1980s. In the United States, studies have been conducted at all levels of government, education, and in the private sector. Countries such as Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, Japan, and China, individually and in partnership, have all engaged in significant research regarding employability skills competence for the workplace (Bridgstock, 2009; Butterwick & Benjamin, 2006; Uhalde & Strohl, 2006). A selection of studies relevant to this research include the U.S. Department of Labor's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills; *Are they really ready to work: Employers' perspectives on the basic knowledge and applied skills of new entrants to the 21*st *century U.S. workforce*; Tas' hospitality studies; *Grooming Future Hospitality Leaders: A Competencies Model*; *Workplace Basics: The Essential Skills*

Employers Want; *Employability 2000+*, and *The Definition and Selection of Key Competencie*s.

These studies have focused on identifying employability skills and bringing awareness and understanding to the skills gap that exists between graduate preparation and employer expectations for the workplace (American Association of Colleges, 2007; Society for Human, 2008; U.S. Department of Education, 1983, 2006). Regardless of motivation and intent, these studies contributed much to the research, especially recognition that the issue of employability skills development was critical and that there were no easy solutions. Following is a review of selected employability skills development studies which are representative of the research completed in this area.

The SCANS Report

Perhaps the most prominent American research on the topic of employability skills was that which was conducted by the U.S. Department of Labor's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills. The Commission's objective was two-fold; first, to identify workplace skills that employers require consistently across industry, and second, to provide resources to educators to ensure high school students would be prepared with these skills upon graduation (U.S. Department of Labor, 1991). The resulting document, *What Work Requires of Schools: A SCANS Report for America 2000 From the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills*, released in 1991, was the culmination of a 12-month study which included interviews with employers and front-line employees across most segments of American business and industry. In addition to

generating a model of employability skills requirements, the report also included

breakdowns of how those competencies and foundation skills were demonstrated within

various positions and industries and at various levels of an organization (U.S. Department

of Labor, 1991). In the report, it was also argued that whether employees were entry or

executive level, their positions would require a certain level of proficiency in regard to

the selected skills and competencies. The report exceeded its original intention,

becoming a useful tool for constituents involved in the discourse of employability skills,

including postsecondary education institutions who were taking a first in depth look at

employability skills (Uhalde & Strohl, 2006). Though the results and resources produced

were popular topics into the late 1990s, the anticipation of sweeping national curricular

overhauls integrating the SCANS competencies and foundations at the secondary and

postsecondary level was not realized (Wise et al., 1990). The SCANS project

successfully produced a defined model consisting of competencies and a foundation of

skills and qualities that are necessary for successful performance in the workplace

(Packer, 1992; Packer & Seiberts, 1999). The five competencies included: (a) the

productive use and allocation of resources (time, money, materials, space, and staff); (b)

appropriately participating in and fostering a team environment (teaching others, serving

customers, leading, negotiating, and working well with people from culturally diverse

backgrounds); (c) acquiring and evaluating data (organizing/maintaining files,

interpreting and communicating, employing technology to process information); (d)

understanding social, organizational, and technological systems (monitoring and

correcting performance, and designing or improving systems); and (e) employing a

variety of technologies (selecting equipment and tools, applying technology to specific tasks, and maintaining and troubleshooting technologies) (U.S. Department of Labor, 1991).

The three foundation skills identified in the report included the basic skills (reading, writing, arithmetic, speaking, and listening); thinking skills (creativity, decision-making, problem-solving, conceptualizing, knowing how to learn, and reasoning); and personal qualities (individual responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self-management, and integrity) (U.S. Department of Labor, 1991). Twenty years after the initial report, many researchers and practitioners continued to refer to the SCANS competency model when engaging in discourse regarding employability skills (Packer, 1992; Packer & Seiberts, 1999).

<p align="center">Are They Really Ready To Work?</p>

In 2006, 431 employers throughout the United States participated in a study conducted collaboratively by the Conference Board, Corporate Voices for Working Families, The Partnership for 21st Century Skills, and the Society for Human Resources Management (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006). The purpose of the study, *Are they really ready to work: Employers' perspectives on the basic knowledge and applied skills of new entrants to the 21st century U.S. workforce*, was to garner the perspectives of the nation's leading businesses regarding the readiness of new employees entering the workforce, in general, and in terms of educational attainment (high school diploma, two/four year degree) (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006). Similar to the SCANS Report,

many of the skills listed in the Workforce Readiness Report Card, a tool generated in the study, were also found in the categorical lists of other employability skills studies (Chung-Herrera et al., 2003; Conference Board of Canada, 2000; Tas,1983, 1988; U.S. Department of Labor, 1991). Two types of skills, basic and applied, were determined to be required in the workplace. The basic skills are defined as; English language communication (speaking, reading comprehension, and writing), Mathematics, Science, Government/Economics, Humanities/Arts, Foreign Languages, and History/Geography. The applied skills include; Critical Thinking/Problem Solving, Oral Communications, Written Communications, Teamwork/Collaboration, Diversity, Information Technology, Application, Leadership, Creativity/Innovation, Lifelong Learning/Self Direction, Professionalism/Work Ethic, and Ethics/Social Responsibility (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006). The findings were not surprising to those engaged in the employability skills development campaign.

In this study, employers were dissatisfied with university preparation of graduates and, therefore, reported unmet expectations for new employee skill levels (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006). A number of smaller studies centered on defining the employability skills and as such were specifically targeted for review. In these studies, researchers attempted to ascertain the appropriateness of the employability skills addressed in the study.

Tas' Hospitality Studies

In studies conducted by Tas (1983, 1988), five employability skills were proposed as necessary for individuals entering the hospitality industry in entry-level management roles: self-management, communication, interpersonal, leadership, and critical thinking. Tas' studies, and specifically his instrumentation, have served as a basis or framework for subsequent inquiry into employability skills (Brownell & Chung, 2001; Goodman & Sprague, 1991; Kay & Russette, 2000).

Grooming Future Hospitality Leaders

In the study conducted by Chung-Herrera et al. (2003), *Grooming Future Hospitality Leaders: A Competencies Model*, a model was introduced to explain competencies required by future hospitality managers as identified by hospitality executives. The model established not only core performance elements but also expected behaviors which were specific to hospitality, including communication, critical thinking, implementation, industry knowledge, interpersonal skills, leadership, self-management, and strategic positioning (Chung-Herrera et al., 2003). Finally, two over-arching categories of employability skills required for the entry-level hospitality professional were revealed: they were (a) self-management which was comprised of ethics, integrity, time management, flexibility, adaptability, and self-development; and (b) strategic positioning which was comprised of awareness of customer needs, commitment to quality, stakeholder management, and concern for the community (Chung-Herrera et al., 2003).

Committee for Economic Development

In a study conducted in 1985 by The Committee for Economic Development, four overarching skills sets were established that consisted overall of 60 employability skill factors and addressed the primary employability demands of employers. The identified skill sets were learning how to learn, priority setting, striving to do well and communication (Wise et al., 1990).

Workplace Basics: The Essential Skills Employers Want

The American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) authored *Workplace Basics: The Essential Skills Employers Want* cataloging the following six areas of employability skills. They were: (a) basic competency skills in reading, writing, and mathematics; (b) communication skills of speaking and listening; (c) adaptability skills of problem-solving and creative thinking; (d) developmental skills of self-esteem, motivation, goal setting, and career planning; (e) group effectiveness skills of interpersonal skills, teamwork, negotiation; and (f) influencing skills of understanding organizational culture, and shared leadership (Carnevale & Gainer, 1989).

International Employability Skills Studies

As mentioned, considerable work has been conducted internationally on the topic of employability. As an increasingly globalized economy has impacted the preparedness of the American workforce to address a more comprehensive and complex, workplace,

other countries have experienced similar struggles (OECD, 2005; Porter & van Opstal, 2001).

Employability 2000+

A well-known study conducted by The Conference Board of Canada resulted in the publication of *Employability 2000+*, which outlined the employability skills required in the contemporary workplace. Described were fundamental skills (ability to communicate, manage information, perform basic numeracy, and solve problems); personal management skills (demonstrate positive attitudes and behaviors, responsiveness, adaptability, and embrace continuous learning); and teamwork skills (working with others and collaboration on projects and activities) (Conference Board of Canada, 2000).

The Definition and Selection of Key Competencies

In 2005, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) which was comprised of 34 of the world's most advanced nations (all of North America, Great Britain, much of Europe, Australia, and Japan) published the 2005 report, *The Definition and Selection of Key Competencie*s. The OECD (2005) proposed nine competencies that were beneficial to workplace success and specifically contributed to the concepts of diversity, interdependence, and collaboration within the global economy. Additionally, it was conceptualized that lifelong learning underpinned the competencies, which were the ability to (a) speak, read, write, and compute; (b) identify, locate, access,

use, evaluate and organize knowledge and information; (c) use and access technology; initiate, maintain and manage interpersonal relationships; (d) work in teams (listen, participate, negotiate); (e) manage and resolve conflicts; (f) make decisions and solve problems; (g) create one's personal identity; and understand systems and the idea of individual and shared norms (Organisation for, 2005).

This brief review of employability studies has revealed significant congruence among them in terms of employability skills to be considered as well as the definition of the skills. Table 2 features a mapping between the employability skills addressed in this research and the various studies previously reviewed, in which the skills were discussed.

Table 1

Employability Skills Study Linkages

Employability Skills	Employability Skill Studies
Communication	Are They Really Ready To Work? (2006); The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2005); Chung-Herrera et al. (2003); The Conference Board of Canada (2000); SCANS (1991); American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) (1990); Tas (1983, 1988); Committee for Economic Development (1985)
Work Culture	Are They Really Ready To Work? (2006); OECD (2005); Chung-Herrera et al. (2003); SCANS (1991); ASTD (1990); Tas (1983, 1988)
Leadership	Are They Really Ready To Work? (2006); OECD (2005); Chung-Herrera et al. (2003); SCANS (1991); ASTD (1990); Tas (1983, 1988)
Professional Qualities	Are They Really Ready To Work? (2006); OECD (2005); Chung-Herrera et al. (2003); The Conference Board of Canada (2000); SCANS (1991); ASTD (1990); Tas (1983, 1988); Committee for Economic Development (1985)
Teamwork	Are They Really Ready To Work? (2006); OECD (2005); The Conference Board of Canada (2000); SCANS (1991); ASTD (1990)
Analytic Skills	Are They Really Ready To Work? (2006); OECD (2005); Chung-Herrera et al. (2003); The Conference Board of Canada (2000); SCANS (1991); ASTD (1990); Tas (1983, 1988)
Learning Theory and Practice	Are They Really Ready To Work? (2006); OECD (2005); The Conference Board of Canada (2000); Committee for Economic Development (1985)
Organization/Planning	Are They Really Ready To Work? (2006); OECD (2005); Chung-Herrera et al. (2003); The Conference Board of Canada (2000); SCANS (1991); Committee for Economic Development (1985)

Impact of Employability Skills Deficiency

Employers contend that failure to enter the workplace prepared with expected employability skills significantly handicaps graduates' long-term career prospects (American Association of Colleges and Univeristies (AACU), 2007; McIlveen & Pensiero, 2008; Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM), 2008). Graduates who, according to employers, require employability skills remediation on such basic skills as written communication, presentation skills, time management and teaming, often receive labels such as "unintelligent" or "slacker" that regardless of accuracy quickly adhere to their professional reputations and thus form others' perceptions of them (Mason, Williams, & Cranmer, 2009; Shivpuri & Kim, 2004). Documented examples of lasting effects on graduates' career progression include limited consideration for promotional opportunities and often underemployment. Both of these impact the graduates' earning potential (Andrews & Higson, 2008; Cox & King, 2006).

The membership of the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) includes 5,200 representatives from 2,000 college and university career centers and 3,000 recruiting/HR professionals. This organization has surveyed employers annually regarding the employability skills they expect new college graduates to possess and demonstrate in the workplace. Surveyed employers have reported annually their ongoing disappointment with both graduates and institutions of higher education for their failure to prepare on employability skills (Bridgstock, 2009; Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006; Miranda, 1999; National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2009).

<u>Key Employability Skills</u>

The following employability skills have been consistently identified and studied in employability skills research. (a) communication, (b) work culture, (c) leadership, (d) professional qualities (ethics and self-management), (e) teamwork, (f) conceptual/analytic skills, (g) learning theory and practice, and (h) organization/planning (Conference Board of Canada, 2000; Department of Education, 1991; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2005; Tas, 1983, 1988). As a result, these will serve as the basis for exploring employability skills in this study and are defined in this section of the review of literature and related research.

Communication

According to the employer respondents participating in a National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) survey, communication is the most important skill needed by graduates in the workplace and unfortunately the one skill in which graduates are most deficient (National Association, 2009). For Lehman and DuFrene (2008), communication was defined as (a) writing and presenting information in the form of memos, letters, and reports; (b) engaging in meetings and team assignments with colleagues; (c) guiding, motivating, directing, and evaluating individuals; and (d) selling and telling guests about the organization, all of which come via face-to-face, e-mail, written and visual presentation, and telephone. The ability to use and understand statistical representation of complex information is also a valued communication tool. According to several definitions, non-verbal methods of communication are as important

as verbal ones (Evers et al., 1998; Gewertz, 2007; O'Neil, 1997; Sandia, 1993).

"Physical stance; eye contact; fluctuations in the voice, tone, and volume of the voice; hand gestures; speed of talking; and the number of pauses" (p. 85) have been identified as the most prominent non-verbal modes of communicating (Evers et al.,1998). Typically, the listening aspects of communication have been often overlooked. It has been, however, the skill of listening that most contributes to better understanding, less conflict, and a clearer path to goal achievement. It has also been stressed that communication skills are critical to all graduates entering the workplace regardless of position or industry (Lehman & DuFrene, 2008). For this study, communication is defined as speaking with clarity and confidence, writing clearly and concisely, possessing the ability to conduct effective presentations, and exhibiting good listening and questioning skills (Cates & Cedercreutz, 2008; Pacheco & Office of Experiential Learning, 2008).

<div align="center">Work Culture</div>

Work culture, in this study, was defined as understanding and working within the culture of the group, respecting diversity, and recognizing political and social implications of actions. According to the 2005 report of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), "globalization and modernization are creating increasingly diverse and interconnected world" (p. 4). This requires individuals with the ability and desire to engage and partner with individuals from a variety of backgrounds. Furthermore, as identified in the study conducted by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2005), attention to cultural diversity was also highlighted to include (a) knowledge

of global cultures, geography and issues; (b) development of foreign language skills; (c) (d) experience working in global and cross-cultural environments, and an expected appreciation and respect for diversity of other cultures' people and practices (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006). Additionally, in a group context, recognizing, valuing, and utilizing the diversity of backgrounds and experiences of individuals was determined to contribute to the perspectives, knowledge, and skills the group may employ (Porter & van Opstal, 2001; Society for Human Resources Managers (SHRM), 2008; U.S. Department of Education, 1983). As a result, the work of the group is likely more informed, comprehensive, and of improved quality.

Work culture pertains to the political and social elements of the workplace environment and the ability to recognize those elements and respond appropriately as required (Tas, LaBrecque, & Clayton, 1996). As such, political and social elements of the workplace culture may include recognizing situations that are both formal and informal and covert and overt. Included are organization roles and responsibilities, strategic partnerships and alliances, protocols, as well as access to resources and positions of power (Bridgstock, 2008).

Leadership

In the instrument used in this study, leadership was described as motivating others to succeed by giving direction, guidance and training, and managing conflict effectively (Crawfor, Brungardt, & Maughan, 2000). Leadership also encompasses the ability to cultivate an organizational vision, to align individuals with activities based on abilities

29

and knowledge, to be innovative, and to facilitate change initiatives (Crawford et al., 2000). Leaders also influence the activities of organized groups and teams to achieve a common goal (Stogdill, 1950). Additionally, leadership is defined as the ability to coordinate and supervise the work of team members, evaluate team performance, assign, facilitate, and manage their projects, and cultivate a positive environment for team interaction (Harkin, 2003; O'Neil et al., 1997). Furthermore, a leader should serve as a moral role model within the organization, demonstrating empathy, integrity, honesty, and self-discipline, not only in words but also in deeds (Bok, 2006). In a traditional sense of leadership, the power of position which resides in a title, location on an organization chart, or authority within the organization, may also contribute to the concept of leadership (Drucker, 1999; Dubrin, 2007; Zalesnik, 1992). Senge (1993) argued, however, that leadership was not restricted to top managers and executives of organizations. Rather, it was present at all levels where individuals "are concerned with building shared vision, inspiring commitment, and accelerating learning" (Senge, 1993, p. 15).

<div align="center">Professional Qualities</div>

Professional qualities, as defined in this study, include skills related to ethical and self-management behaviors (Cates & Cedercreutz, 2008; Pacheco & Office of Experiential Learning, 2008). Although ethics has been commonly defined using terms such as trustworthy, honesty, and integrity, there has been no commonly recognized manual guiding ethical behavior across all organizations (Lehman & DuFrene, 2008). In

society, the law sets the basic standards of behavior. Policies have a similar role in the workplace. Ethics, however, are principles of conduct that are often unregulated, by law and policy, that compel individuals to do the "right thing," even when doing so results in a more difficult course of action or opposes popular behavior or thought (Dittman, 2000; Dubrin, 2007; Tas, 1988). Self-management skills are typically evident in the assumption of responsibility for one's views, actions, and behaviors. Self-management is also expressed as goal-oriented, personal confidence, judgment, initiative, and motivation as well as expressing a positive attitude toward change as exhibited within professional roles. According to Henry (1995), persistence is the "continued, steadfast pursuit of an objective despite some form of opposition or impediment" (p. 67). Individuals with the mental fortitude and determination to persevere and overcome frustrations, set-backs, and obstacles have been highly prized employees in the complex, constantly changing workplace of the 21st century (Gewertz, 2007; Henry, 1995).

Self-management skills also include understanding of how one's personality, perspective, and purpose influence one's paradigm thus ensuring professional decisions and actions are not clouded by personal factors (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006; Nunan, 1999; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2005; Robst, 2007). Stress management, enthusiasm, flexibility, adaptability, dependability, punctuality, and commitment may also be considered within the domain of self-management skills (Arnold, et al., 2005; Gewertz, 2007). Additionally, self-management entails an openness to critically evaluate one's own conduct and actions as well as to respectfully welcome the critique of others. Finally, self-management involves a

commitment to quality and professionalism and a recognized commitment to lifelong

learning and development (Senge, 1990, 1996; Tas, 1983, 1988). For this study,

professional qualities were defined as assuming responsibility and being accountable for

actions; exhibiting self-confidence and a positive attitude toward change; being self-

motivated demonstrating honesty, integrity, personal ethics, and initiative (Cates &

Cedercreutz, 2008; Pacheco & Office of Experiential Learning, 2008).

Teamwork

In the contemporary workplace, teams, workgroups, and committees are

fundamental to the success of initiatives, projects, and routine assignments (Dunne &

Rawlins, 2000; Wise et al., 1990). It has long been contended that teams are synergistic

in nature. The collective benefits and accomplishments of the team are greater than

would be the results of individuals' independent actions (Lehman & DuFrene, 2008;

Society for Human Resources Management, 2008). Additionally, teams can be

permanent or flexible, structured around core responsibilities of staff or in response to

changing priorities (Gewertz, 2007; Henry, 1995; Zalesnik, 1992). Finally, numerous

experts have addressed the need to consider more than personalities and work-styles

(Arnold et al., 2005; Dunne & Rawlins, 2000; Gewertz, 2007). They have indicated that

convening individuals based on specific talents, expertise, experience, relationships, and

skills would likely result in a high-performing, high-achieving team. Within a team, the

skill of facilitating dialogue so that all members feel comfortable contributing and

exchanging ideas, while still respecting individuals' emotions, attitudes, and perspectives

in pursuit of a shared vision and goal, is critical and highly valued (Marini & Genereaux, 1995; Miranda, 1999; U.S. Department of Labor, 1991). The ability to work collaboratively in a team environment has been determined to be of paramount importance to contemporary employers (Bok, 2006; Brewer & Gray, 1999; Gewertz, 2007). For this study, teamwork is defined as working effectively with others, understanding and contributing to the organization's goals, demonstrating flexibility and adaptability, and functioning well on multidisciplinary teams (Cates & Cedercreutz, 2008; Pacheco & Office of Experiential Learning, 2008).

Analytic Skills

According to Evers et al. (1998), analytic skills are often the skills most valued by employers. Critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making are elements of analytic skills (Bridgstock, 2009; Chung-Herrera, et al., 2003; Coplin, 2003). Explored as a process, analytic skills include the ability to study a situation or issue, provide an assessment by considering all the factors, develop alternatives to address an issue, evaluate options, and select and implement an intervention or solution (Evers et al., 1998; Gedye & Chalkey, 2006). At its highest level, the analytic process also encompasses an appreciation of the unique aspect of the human, interpersonal, and functional elements of the issue as well as both the short and long-term ethical and political organizational consequences (Casner-Lotto, et al., 2009; Stodgill, 1950). Employers consistently stress the importance of analytic skills in the workplace, regardless of occupation or industry, as essential to addressing the core responsibilities of an organization and as a recognized

contributor to individual, career upward mobility (Coplin, 2003; Dunne & Rawlins, 2000; Lehman & DuFrene, 2008; Tas 1983, 1988). Additionally, individuals with strengths in these areas often define it as "being able to combine relevant information from a number of sources, integrate information into more general frameworks, and apply information to new or broader contexts" (Lehman & DuFrene, 2008, pp. 120-121). Finally, conceptualizing involves exploring and comprehending current situations and applying them to the broader context (Evers et al., 1998). For this study, conceptual and analytical ability were defined as evaluating situations effectively, solving problems and making decisions, demonstrating original and creative thinking, and identifying and suggesting new ideas (Cates & Cedercreutz, 2008; Pacheco & Office of Experiential Learning, 2008).

Learning Theory and Practice

Learning skills may be defined differently depending on the perspective of researcher. Learning skills have been defined by Senge (1990, 1996) as enthusiasm and continuous pursuit of learning and growth experiences. Further, from this perspective, the learner establishes learning goals and is committed to identifying and accessing resources and interventions that address them (Senge, 1990; Shivpuri & Kim, 2004). In contrast, Kay & Monarz (2004) and Loscertales (2007) identified the learning skill as an ability to evaluate situations, recognize themes and patterns, and appropriately employ prior learning and knowledge (from the classroom, workplace or other life experiences) to the situation.

Regardless of definition, an affinity for lifelong learning and the thoughtful, purposeful application of prior knowledge to new scenarios is empowering. When fostered professionally, employees can gain a greater sense of identity within their professional organization (Evers et al., 1998; O'Neil, 1997). For this study, learning theory and practice were defined as learning new material quickly, accessing and applying specialized knowledge, and applying classroom learning to work situations (Cates & Cedercreutz, 2008; Pacheco & Office of Experiential Learning, 2008).

Organization/Planning

Organization and/or planning focus on the concepts of time and activity coordination and implementation in order to complete work and contribute to the achievement of organizational goals (American Association, 2007; Wise et al., 1990). In this study, organization and planning was defined as managing projects and other resources effectively, setting goals and priorities, multi-tasking, and allocating time to meet deadlines (Cates & Cedercreutz, 2008; Pacheco & Office of Experiential Learning, 2008).

In terms of practical application, organization and planning involves the following: (a) outlining and prioritizing responsibilities; (b) setting realistic/achievable goals; (c) assigning time commitments to them; (d) determining and assigning resources (including personnel and technology); (e) establishing expectations, processes, and procedures; (f) garnering feedback; (g) monitoring progress; (h) allowing for adjustment as appropriate in response to altered information, requirements, and objectives; (i)

35

establishing and maintaining systems and structures to store project elements; (j) ensuring

final products, projects, and reports; (k) delivery as promised; and finally, (k) conducting

post-evaluation to determine outcomes and opportunities for improvement (Evers et al.,

1998; Sandia, 1993). Individuals skilled in organization and planning are often

considered master multi-taskers with recognized talents for simultaneously managing

several projects (Packer & Seiberts, 1999; Wise et al., 1990).

Economy and Education

The idea that education impacts the workforce and workplace has been supported

throughout the reviewed research. As Packer and Seiberts (1999) offered, "Every study

that I am familiar with (all the way back to Adam Smith) indicates a relationship between

education and economic success" (p. 697). In addition, according to the Association of

American College and Universities (2007) and Brewer and Gray (1999), it is the shared

responsibility of employers and educational institutions to ensure graduates are

appropriately prepared for the realities and expectations of the contemporary globalized

workplace.

Uhalde and Strohl (2006), in their global economy study, noted that individual

gain from education impacted national economic growth: "Education enhances labor

productivity and hence economic growth through improvements in workers' skills and by

upgrading the quality of human capital embodied in workers" (p. 11). The Department of

Education also implied a connection when it proposed that improvements to education in

terms of workplace skills development would yield a $400 billion addition to the nation's

gross domestic product (Duzer, 2006). Similarly, the Department of Labor implied a connection when it suggested that a 1% increase in worker skills yielded the same production results as a 1% increase in hours worked (Porter & van Opstal, 2001). As published in the U.S. Department of Education report, *A Nation at Risk* (1983), "Business leaders complain that they are required to spend millions of dollars on costly remedial education and training programs in such basic skills as reading, writing and spelling, and computation" (p. 3). Sandia National Laboratories (1993) observed that two-thirds of all industry training funds were expended on college-educated employees.

According to Hughes and Karp (2006), the Department of Education, in light of the evidence, appropriately identified the alignment of post-secondary education with trends in the global economy and the decreased need for remediation as one of its strategic goals. In the 21st century landscape of higher education, there are multiple and often contradictory issues influencing the drive to pursue postsecondary education. In the United States, the growth in the following types of institutions and programs has contributed to the surge in postsecondary enrollment: proprietary schools, funded programs for minority and at-risk populations, distance and online programs, open access systems, dual enrollment programs, and tech prep. Expanded access to higher education has resulted in enrollment growth, increased graduate production, and, subsequently, greater competition for jobs within the graduate labor market (Gedye & Chalkey, 2006). Thus, in order to be competitive for many positions, graduates must demonstrate proficiency in regard to a host of desired skills and qualities (Harvey et al., 2002). Most students who have been able to participate in higher education as a result of increased

access have done so to improve their career prospects. In response, universities must

ensure that academic programs provide clear career benefits or students will elect

alternate courses of study that yield greater professional and salary-related outcomes.

There has also been a growth in the American educational system of what the

British term "new vocationalism." This has resulted in government's having funneled

resources and attention to institutions with programs that address the economic and

workforce priorities of the community and nation (Coplin, 2003; Gedye & Chalkey,

2006). Academic initiatives focused on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and

Mathematics) and nursing programs, for example, have received priority funding because

they address workforce and economic needs of the region, state, and nation (U.S.

Department of Education, 1983, 2006; U.S. Department of Labor, 1991). As a result,

universities can no longer sustain all of the other academic programs that do not address

these governmental imperatives for career-relatedness (Casner-Lotto et al., 2009; Gedye

& Chalkey, 2006). Consequently, to attract and retain students as well as to remain

fiscally viable, many programs have attempted to strengthen their curricula by

articulating expectations regarding employability skills development and career linkages

(Brewer & Gray, 1999; Hughes & Karp, 2006).

In 2006, the report, *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher

Education* was released by the U.S. Department of Education. The report stressed that

the American system of higher education was lagging behind other nations in the

preparation of graduates and in the workplace preparedness of graduates. The report

further highlighted that the U.S. was failing to prepare its graduates for the evolving

global workplace and as such jeopardizing the economic prosperity of the nation (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). Although the report contained five specific goals to improve educational attainment, preparedness and readiness of graduates, two goals in particular spoke of the concern for employability skills preparedness:

1. We want a world-class education system that creates new knowledge, contributes to economic prosperity and global competiveness, and empowers citizens;

2. We want a higher-education system that gives Americans the workplace skills. (U.S. Department of Education, 2006, p. xi)

The sentiments and findings of this report have been echoed countless times throughout the ongoing employability skills debate.

<u>Contemporary Experiential Learning</u>

Experiential learning has long been recognized as a constructivist theory model. As such, it has been characterized by knowledge creation through experience and also as a means to cultivate, reinforce, and advance employability skills. Experiential learning, therefore, served as an ideal vehicle to conduct this study (Clark, 2005; Kramer, 1988; Kolb, 1984). This section addresses the concept, history, and philosophy of experiential learning as conceived by Dewey, Lewin, Kolb, and Piaget and discussed by Dyer & Schumann, (1993).

John Dewey, American educator and philosopher, has been credited with pioneering the philosophy of experiential learning (Dyer & Schumann, 1993; (Ryder,

1987). In his 1916 work, Dewey stated, "An ounce of experience is better than a ton of theory simply because it is only in experience that any theory has vital and verifiable significance" (p. 144). He proposed that progressive education, which integrates elements of real-world experience, provides greater benefits to learners than traditional modes of education such as rote memorization or lecture methods (Dewey, 1916).

The first structured cooperative education program was launched in 1906. The first program boasted 27 students, and was initiated in a University of Cincinnati engineering program (Ryder, 1987). The engineering dean recognized that students often struggled with the especially difficult engineering concepts during classroom lecture and believed that student learning and understanding would be improved by allowing students to further experience the concepts in an applied setting (Brewer & Gray, 1999; Sovilla, 1988). He also believed that through applied experiences, students would recognize the relevance of the concept to the real world and workplace (Grubb & Villeneuve, 1995). The success of the program was confirmed the next year when inquiries were received from 400 prospective students, many of whom enrolled (Sovilla & Varty, 2004). Over the next 15 years, seven additional programs were launched, most of which were situated within engineering programs at four-year institutions (Sovilla & Varty, 2004). The University of Cincinnati, however, expanded its program to include business administration and liberal arts (Ryder, 1987). By the mid-1950s, approximately 60 colleges and universities throughout the nation housed internship/co-op programs (Sovilla & Varty, 2004). Clearly, experiential learning, in the form of internship and co-op, had established a presence in American higher education.

40

The Higher Education Act of 1965 included provisions to directly fund cooperative education programs and resulted in a $275 million allocation (Sovilla & Varty, 2004). Although later discontinued, this federal funding launched experiential education programs at over 1,000 postsecondary institutions across the nation (Sovilla & Varty, 2004).

In 1993, a set of professional standards, *Attributes of Cooperative Education*, was developed (American Society for Engineering Education, n.d.). The Cooperative Education and Internship Association later enacted the standards that have continued into the present to serve as the foundational criteria in the professional accreditation process. The standards have ensured that accredited programs can maintain a level of specificity within their individual programs and at the same time ensure universal quality across programs (American Society, n.d.). Recognized elements of accredited internship and cooperative education programs include written guidelines for students and supervisors, evaluation of program, learning, and performance by students, and integration of work experience with curriculum of appropriate courses (Accreditation Council, n.d.). At the time of the present study, the University of Central Florida's internship and co-op program was one of the few nationally accredited programs (UCF Experiential Learning, n.d.).

Models of Experiential Learning

Regardless of specific program type, delivery model, or requirements, there is a single key to the success of experiential learning. That key is the engaged, active participation of students in the learning process (Sweitzer & King, 2004).

The majority of internships and cooperative education experiences have been structured as either parallel or alternating programs (Grubb & Villeneuve, 1995; Mentkowski et al., 1991). The primary difference between internship and co-op programs is that the internship is typically a one-semester experience and co-op programs span multiple semesters and offer students progressively challenging opportunities. In alternating programs, students work fulltime during one semester without the conflict of also attending classes. The next semester, the student attends classes full-time and is not employed in an internship experience. In parallel programs, students simultaneously work and attend classes, typically on a part-time basis (Brewer & Gray, 1999; Grubb & Villeneuve, 1995; Parks, 2003). Regardless of alternating or parallel structure, both models offer significant benefits to students. As noted by Nasr, Pennington, and Andres (2004), experiential education "has the potential to produce a student with a higher aptitude for obtaining the soft skills employers in today's market so desperately seek" (p. 13).

Benefits of Experiential Learning

Researchers have offered countless examples of the benefits of internship experiences for students including improved self-confidence and self-concept, improved

social skills, increased practical knowledge, and enhanced employment opportunities

(Clark, 1994; Drucker, 1999; Dyer & Schumann, 1993; Sharma, Mannel, & Rowe, 1995).

Many programs, such as those in hospitality management, have taken these benefits

seriously by integrating experiential learning into the core of the curriculum.

Furthermore, Fletcher (1989) and Parks (2003) reported specific student learning in terms

of personal, academic, career, and professional/work-skills development as a result of

experiential learning participation.

Nasr et al. (2004) reported that internships contribute to students' workplace

preparedness, offering the opportunity to "take what they have learned in the classroom

and apply it to something considerably more than situational classroom simulations" (p.

13). Similarly, Marini and Tillman (1998) stated that internship programs provide a

forum for students to expand their employability skills including interpersonal skills,

analytical skills, and teaming. In addition, after putting their skills to the test in the

professional workplace, interns have the advantage in being able to respond (via

additional education and training) to the formative evaluation they receive from

employers (Cates & Cedercreutz, 2008; Dyer & Schumann, 1993).

<div align="center">Hospitality Industry</div>

As previously defined, the hospitality industry is a service industry divided into

sectors including lodging, food and beverage, conferences, meetings, events, recreation,

travel and tourism, and transportation (International Hotel & Restaurant Association,

2007). As stated by Walker (2007), "The concept of hospitality is as old as civilization

itself, its development from the ancient custom of breaking bread with a passing stranger to the operations of today's multifaceted hospitality conglomerates makes fascinating reading" (p. 4). The concept of hospitality pre-dates the Roman Empire when lodging in private homes was offered to weary travelers (Walker, 2007; World Tourism Organization, 2004). As in 2011, these early people traveled for reasons of trade and commerce, religion, family, education, and recreation. Globalization and technological innovations spawned interest in and access to other countries and cultures. This, in turn, led to consumer demand for travel, tourism, and hospitality (*Guide to College Programs*, 2002, 2004).

With approximately $7 trillion generated in 2007, hospitality has been recognized as the largest industry in the world (World Travel & Tourism Council, n.d.). According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, hospitality organizations have contributed significantly to the global economy with operations in every country in the world. Contributions have been reported to represent an estimated 11% of the gross domestic product and 8% of total employment (Sigala & Baum, 2003; Walker, 2004). In 2011, hospitality was the United States' third largest industry with close to 9.5 million employees (U.S. Department of Labor, 2009). Ninemeier and Perdue (2007) identified several different issues that present challenges to the global hospitality industry including (a) rapid acceleration of technology; (b) increased safety concerns; (c) escalating operating cost for energy, insurance; (d) renovations; (e) natural disasters; and (f) fear of a world health pandemic. These challenges notwithstanding, the industry has continued to grow. Globalization, the Internet, the ease of business and leisure travel, the meeting

44

and convention business, and the increase in amusement entities have contributed to the continued growth of hospitality in general and lodging management organizations in particular (Walker, 2004, 2007). In 2009, the U.S. hospitality industry recorded over 52 million international travelers and reported total industry revenue of $127.2 billion. This was the largest share of world international tourism receipts of any country in the world. This industry, alone, accounted for over 300,000 U.S. jobs (U.S. Department of Transportation, 2010; World Travel and Tourism Council, n.d.).

Lodging

At the time of the present study, lodging represented the largest segment of the hospitality industry, and, in 2009, the lodging industry generated $16.0 billion in profits. Hotels and other accommodations have typically been distinguished using three categories (budget, business, and luxury) based on services and amenities on offer, location, and pricing (World Tourism Organization, 2004). Usually, budget hotels range from $20 to $70 per night and cater to the price conscious traveler who typically is seeking a bed, shower and perhaps a television for entertainment (Kay & Monarz, 2004). Business hotels, ranging from $80 to $250 per night, offer rooms with features such as Internet connections, alarm clocks, laundry service, coffee makers, and complimentary newspaper delivery, which address the needs of the business traveler. Additionally, business hotels usually offer other property facilities that appeal to the guests, such as restaurants, fitness rooms, and airport transportation (Kay & Monarz, 2004; Ninemeier & Purdue, 2007; World Tourism Organization, 2004). With a focus on offering superior

service and amenities, accommodations at luxury hotels are designed to impress guests and reflect prestige and status. It is typical to find full-service spas, five-star restaurants, exceptional, recreational facilities including pools, golf courses, and retail boutiques, as well as comprehensive, individualized guest concierge service. Luxury property rates range from $129 to $2,000 per night (Kay & Monarz, 2004; Ninemeier & Purdue, 2007).

Further breakdown of these categories, common to American lodging includes airport hotels that are conveniently located near airports and offer services specific to guests flying to/from a destination. Conference hotels cater to group travel offering either meeting space or being situated adjacent to a destination's conference or convention center. The primary purpose of casino hotels is in support of the gambling operation (International Hotel, 2007; Kay & Monarz, 2004). Typically, casino hotels offer extensive amenities and services in a luxurious setting to retain guest presence on site in the casino itself. Resort hotels often serve as the destination of travelers. It is usually the location, e.g., beaches, mountains, and amenities, e.g., golf, skiing, of these properties that draw vacationers. Additionally, many resort hotels may also be in proximity to other tour and travel destinations such as theme parks or historical sites (International Hotel, 2007; Ninemeier & Perdue, 2007).

<div align="center">Food and Beverage</div>

The origins of the modern restaurant can be traced back to 18th century France, with rudimentary dining establishments dating to Roman times. Thermopolia were restaurant/bars in ancient Rome where travelers were served food and beverages (Walker,

2004, 2007). Based on a 2007 report of the International Hotel and Restaurant

Association, the restaurant industry garners $800 billion in revenues and employs over 60

million people annually. With 12.8 million employees, 960,000 locations, and annual

sales topping $600 billion, the restaurant industry, according to Ninemeier & Perdue

(2007) represented one of the largest private-sector employers in the United States.

Commercial foodservice such as restaurants, off-site caterers, hotel food and beverage

departments, and retail foodservice outlets generate revenue based on this purpose

(Walker, 2004). Noncommercial foodservice enterprises operate within facilities such as

hospitals, educational organizations, correctional facilities, and military bases to address

the dining needs of a defined population or community (Ninemeier & Perdue, 2007). The

noncommercial foodservice operation typically represents a cost center, not a profit

source, to the overall organization.

Restaurants may be categorized as fine dining, casual, and quick-service,

according to menu and pricing. The commercial food and beverage industry is

sometimes volatile, as new restaurants assume significant risk and are very sensitive to

even minimal changes in economic variables such as guest demand, product cost, and

competition. Restaurants experience the greatest fail rate of any business category. With

a guaranteed customer base, noncommercial food service is much more stable (Kay &

Moncarz, 2004; Walker, 2004).

Conferences, Meetings, & Events

According to DMAI, the meetings industry represents big business at the national, regional, state, and local levels and attracts more than 33 million attendees to American cities annually. The group market for meetings and events is segmented into conventions, association meetings, corporate meetings, and SMERF (Social, Military, Educational, Religious, Fraternal organizations). Walker (2004) reported that the conference, convention, meeting and events segment of the hospitality industry represented more than $85.5 billion in spending by participants attending the 800,000 association and corporate meetings and 14,000 conventions held in the U.S. annually.

Recreation, Travel and Tourism

Recreation is a segment which includes theme parks, attractions, and gambling (Angelo & Vladimir, 2004). Las Vegas and Orlando feature significant recreational attractions and amusement offerings, and they are the leading tourist destinations in the world (Ninemeier & Perdue, 2007). According to Angelo and Vladimir (2004), this segment may be divided into the categories of man-made attractions, e.g., Walt Disney World, Universal Orlando, and natural attractions/recreation, e.g., Colorado Rockies, Caribbean beaches, (International Council on Hotel, Restaurant, and Institutional Education, 2006; Ninemeier & Perdue, 2007; Walker, 2004).

Transportation

Transportation specific to the hospitality industry includes modes of transporting travelers such as airlines, railroads, cruise lines, and rental car agencies. Transportation is fundamental to the hospitality industry as convenience and cost of certain modes of transport significantly impact opportunities to travel and access other segments of the industry (Walker, 2004, 2007). In the United States, the airline industry is comprised of close to 500 companies including the major airline carriers of Delta, American, United, and US Airways. These carriers offer intercontinental, intra-continental, domestic, regional, or international scheduled and chartered flights. Many carriers have formed strategic partnerships with air carriers in other countries (Walker, 2004, 2007) improving global reach and affording broader access to markets. In the United States, the busiest airports are Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, Chicago's O'Hare International, Los Angeles, Dallas/Fort Worth, and Denver (Travel Industry Association, 2007). The international airline industry has been significantly impacted by the terrorist bombings in the United States on September 11, 2001, the ongoing threat of terrorism, and more recently the world economic situation and significant price increases for fuel. According to data from 2009 for domestic and international travel, 769.6 million people flew in 2009 (U.S. Department of Transportation, 2010). In July of 2010, U.S. airlines carried about 68.4 million passengers on scheduled domestic and international flights, according to the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (U.S. Department of Transportation, 2010).

According to Angelo and Vladimir (2004), the cruise segment can be divided into four markets. The first three (mass market, middle market, and luxury market) are segmented by passenger financial attributes. The final category, specialty ships, is segmented according to destinations served (Angelo & Vladimir, 2004; Cruise Lines International Association, 2010). As reported in 2009, 167 vessels with a total combined capacity of 284,754 berths comprised the global cruise industry. Additionally, during 2009, an estimated 13 million passengers embarked on a cruise (Cruise Lines International Association, 2010). The United States represents a significant market with an estimated nine million residents taking cruise vacations globally. This number represents 70% of the industry's global passengers.

As considered for use as part of the hospitality industry, rental car organizations rent or lease cars to consumers for the purpose of either travel to/from a vacation or once on location at the destination for travel while on vacation. As reported for 2010, U.S. annual revenue in the rental car industry exceeded $20 billion with 1.6 million cars offered for rent (U.S. Department of Transportation, 2010).

<div align="center">Hospitality Management Postsecondary Programs</div>

In 1922, the nation's first hospitality management baccalaureate program was launched as the School of Hotel Administration at Cornell University (*Guide to College Programs*, 2002). Over the next 15 years, Purdue University, Michigan State University, and The Pennsylvania State University all launched similar programs (*Guide to College Programs*, 2002; 2004). By 1974, nationally, 41 hospitality management/administration

programs were awarding baccalaureate degrees (Brady, 1988; Tanke, 1984). By 1986, there were 128 programs (Brady, 1988).

In the first decade of the 21st century, there were 170 institutions awarding hospitality baccalaureate degrees and approximately 800 institutions offering associates degrees and/or professional certificates (International Council, 2004; Sigala & Baum, 2003; Tas, 1983). In the almost 100 years since the founding of Cornell's School of Hotel Administration, hospitality education has rapidly expanded. However, in 2004, hospitality degrees were only offered at approximately 8% percent of all postsecondary institutions (Brownell, & Chung, 2001; International Council, 2004). The nation's leading hospitality programs, such as Cornell, Florida State, and Penn State have required their students to participate in experiential learning activities to enhance their academic learning, employability, and technical skills in real-world application (Brownell, & Chung, 2001; Dittman, 1997, 2000; ICHRIE, 2004).

Contemporary researchers have demonstrated that, outside of the internship experience, most hospitality programs focus on developing technical proficiency with minimal attention to employability skills development (Dittman, 1997; Miranda, 1999; Tas, 1988). It was the contention of Breiter and Clements (1996) that human resources, conceptual, and planning skills were more important than technical skills in terms of meeting the essential needs of hospitality employers. Chung-Herrera et al., (2003), Dittman (2000), and Pavesic (1991), in suggesting it is imperative to address customer service, communication, analytical, and problem solving skills in the curriculum, supported this contention.

Rosen College of Hospitality Management

The University of Central Florida (UCF) was founded in 1963 as Florida

Technological University in Orlando, Florida. UCF is a comprehensive metropolitan

university with a diverse student population of over 56,000 students and at the time of

this study was the second largest university in the nation (Rosen College of Hospitality

Management, n.d.).

The hospitality management program at the University of Central Florida was

established in 1983 as the Department of Hospitality Management and in 2000, renamed

Rosen School of Hospitality Management. In 2003/2004, college status was granted and

the program renamed, The Rosen College of Hospitality Management (RCHM). In 2011,

the Rosen College of Hospitality Management was one of the nation's leading

hospitality/tourism management programs with 2,800 undergraduate majors and 80

master's degree-seeking candidates (Rosen College, n.d.). Additionally, the Rosen

campus offers state of the art facilities comprised of (a) a 150,000 square foot

educational/classroom building, (b) a 160,000 square foot housing complex, and (c) the

Dick Pope, Sr. Institute for Tourism Studies. The Rosen College offers three Bachelor of

Science (B.S.) degree programs in Hospitality Management, Event Management, and

Restaurant and Foodservice Management. The Hospitality Management program focuses

on preparing individuals for management careers in the hotel and lodging industry (Rosen

College, n.d.). The program also offers specializations in Theme Park Management and

Golf & Club Management. The B.S. in Event Management is perfect for students who

want to work on large conferences and conventions or smaller events. The Restaurant

and Foodservice Management program focuses on restaurant design, food preparation, franchise development, cost controls, food and beverage management, catering and banquet organization (Rosen College, n.d.).

The RCHM requires all undergraduates to complete three academic credit hours of paid, supervised, internship or work experience in the industry, over three semesters. This equates to approximately 800 hours in the workplace. As noted by RCHM,

> Our school is located in the largest learning laboratory in the world for hospitality and tourism, Orlando! Students at the Rosen College of Hospitality Management benefit from studying in a city that boasts 42 million visitors each year, and has 120,000 hotel rooms, 4,000 restaurants, and 75 theme parks and attractions. (Rosen College of Hospitality Management (RCHM), n.d.)

As a result, students are assured ample opportunity to meet their internship requirement with the convenience of staying close to campus and simultaneously attending other classes. To further affirm the value of experiential learning, Waryszak (2000) offered:

> Work experience gained through cooperative education placements can help in the induction process so that tourism organizations may be better able to retain their employees and foster their performance. It is important, therefore, to both educational institutions and industry, that students have realistic perceptions of their prospective entry to these organizations. If educators and employers know how students perceive their organizational placements environment, they can better prepare the students and organizational processes for successful entry to the labor force. (p. 84)

> Additionally, Purcell and Quinn (1995) wrote that,

> One of the main purposes of work experience is to enable industry to demonstrate the career potential that is available which involves providing appropriate management learning opportunities and enabling students to obtain insight into the management and supervision skills and knowledge they will require in their intended careers (p. 11).

In addition to its undergraduate program offerings, the RCHM offers several

graduate level programs including; the Master's Program in Hospitality and Tourism

Management and the Graduate Certificate in Hospitality Management.

Conceptual Framework: Cultivating Student and Graduate Identity

As conceptualized by social scientists, identity is a dynamic process of formation

and reformation as one travels through life (American College, 2004; Bowen, 1997;

Boyer, 1996). Higher education has been recognized as an environment that fosters an

individual's sense of identity as both a student and a graduate (Holmes, 1999, 2001,

Holmes et al., 1998), and it is this concept that is at the heart of this study.

Student Identity

According to Chickering and Reisser (1993) "Institutions that emphasize

intellectual development to the exclusion of other strengths and skills reinforce society's

tendency to see some aspects of its citizens and not others" (p. 41). The conceptual frame

used to address the idea of student development and identity formulation was

Chickering's Theory of Identity Development. The theory is comprised of seven vectors

of personal development which include developing competence, managing emotions,

moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing mature interpersonal

relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose, and developing integrity (Baxter-

Magolda, 2003; Chickering, 1969; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Evans, Forney, & Guido-

DiBrito, 1998). In exploring Chickering's (1969) theory in further detail, there are clear

54

linkages among the elements (behaviors, skills, knowledge, actions, activities) that comprise the developmental vectors presented and the defined employability skills and behaviors sought by employers.

In 1937, the American Council on Education (ACE) authored *The Student Personnel Point of View* to frame an initial understanding of the student development concept. In the report, ACE advocated for institutions of higher education to view the student holistically, recognizing that intellect, or the acquisition of knowledge, did not exist or develop in isolation for the student but in concurrence with other factors such as health, emotion, values, and socialization (ACE, 1937). One theorist in support of this model was Chickering (1969). In the 1960s, Chickering sought to further the study of student development as a way of informing the concept of whole person education and identity (Chickering, 1969, Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Influenced by psychologists and theorists such as Jung, Erikson, Newman, Freud, and Perry, Chickering (1969) formulated the Theory of Identity Development, a psychosocial theory in which identity was viewed as emerging through a series of developmental stages. These stages address thinking, feeling, believing, and relating (Chickering, 1969; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Evans et al., 1998). Chickering (1969) identified seven vectors of development that serve to formulate the student's identity. Although it was contended that movement through the vectors was not linear nor prescribed for students, progression through the first four was thought to establish the basis of one's individual identity. The seven vectors as introduced by Chickering (1969), and further defined in the following paragraphs, are (a) developing competence, (b) managing emotions, (c) moving through autonomy toward

interdependence, (d) developing mature interpersonal relationships, (e) establishing

identity, (f) developing purpose, and (g) developing integrity (Chickering & Reisser,

1993; Feldman, 1972).

Developing Competence

Intellectual competence, physical and manual competence, and interpersonal

competence are developed within the vector, developing competence (Chickering &

Reisser, 1993). As defined by Chickering (1969), intellectual competence involves

mastery of course curricular content (knowledge and skills) and the ability to access,

synthesize, and apply knowledge in critical thinking and decision making. By contrast,

physical and manual competence focuses on athletic and artistic developments and may

include the pursuit of fitness and strength as well as the ability to create tangible items.

Finally, interpersonal competence along this vector includes cooperating, collaborating,

communicating effectively, and evaluating others' emotions (Chickering & Reisser,

1969; Evans et al., 1998).

Managing Emotions

Development of the vector, managing emotions, occurs when students

acknowledge their emotions and identify and proceed with activities, processes and

interventions to appropriately address them. This ensures that students' ability to learn,

participate in campus life, and maintain, foster, and grow relationships are not inhibited

(Bowen, 1997; Boyer, 1996, 1987; Chickering & Reisser, 1993). According to

Chickering (1969), "their [students] challenge is to get in touch with the full range and variety of feelings and to learn to exercise self-regulation rather than repression. As self-control and self-expression come into balance, awareness and integration ideally support each other." (p. 74)

Moving through Autonomy toward Interdependence

The vector, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, includes establishing students' emotional and instrumental independence and recognizing the need and worth of interdependence (Chickering, 1969; Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Emotional independence is characterized by a shift away from established support systems, i.e., parents and peers, that have long provided unconditional security, guidance, and affirmation. Students' convictions and interests trump reliance on these existing networks of support. Furthermore, instrumental independence fosters self-sufficiency as students cultivate critical thinking skills and are able to translate thoughts into action at their own direction and discretion (Baxter-Magolda, 2003; Bowen, 1997; Boyer, 1996). Finally, in completion of this vector, students realize the value of interdependence. The synergistic positives of interdependence are realized through partnership, collaboration, and appreciation of equality and reciprocity. According to Chickering and Reisser (1993), autonomy development culminates as "the need to be independent and the longing for inclusion become better balanced" and "students learn that greater autonomy enables healthier forms of interdependence" (p. 140).

Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships

The hallmark of the vector, developing mature interpersonal relationships, is that students develop more mature relationships. According to Chickering and Reisser (1993), these relationships are characterized by "tolerance and appreciation of differences and capacity for intimacy" (p. 48). Students develop a sense of community and an appreciation for diversity which often manifests in the bridging of gaps between different groups. Additionally, establishing relationships with deeper emotional connections and meaning results from relationships formed outside of established comfort zones, e.g., forging bonds with individuals that are dissimilar from themselves (Baxter- Magolda, 2003; Bowen, 1997; Reisser, 1995).

Establishing Identity

The aforementioned vectors of competence, emotional maturity, autonomy, and positive relationships all factor into the formulation of one's identity. Thus, the vector, establishing identity, includes establishing comfort with body image, appearance, sexual orientation, and self-concept in context of society, heritage, culture, roles, and life-style. Also included is an improved concept of self, resulting from the feedback of others, and growth in self-acceptance and self-esteem, (Bowen, 1997; Boyer, 1996; Reisser, 1995). Students' identities or sense of self emerge along this vector. Students' maturation and development through this vector "leads to a clarity and stability. . . of this core self as capable, familiar, worthwhile" (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 50).

Developing Purpose

According to Chickering & Reisser (1993), the vector, developing purpose, "entails an increasing ability to be intentional, to assess interests and options, to clarify goals, to persist despite obstacles, and to make plans" (p. 209). The vector is also characterized by students setting priorities and formulating action plans that focus on career, individual interests, and personal relationships. Developing purpose culminates in the unification of students' different goals with a commitment to advance these plans (Evans et al., 2010).

Developing Integrity

The final vector, developing integrity, relates to understanding various values dimensions and developing congruence among them (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Chickering and Reisser described humanizing values as students balancing "self-interests with the interests of [their] fellow human beings" (p. 51). Personalizing these values involves "confirming core values and beliefs through one's experience while respecting other opinions and points of view" (p. 51). Developing congruence occurs when students' behavior becomes consistent with the values and beliefs they hold. In essence, developing integrity surrounds students' recognition that their values and beliefs impact their decisions and subsequently their actions (Evans et al., 2010).

<u>Student Identity Linkages to Employability Skills</u>

Although not based on prior research evidence, this researcher proposes that there exists a measure of alignment between Chickering's (1969) theory and employability skills. In reference to Chickering, many of the skills sought by employers, and termed employability skills, appear synonymous with those emerging skills, knowledge, behaviors, and actions along the vectors. Furthermore, as suggested by Drucker (1999), employers echo the sentiments of developmental theorists and student personnel practitioners. Higher education institutions that ascribe to whole person developmental models, such as Chickering's, will matriculate balanced candidates with the knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes desired by most employers in the 21st century workplace. This will occur by integrating affective and cognitive learning in tandem within curricular and co-curricular areas (Bowen, 1977; Mentkowski et al., 1991; Baxter-Magolda; 2003).

Hersch (1997) found that 66% of CEOs and human resources professionals confirmed this balanced approach. He found that a practical education combining intellect and cognition with social and communication skills and a commitment to continuous learning was more important to performance and success in the workplace then was development of a singular focus on knowledge and discipline specific concepts and curriculum (Hersch, 1997).

Although not supported by prior study, the researcher proposed linkages between the vectors and the defined employability skills addressed in this study. Table 2 summarizes these linkages.

Table 2

Chickering's Vectors of Student Development Linkages to Employability Skills

Vectors of Student Development	Employability Skills
Developing competence	Communication, Work Culture, Professional Qualities, Teamwork, Analytic Skills, Learning Theory and Practice, Organization/ Planning
Managing emotions	Work Culture, Professional Qualities, Teamwork
Moving through autonomy toward interdependence	Work Culture, Leadership, Professional Qualities, Teamwork
Developing mature interpersonal relationships	Work Culture, Leadership, Professional Qualities, Teamwork
Establishing identity	Communication, Work Culture, Leadership, Professional Qualities, Teamwork, Analytic Skills, Learning Theory and Practice, Organization/Planning
Developing purpose	Analytic Skills, Learning Theory and Practice, Organization/ Planning
Developing integrity	Communication, Work Culture, Leadership, Professional Qualities, Teamwork, Analytic Skills, Learning Theory and Practice, Organization/Planning

In revisiting his 1969 study in 1993, Chickering, in partnership with Reisser, offered the following observations:

> to develop all the gifts of human potential, we need to be able to see them whole and to believe in their essential worth. . . . Our theory assumes that emotional, interpersonal, and ethical development deserves equal billing with intellectual development. (p. 41)

Other theorists have supported Chickering's theory and the importance of student identity formulation as a result of progressing through various development processes (Bowen, 1977; Mentkowski et al.,1991).

Bowen (1977) penned, "on the average, college education helps students a great deal in finding their personal identity and in making lifetime choices congruent with this identity" (p. 433). Additionally, Boyer (1987), espoused the value of identity formulation, professing that "identity is the search for meaning in one's life, and that the principle aims of education are understanding oneself and the acquisition of sound judgment" (p. 39). Chickering's theory supports integration of educational and developmental learning priorities to address the students holistically, employing the seven vectors in programmatic planning for students (ACPA/NASPA, 2004; Bowen, 1997; 1977; Boyer, 1996, 1987; Chickering, 1969; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Mentokowski et al.,1991).

Critiques of Chickering's Theory

Although Chickering's (1969) theory on student development remains one of the most universally respected and applied in American higher education, it has not been

without its share of criticism. As is typical in much of the social sciences, there is little

quantitative empirical research that supports Chickering's theory. As such, there are

variables that may in isolation or combination impact the development of the individual

in the same way, regardless of participation in higher education (Dannefer, 1984;

Feldman, 1972; Quay, 1981; Terenzini, 1987; Widdick, Parker, & Knefelkamp, 1978).

Subsequently, researchers have questioned if the development is truly that

experienced only by students within a higher education setting or if individuals who have

not been influenced by higher education still develop along Chickering's vectors as a

result of the natural maturation process of a person at the same life stage (Bowen, 1977;

Boyer, 1987; Foubert, Nixon, Sisson, & Barnes, 2005; Terenzini,1987). Few longitudinal

studies have been conducted to explore the long-term aspects of college developed

identity. Additionally, Chickering indicated that progression along the vectors was not

necessarily sequential, i.e., one may address a vector that appears further along the

developmental continuum before a vector that appears at earlier level of development

(Dannefer, 1984, Feldman, 1972). He did, however, postulate that the progress was

directionally one-way (Feldman, 1972). Thus, he did not support the premise that a

student might regress or otherwise need to revisit a vector. Critics have argued that in

response to changes in relationships, environments, health, or other internal/external

factors, it is impractical to assume that there may not be instances in which students

remediate along a previously scaled vector (Dannefer, 1984; Feldman, 1972; Quay, 1981;

Widdick et al., 1978).

Furthermore, Widdick et al., (1978) and Reisser (1995) opined that there were minimal details provided regarding activities that contribute to the achievement of each vector. Overall, they felt that Chickering's (1969) explanation of the development process was vague and general. They specifically indicated that Chickering did not discuss the different levels of student motivation and behavior attributed to individual vectors (Widdick et al., 1978). Chickering, too, recognized the shortcomings in his original 1969 theory, hence, his revision to the theory published in 1993, in partnership with Reisser. In defense of the generality of his original publication, Chickering indicated that his intent was to provide practitioners with a resource to improve their service and interaction with students and not to advance a theory (Thomas & Chickering, 1984). As a result, Chickering wrote the book at a somewhat elementary level to ensure practitioners at all levels of knowledge and experience were able to benefit from the information. This resulted in limited technical detailing of institutional and student factors that may have been considered in development along the vectors (Thomas & Chickering, 1984). Some researchers, such as Widdick, Parker, and Knefelkamp (1978) and Reisser (1995) have indicated that Chickering's theory was too general to be applied so universally (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

Although the original 1969 theory was updated in 1993, with several vectors being renamed, reordered, and applied in international settings, critics have maintained that Chickering's (1969) theory does not accurately reflect the more diverse nature of the contemporary student population in higher education (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Maekawa Kodama, McEwen, Liang, & Lee, 2002; Moore & Upcraft, 1990; Thomas &

Chickering, 1984). Critics have noted that Chickering's research was conducted in western institutions with predominantly male Caucasian enrollments, and therefore, was not reflective of diverse student populations with unique cultural traditions, influences, and perspectives (Greeley & Tinsley, 1988; Maekawa Kodama, McEwen, Liang, & Lee, 2002; Moore & Upcraft, 1990; Reisser, 1995; Straub & Rodgers, 1986; Taub, 1995). Specifically, in studies involving Asian males, gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, transgender students, females, and non-traditionally aged students, disparities between the theorized and actual development of students were revealed (Josselson, 1987; Maekawa Kodama, McEwen, Liang, & Lee, 2002; Moore & Upcraft, 1990; Reisser, 1995; Straub & Rodgers, 1986; Taub, 1995). For example, students from these groups did not progress along the vectors in similar fashion to their white male counterparts, nor even to each other. In fact, some groups did not view the vectors as favorable or applicable measures of development (Evans et al., 1998; Josselson, 1987). Thus, questions surround the generalizability of the theory, which when considered and applied in isolation, discounts other personal, demographic, and cultural factors that impact the developmental processes (Greeley & Tinsley, 1988; Josselson, 1987; Maekawa Kodama, McEwen, Liang, & Lee, 2002; Reisser, 1995; Straub & Rodgers, 1986; Taub, 1995; Widdick et al., 1978).

Research over time has indicated that men and women develop differently and consequently experience the vectors differently (Reisser, 1995; Straub & Rodgers, 1986; Taub, 1995). A primary example occurs along the vectors of autonomy and mature interpersonal relationships, in which the ordering of the vectors is inverted for the

genders (Baxter-Magolda, 1992). Women develop close interpersonal relationships prior to achieving autonomy while men develop autonomy prior to establishing mature interpersonal relationships (Reisser, 1995; Straub & Rodgers, 1986; Taub, 1995). These discoveries were not part of Chickering's original work because his subjects were predominantly white males so the gender differences were not revealed.

Despite these criticisms, Chickering's Theory of Student Identity remained an appropriate framework for this study. The means, timing, and circumstances in which a vector is scaled are not the primary considerations in the context of employability skills development. For the purpose of this study, the mere existence of a "whole person" frame aligning student development to a multitude of dimensions that encompass academic knowledge, functional skills, and employability skills, as considered by the researcher, rendered Chickering's theory appropriate (Terenzini, 1987; Thieke, 1994). Though Chickering's theory has been applied to student development in an educational setting, there are no known studies in which the application of the vectors to preparing students for transition to the workplace and future career success have been investigated.

Although educators have and will continue to argue the purpose of higher education, the ongoing discourse surrounding employability skills has supported the notion of employer preference for graduates with a balance of intellectual and psychosocial capabilities (Hersh, 1997). Therefore, the primary consideration is conveying the attributes, behaviors, and understanding achieved in the vectors from an educational to workplace setting. For example, in one such study conducted by Hersh, two-thirds of the employers surveyed indicated that a practical [liberal] education was

preferred as a means to develop students' intellect as well as social and cognitive skills and abilities. Only one-third of the employers in the study indicated that postsecondary education should be discipline-focused with job placement as a primary objective (Hersh). Clearly, the employers indicated an appreciation of the holistic approach to student learning and development that equates to employability skills development. The study resulted in evidence that discipline and vocational focus in isolation may impede the career opportunities for students upon graduation.

<div align="center">Graduate Identity</div>

The Graduate Identity Approach as authored by Holmes (2001) serves as a conceptual frame in investigating the employability skills of graduates. The Graduate Identity Approach focuses on the transition from student to employee that for many new graduates is marred by insecurity, confusion, stress, and fear (Hughes & Karp, 2006). It has been indicated in several studies, including one conducted by Wendlandt & Rochlen (2008) that shared circumstances affect graduates' transition to the workplace. For example, it is recognized that a significant cultural shift occurs when transitioning from campus to work environments. Specifically, the purpose, rules, activity, and structure of one's post-college home life, and ultimately of one's workplace, significantly differs from that of higher education and campus life that students have most recently experienced (Hughes & Karp; Wendlandt & Rochlen).

Additionally, many graduates have had inaccurate expectations regarding their credentials, strength of candidacy, and ability to significantly contribute to an

organization upon hire (Cappelli, 2008; Cox & King, 2006). According to Nunan (1999) and Robst (2007), new graduates assume that the attainment of a college degree certifies that they have the requisite knowledge, skills, and abilities to meet expectations to perform successfully in the workplace. In reality, according to Uhalde and Strohl (2006), "educational credentials often serve only as a signaling device. . . employers are really interested in the knowledge, skills, and abilities people bring to the workplace, not their educational credentials" (p. 49). Furthermore, in a study conducted by Bok (2006), 54% of employers indicated that students were not taught the knowledge and skills in college that are essential to success in the workplace. Additionally, 56% indicated that colleges were responsible for this failure because they often refused to consider employer and workplace expectations in the design of program content. These transition issues, according to Wendlandt & Rochlen (2008) have served to further exacerbate an already tenuous situation.

Holmes (2000, 2001) based the Graduate Identity Approach on what is termed as a "social process" or "relational" perspective. In essence, the social/relational approach to identity considers the ways that individuals establish their identities. Holmes (2000, 2001) has supported the idea that graduates have expectations regarding the credentials, attributes, and behaviors that are expected of them and these form their graduate identities (Holmes 1999, 2000, 2001). However, Holmes (2001) also asserted that it is through acknowledgement and recognition of those credentials, attributes, and behaviors by an employer, that one's graduate identity is fully established. He concluded by proposing that graduate identity is a product of both graduates' self-perception

employers' identification of attributes, skills, knowledge, and behaviors that distinguish a graduate (Holmes 1999, 2000, 2001; Jameson & Holden, 2000).

Holmes (2001) has urged educational constituents engaged in the employability skills debate to see the logic of the Graduate Identity Approach. The ongoing misalignment of academic program content to workplace needs renders a new graduate's degree worthless, as employers assign no value or meaning to it. As such, the Graduate Identity Approach serves more as a rationale for engaging employers in curricular and co-curricular program design to accurately reflect the defined knowledge, skills, and abilities expected of a graduate (Bok, 2006; Jameson, & Holden, 2000; Uhalde & Strohl, 2006). Shivpuri and Kim (2004) acknowledged that though graduate employment was not the only goal of postsecondary education, academia must initiate ongoing dialogue with employers to ensure that programs contain the content to meet the needs of the workplace while bringing value to one's degree.

Application of Holmes' Theory

As Holmes' (2001) Graduate Identity Approach is less a theory to be applied and more a perspective to be considered, researchers have not revealed critical review of his work. Other than Holmes' own work, authored independently and in partnership, there are few studies which discuss the Graduate Identity Approach (Hinchcliffe & Jolly, 2010; Jameson & Holden, 2000).

The study conducted by Hinchcliffe and Jolly (2010) on behalf of the Higher Education Academy, entitled *Employer Concepts of Graduate Employability*, involved

garnering employer perceptions regarding graduates and specific competencies, attributes, and behaviors. The researchers proposed an "employer-centric four-stranded concept of identity that comprises value, intellect, social engagement and performance" (Hinchcliffe & Jolly, 2010, p. 8).

The study conducted by Jameson and Holden (2000) focused on hospitality graduate employability skills development and the establishment of the graduate identity as proposed by Holmes (2001). The researchers concluded that the Graduate Identity Approach offers a meaningful perspective to consider employability skills development in higher education as well as their application in the workplace. Further, they supported Holmes' contention that graduate identity is established through a convergence of employer expectations for and graduates' understanding and aspiration of skills, abilities and knowledge that a graduate should possess as a result of earning a degree (Holmes 1999, 2000, 2001; Jameson & Holden). Researchers in both studies reached conclusions similar to Holmes' in terms of employer involvement in affirming graduate identity in relation to professional career roles (Hinchcliffe & Jolly, 2010; Jameson & Holden).

<div align="center">Summary</div>

In summary, there has been noted consistency among various constituencies that graduates' employability skills are a central issue in higher education (Conference Board of Canada, 2000; Harbour, 2005; Markes, 2006; Society for Human, 2008; U.S. Department of Labor, 1991; Wilton, 2008). Researchers have also proposed that in most cases there is a gap between the preparation occurring on college campuses and the skill

application in the workplace (Chung-Herrera et al., 2003; Dunne & Rawlins, 2000; Harbour, 2005). This review of literature has brought a measure of clarity to the understanding of the importance of employability skills to workplace success. Additionally, the review provided information on the topics of employability skills, economic issues, experiential learning, hospitality industry, hospitality management degree programs, and conceptual frameworks of student identity and graduate identity which are relevant to the employability skills as addressed in the study. The literature review contained in this chapter supported the legitimacy of the skills addressed in this research as representative and common to discourse and study of employability skills.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter addresses the specific methods and procedures used to conduct the research. The context of the study, the research questions and the participants are explained. Information related to the instrumentation, pilot test, data collection and analyses, authorization to conduct the study, and originality of the dissertation are also discussed.

Context of the Study

The Rosen College of Hospitality Management at the University of Central Florida, and the RCHM internship program served as the setting for this study. This research site was appropriate for a number reasons:

1. The researcher's position at the institution ensured greater accessibility to the data and data providers as well as to information about the program, institution, and environment;

2. The RCHM program served 2,800 undergraduate students, all of whom must complete three credit hours (approximately 800 hours in the workplace) in a major-related internship, resulting in a robust population of informants (employers) for the study (Rosen, n.d.);

3. The employers who participated in the internship program also recruited and hired new UCF graduates for entry-level/manager-in-training programs and, therefore, had significant knowledge of the situation that was studied;

4. Evaluation of the students by the employer was a component of the mandatory internship program and as such generated an inherent, high rate of return;

5. Located in Orlando, Florida, the RCHM served as a significant labor resource to one of the world's largest tourism markets. As such, most employers asked to provide feedback and guidance to the institution did so to ensure their [employers] specific needs and ideas were known and considered in program design and revisions (Rosen College, n.d.).

<u>Research Questions</u>

Three research questions were used to guide the research. The employability skills considered in the research questions included: (a) communication, (b) work culture, (c) leadership, (d) professional qualities (ethics and self-management), (e) teamwork, (f) conceptual/analytic skills, (g) learning theory and practice, and (h) organization/planningWhat employability skills do employers perceive to be important for entry-level management/management-in-training positions in the hospitality industry?

1. What employability skills competency levels do employers expect for entry-level management/management-in-training positions in the hospitality industry?

2. To what extent do employers perceive Rosen College of Hospitality

   Management interns and new graduates demonstrate the employability skills

   competence expected for entry-level management/management-in-training

   positions in the hospitality industry?

Participants of the Study

The participants in this study represented the census of the entire population of employers

who supervised students in the UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management

internship program during the 2010-2011 academic year (included summer 2010, fall

2010, and spring 2011). Based on student registration data for the internship (course

numbers: HFT 3940, HFT 4941, and HFT 4944), 1,186 employers were identified. They

were e-mailed the survey on July 7, 2011. There were 202 e-mail returns received due to

incorrect or expired e-mail addresses. As a result, the final population for the study was

comprised of 984 employers. The researcher did not have direct access to the contact

information; therefore, the opportunity to locate correct information was not available.

The response rate was 44.8%, with 441 respondents to the survey.

Instrumentation

The survey instrument used to collect data in this non-experimental research study

was titled *Employability Skills Expected of New Graduates in the Hospitality Industry*

(Appendix A). This employer-completed cross-sectional questionnaire was used to

garner the evaluation of interns' and graduates' employability skills.

The instrument included Likert-type scale and open-ended items to address the research questions specific to this study. The employability skills as defined and considered in the Likert-type scale questions were derived from an instrument developed in 2007 by the UCF Office of Experiential Learning in partnership with the University of Cincinnati, Division of Professional Practice to be used as an employer evaluation (Cates & Cedercreutz, 2008; Pacheco & UCF Office of Experiential Learning, 2008). This instrument, *Experiential Learning Co-op/Internship Employer Evaluation of Co-op/Intern Performance*, is copyrighted by the Office of Experiential Learning and accessible on their website at http://www.coop.ucf.edu.

Original UCF Experiential Learning Employer Evaluation Instrument

The data collection instrument developed for this study features terms initially referenced and defined in the UCF Office of Experiential Learning instrument. Because of this, a brief overview of the employer evaluation instrument is required.

Part I of the employer instrument is comprised of 42 items intended to elicit employers' assessments of student employability skills competence in their co-op/internship experience. Part I is divided into 15 sub-sections of employability skills, with each sub-section further divided into items addressing behaviors, knowledge, values, and abilities that exemplify the skill. A 6-point Likert-type scale with response choices ranging from Outstanding (the best or one of the best in the categories) to Unsatisfactory (needs quite a bit of improvement in this area) was used in this part of the instrument. N/A (not applicable or no opportunity to develop this skill) was also a response choice

for items in this section. Of the 15 sub-section headings in Part I, eight were duplicated in the study-specific survey instrument and served as the employability skills being investigated in this study.

Part II of the employer instrument was comprised of open-ended narrative questions used to elicit information regarding students' changes in behavior, strengths, and weaknesses. Additionally, the employers were asked to indicate if the student had been evaluated previously and if the evaluation would be shared with the student. Information from Part II of the survey was not considered or replicated in the current study.

Employability Skills Expected of New Graduates: Study-Specific Survey

The instrument included Likert-type scale and open-ended items to address the research questions specific to this study. The first item on the instrument featured information regarding participation and use of collected data, participants were required to acknowledge their understanding and agreement with the terms of the study. This step was completed using a check box on the instrument.

Items 2-5 were 5-point Likert-type scale questions. The definitions of the employability skills addressed in these items were listed at the beginning of the section. In item 2, respondents were asked to indicate the importance of various employability skills in the workplace. Respondents selected responses that ranged from 1 to 5 where 1 = Not important and 5 = Most important. This question provided the data necessary to answer Research Question 1. Item 3 asked respondents to indicate competency level

expected for each employability skill in the workplace using the same Likert-type scale with responses ranging from 1 = Skill not needed to 5 = Expert. Responses to this question generated the data to answer Research Question 2.

In items 4 and 5, respondents evaluated the employability skills of interns and new graduates, respectively, using a Likert-type scale with measures ranging from 1 = Significantly below expectations to 5 = Significantly above expectations. The responses of employers to items 4 and 5 were used to answer Research Question 3.

Items 6, 7, 8, and 9 were open-ended narrative questions used to elicit information regarding the observed employability skills deficiencies, ideas of programs and activities that address skill development, and other information the respondents elected to present for consideration in this study. Although these items on the survey did not specifically address any of the research questions, it was anticipated that the responses might prove useful in the discussion of proposed interventions to mitigate the employability skills gap, if one emerged.

The data from the remaining items were used to generate descriptive statistics regarding the population: item 10, industry segments; item 11, new graduates' degree program; item 12, interns' major; item 13, interns' academic year; and item 14, interns' internship experience. Respondents were asked to answer each question by recording a check mark in the appropriate available space.

Pilot Study Instrument

Employer Perceptions of Employability Skills was the instrument used in the pilot

study. It is contained in Appendix B. UCF's Institutional Review Board (IRB) indicated

that the pilot study did not require IRB review and approval because the information was

generated to prepare for the actual study and was not, therefore, considered human

subject research. Communication regarding the pilot study and official approval to

proceed with the research from the IRB Office are contained in Appendix C.

Pilot Study Participants

The instrument was piloted on May 12, 2011, at the Florida Career Centers (FCC)

Statewide Job Fair. The event was coordinated by the Career Services office at the

University of Central Florida and was held on UCF's campus in the Arena. Of the 112

employers in attendance to recruit new college graduates at the Statewide Job Fair, a

convenience sample of 107 employers was asked to complete the survey. Hospitality

industry employers were excluded from participation as they are part of the population

that was asked to participate in the actual study.

Pilot Study Data Collection

As the Statewide Job Fair provided face-to face interaction with the sample

members, the instrument was administered in hardcopy to encourage completion at the

event. One day prior to the event, registered employers were sent an e-mail notification

from UCF Career Services on behalf of the researcher advising them of the research

being conducted and encouraging them to participate in the survey. The pilot study

instrument was attached to the e-mail. A sample of the e-mail sent is located in

Appendix D. Assistance in distributing the instrument to the sample was also provided

by the UCF Career Services department. The Career Services staff distributed the survey

to the specified employers as they checked in at the registration table prior to the

beginning of the event. During the check-in process, the Career Services staff referenced

the survey, encouraged employers' participation, and instructed them on the return

process. Additionally, the researcher visited the employer tables throughout the event to

remind them of the survey and ask for their participation. The employers were provided

three options to submit their surveys: (a) by leaving it on their assigned table for pick-up,

(b) giving it to a Career Services staff member, or (c) inserting it into a drop box located

at the employer table upon exiting the event at the end of the day. Of the 107 sample

members, 91 started the survey for a response rate of 85.1%. Of the 91 returned surveys,

9 respondents did not fully complete the survey, resulting in a completion rate of 76.6%.

The missing information resulted when respondents did not complete sections that

required them to evaluate interns or new graduates if they did not have experience in the

hiring/supervision of those individuals into their organization. As the two instrument

sections in question did not influence each other, the remaining data on the incomplete

instruments were used in the analysis.

The pilot test was conducted to gain feedback regarding the appearance and

clarity of the survey items as well as to ascertain whether the questions asked were

providing consistent results. Additionally, information obtained in pilot testing was

valuable in the following discussion of reliability and validity of the survey addendum.

<div align="center">Validity and Reliability</div>

It was important to address validity and reliability for the existing *Experiential

Learning Co-op/Internship Employer Evaluation of Co-op/Intern Performance*

instrument, the *Employability Skills Expected of Interns and New Graduates in the

Hospitality Industry instrument* (study-specific instrument), and the *Employer

Perceptions of Employment* instrument (pilot study) for several reasons. First, the named

and defined employability skills presented in the study-specific addendum instrument

replicated categorical skills featured on the original experiential learning instrument.

Therefore, it was important to review and report the reliability statistics as they applied to

both instruments, as well as establishing the content validity of both.

<div align="center">Validity</div>

Validity refers to the ability of a survey instrument to measure what it claims to

measure (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 2002). The employability skills instruments used for

this study were comprehensive and based on two different types of validity: face validity

and content validity (Robinson, 2006). Content validity indicates that the items in the

questionnaire represent the objective(s) of the instrument (Gall, Gall, & Borg 2003).

Face validity indicates that the questionnaire is pleasing to the eye and applicable for its

intended use (Ary et al., 2002).

<div align="center">80</div>

The University of Cincinnati, Division of Professional Practice (UCDPP) developed the tool being used by UCF's Office of Experiential Learning at the time of the study and previously established validity and reliability of the instrument. In constructing the instrument, the UCDPP enlisted content experts including internal staff and national colleagues to review and evaluate the surveys for face and content validity (Cates & Cedercreutz, 2008; Robinson, 2006). First, the list of employability skills was compiled from existing research on the topic, and employer feedback regarding hiring requirements and program accreditation guidelines was obtained.

Questions on the instrument were developed by Division of Professional Practice faculty in consultation with employer and student focus groups. These experts and focus group participants contributed to the refinement of the instrument and its validation. After review and minor edits, the experts affirmed the validity of the surveys (Cates & Cedercreutz, 2008).

The pilot study of the instrument, *Employer Perceptions of Employability Skills*, and the primary survey instrument, *Employability Skills Expected of New Graduates in the Hospitality Industry*, specific to this study, were also reviewed for face and content validity. Career services and experiential learning directors from the University of Central Florida, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Providence College, who had expertise in college to career transition and employability skills requirements of employers, reviewed the instruments and attested to the face and content validity of each instrument.

In conducting the pilot study, respondents did not provide comments or concerns regarding the terminology, directions, clarity, and structure of the instrument therefore no adjustments were made to the final instrument. Additionally, based on the data generated in the pilot, no changes were made to the final instrument.

Both the pilot instrument and the primary instrument were also tested for readability using the Flesch Reading Ease Test and the Flesch Kincaid Grade Level Test. According to the Flesch Reading Ease Test, the pilot survey scored 30.1, and the primary survey scored 18.2. The Flesch Reading Ease test scores range from 0-100; with lower scores, specifically 0.0-30.0, indicating content that is best comprehended by university graduates (Readability Formulas.com, n.d.). The Flesch Kincaid Grade Level scores of 14.4 for the pilot survey and 18.2 for the primary survey indicated college-level reading skills were most appropriate for understanding these instruments. These results were acceptable for this study for several reasons: (a) the scores were based on syllables, sentence length, sentence structure (including punctuation) and word length; on a subject-specific instrument such as this, the measures were not consistent with narrative writing styles to which these readability formulas are typically applied, and (b) as both of these instruments were designed for completion by employers with responsibility for hiring and supervising college graduates, it may be assumed that most were themselves college graduates, and that as professionals they were capable of reading these survey instruments. Based on the comprehensive review and analysis, the validity of the instrument was assumed.

Reliability

Reliability refers to the extent to which instruments garner consistent results (Ary, et al., 2002; Harris & Ogbonna, 2001). The common measure of reliability is the Cronbach's alpha, and the usual criterion is a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .70 (Harris & Ogbonna, 2001). A Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .70 and above indicates a high degree of internal consistency among the data collected (Harris & Ogbonna, 2001; Hsu et al., 2003).

The reliability of the *Experiential Learning Co-op/Internship Employer Evaluation of Co-op/Intern Performance* instrument was previously confirmed through statistical analysis of 504 surveys (Cates & Cedercreutz, 2008). The Cronbach's alpha confirmed the internal consistency of the instrument on each of the 42 employability skills factors which were categorized into 15 sub-sections (Cates & Cedercreutz). All constructs showed a coefficient alpha larger than 0.80 and implied a high level of reliability (Cates & Cedercreutz; Dillman, 2007). A Cronbach's alpha was not calculated for the pilot and primary survey instruments. Factor loading was not a concern due to survey design in which the factors were previously subjected to analysis and deemed reliable (Dillman). As presented on the pilot and study instruments, the factors were compressed to reflect categorized employability skills and negate further opportunity to reduce the items.

After conducting the pilot study, means, standard deviations, kurtosis and skewness of the data generated from items were analyzed to determine reliability of the instrument. The findings indicated that the data for each of items 2 through 5 approached

the normal distribution, indicating that the instrument was garnering consistent results and offered the reliability needed to proceed.

After the actual study was completed, reliability statistics of the primary survey instrument, *Employability Skills Expected of New Graduates*, were calculated and were consistent with the results found in the pilot. Therefore, it was affirmed that the instrument continued to produce consistent results in the study.

Procedures

The Office of Experiential Learning agreed to administer the instrument specific to this research to employers who participated in the Rosen College of Hospitality Management internship program during the 2011-2012 academic year. The survey was administered in summer 2011, July 7-22, 2011.

Employer contact information recorded in the experiential learning database was used to reach the population for the study. On July 7, 2011, employers were notified via e-mail by the UCF Office of Experiential Learning that they were invited to participate in the study and were directed to access the instrument link using the following url: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Employability_skills. The UCF Experiential Learning Associate Director sent a follow-up reminder e-mail during the second week of the survey period. Appendix E contains samples of these e-mails. For this study, an additional explanation of research (Appendix F) was included. The document explained that the information provided was analyzed for a dissertation study and provided information to the employers regarding participation and consent.

The instrument was administered through SurveyMonkey. The research data were de-identified and accessible only by the researcher who held the SurveyMonkey account. The data were stored on a password-protected computer. For transport, a password protected portable USB device was used. It was anticipated that no more than minimal risk to participants in terms of confidentiality existed.

The data were analyzed and presented so that no individual subject was identified.

Analysis of Data

For this study, IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) © 19.0 was employed. Descriptive and inferential statistical testing was conducted to address the research questions. The specific analysis conducted is detailed for each question in the following paragraphs.

Research Question 1: What employability skills do employers perceive to be important for entry-level management/management-in-training positions in the hospitality industry?

To address Research Question 1, standard descriptive statistics including means standard deviations, standard error of means, frequencies, and sums for each employability skill were calculated. The means were compared and rank ordered. The sums were also compared and rank ordered.

Research Question 2: What employability skills competency levels do employers expect for entry-level management/management-in-training positions in the hospitality industry?

To address Research Question 2, standard descriptive statistics including means standard deviations, standard error of means, frequencies, and sums for each

employability skill were calculated. The means were compared and rank ordered. The

sums were also compared and rank ordered.

Research Question 3: To what extent do employers perceive Rosen College of Hospitality Management interns and new graduates demonstrate the employability skills competence expected for entry-level management/management-in-training positions in the hospitality industry?

To address Research Question 3, standard descriptive statistics including means

standard deviations, standard error of means, frequencies, and sums for each

employability skill were calculated. The means were compared and rank ordered. The

sums were also compared and rank ordered. A comparison of means was used to explore

the employability skills rated importance in relation to the performance evaluation for interns

and new graduates, respectively. Additionally, ANOVAs were used to determine the

relationship between the demographic data (industry, degree, major, academic class standing,

semester of internship) collected on the survey and the performance evaluations for interns

and new graduates, respectively.

The open-ended questions featured on the survey regarding curricular/co-curricular

interventions/activities/programs and training/interventions offered by employers to develop

employability skills in the workplace were also reviewed and informed the researcher as to

potential interventions and recommendations for further study discussed in Chapter 5.

Permission to Conduct the Study

The required process was followed to obtain University of Central Florida

Institutional Review Board (IRB) permission to gather and examine data. The researcher

received an exempted status and was approved to conduct the study. Appendix G features the IRB Study authorization.

Originality Report

As set forth by UCF's College of Graduate Studies, this study is presented in compliance with originality and plagiarism policies. As defined by the dissertation committee chair, the expected similarity index was not to exceed 10%. Following standard practice, the document was submitted to Turnitin.com, an online plagiarism tool subscribed to by UCF. An initial index score of 28% was returned. Following removal of direct quotations and references, a similarity index of 17% was returned. Content previously submitted by the researcher was then excluded, reducing the index to 7%. The remaining matches were each less than 1% and matched to proper names and generally accepted terms. The dissertation was approved by the research committee chair as an original work.

<u>Summary</u>

Although this initial descriptive study focused on a limited population with highly specific characteristics, there was significant opportunity to gain information that would impact employability skills development. The results, when analyzed and interpreted, not only addressed the research questions set forth in this study but also served as evidence for the researcher's recommendations of curricular/co-curricular development, modifications, and enhancements to ensure future graduates are prepared with the

employability skills expected in the workplace. Additionally, the results may likely

inform other researchers of opportunities of research that contribute to the employability

skills knowledge bank.

CHAPTER 4
ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

Chapter 4 features the results of the statistical analyses conducted to answer the

three research questions. All data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 19.0. For all

inferential statistics, $\alpha = .05$ level of significance was used. After the data collection,

means, standard deviations, kurtosis, and skewness of the data generated from items were

analyzed. The findings indicated that the data for each of items 2 through 5 approached

the normal distribution. This indicated that the instrument was garnering consistent

results and offered the reliability needed for analysis and interpretation. Discussion and

interpretation of these results is contained in Chapter 5.

Population

The survey was sent via e-mail to 1,186 employers on July 7, 2011. There were

202 e-mail returns received due to incorrect or expired e-mail addresses. As a result, the

final population for the study was comprised of 984 employers. The researcher did not

have direct access to the contact information; therefore, the opportunity to locate correct

information was not available. The response rate was 44.8%, with 441 respondents to the

survey.

As reported in Table 3, respondents of the survey represented the following

hospitality industry segments: hotels and lodging, event management, attractions,

restaurant, travel and tourism, and transportation. Those respondents who indicated

"other" in an open narrative listed the additional industry segments of healthcare, university housing, and timeshare management. The hotels and lodging segment generated the highest response rate (36.5%) which was not unexpected. First, this segment represented the largest volume of employment opportunities in hospitality. Second, hotels offer a diversity of careers that have been of interest to many graduates of hospitality programs regardless of specific majors. Third, hospitality management was the largest major in the Rosen College, and thus generated a larger population of interns and graduates seeking employment within this segment. Similarly, event management, as the second largest major in the Rosen College, accounted for the next highest response rate of 19.5%. Though attractions was not a major in the college, this industry segment was similar to the hotel and lodging segment in that it offered a versatility of positions and attracts candidates from many majors. As a result, it garnered an 18.8% response rate. For industry segments that aligned to a Rosen major, restaurant generated the lowest response rate, 17.0%, which was expected since it also reflected the smallest enrollment. Travel and tourism, transportation, and other generated the smallest response rates, a combined total of 8.2%. As these segments do not align with specific majors, individuals may not seek opportunities with such employers for an internship or first position at graduation.

Table 3

Hospitality Industry Segment of Respondents

Industry Segment	N	Percentage
Hotels and lodging	161	36.5
Event management	86	19.5
Attractions	83	18.8
Restaurant	75	17.0
Travel and tourism	24	5.4
Transportation	6	1.4
Other	6	1.4
Total	441	100.0

Table 4 reflects the reported earned degrees of Rosen graduates employed in the respondents' organization. The response rates in order of largest to smallest were hospitality management with 71.2%, event management with 16.3%, and restaurant and foodservice management with .9%. These results were consistent with the current enrollment in the Rosen College in order of size: hospitality management (1,400), event management (1,250), and restaurant and foodservice management (150). Additionally, 4.3% of the respondents indicated the degree of the graduates was unknown, and 7.3% reported that they did not hire Rosen graduates.

Table 4

Graduates' Degrees

Graduates Degrees	N	Percentage
Hospitality management	314	71.2
Event management	72	16.3
Restaurant and foodservice management	4	0.9
Degree unknown	19	4.3
Do not hire Rosen graduates	32	7.3
Total	441	100.0

Table 5 features the reported majors of Rosen interns placed at the respondents'

organization. Consistent with the current Rosen College program enrollment, the largest

majors reflected the greatest number of interns.

Table 5

Interns' Majors

Majors	N	Percentage
Hospitality management	242	54.9
Event management	154	34.9
Restaurant and foodservice management	2	.5
Degree unknown	43	9.8
Total	441	100.0

Table 6 reflects the reported academic year (class standing) of the interns. There

was an overwhelming presence (79.4%) of seniors and juniors, represented in the

population. The remaining responses to this survey item were attributed to sophomores at

6.1%, freshmen at 1.8%, with 12.7% of the respondents reporting academic year as unknown.

The predominance of seniors and juniors is not unexpected because although not mandated, the Rosen College strongly discourages enrolling in internship hours prior to the junior year for several reasons. First, a primary purpose and benefit of an internship experience is to apply major-related class learning in a major-related work experience. Therefore, prior to the junior year, students are likely to have only completed minimal coursework in their major. Second, internships often serve as gateways to professional, major-related post-graduation career opportunities, and, therefore, the greatest career benefit is gained by juniors and seniors who are preparing to graduate.

Table 6

Academic Year (Class Standing) of Interns

Academic Year	N	Percentage
Senior	178	40.4
Junior	172	39.0
Sophomore	27	6.1
Freshmen	8	1.8
Academic year unknown	56	12.7
Total	441	100.0

Table 7 reflects the semester of registration in internship hours by students while employed with the respondents' organizations. The reported results appear evenly distributed among the first through third semesters of registration of the internship requirement.

Table 7

Semester of Registration of Internship Hours

Internship Experience	N	Percentage
First semester	107	24.3
Second semester	101	22.9
Third semester	132	29.9
Semester unknown	101	22.9
Total	441	100.0

Research Questions

Three research questions were used to guide the research. The employability

skills considered in the research questions included: (a) communication, (b) work

culture, (c) leadership, (d) professional qualities (ethics and self-management), (e)

teamwork, (f) conceptual/analytic skills, (g) learning theory and practice, and (h)

organization/planning.

Research Question 1

What employability skills do employers perceive to be important for entry-level management/management-in-training positions in the hospitality industry?

In survey item 2, respondents were asked to indicate the importance of various

employability skills in the workplace. Respondents selected responses that ranged from 1

to 5 where 1 = not important and 5 = most important. This question provided the data

necessary to answer Research Question 1. Standard descriptive statistics including means

standard deviations, standard error of means, and sums for each employability skill were

calculated to address this question. The means were compared and rank ordered. The

sums were also compared and rank ordered. These results are presented in Table 8.

Additionally, frequency tables were calculated for these data and are presented in Table

9. Based on the reported responses, the rank ordering of employability skills, from

highest to lowest, was as follows: communication (M = 4.80), professional qualities (M

= 4.54), teamwork (M = 4.51), conceptual/analytic (M = 4.22), work culture (M = 4.20),

organization/planning (M = 4.15), leadership (M = 4.11), and learning theory and

practice (M = 3.73).

Table 8

Rank Order of Importance of Employability Skills

Rank	Skills	N	Sum	Mean	SEM	SD
1	Communication	441	2,118	4.80	.023	.023
2	Professional qualities	441	2,000	4.54	.031	.031
3	Teamwork	441	1,990	4.51	.033	.033
4	Conceptual/analytic	441	1,863	4.22	.039	.039
5	Work culture	441	1,853	4.20	.038	.038
6	Organization/planning	441	1,829	4.15	.046	.046
7	Leadership	441	1,812	4.11	.050	.050
8	Learning theory and practice	436	1,628	3.73	.054	.054

Table 9

Importance of Employability Skills: Frequencies and Percentages (N = 441)

Skills	No Response		Not Important		Slightly Important		Moderately Important		Somewhat Important		Most Important	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Communication	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	3.6	55	12.5	370	83.9
Professional qualities	0	0	0	0	0	0	38	8.6	129	29.3	274	62.1
Teamwork	0	0	4	.9	0	0	49	11.1	117	26.5	275	62.4
Conceptual/analytical	0	0	5	1.1	2	.5	71	16.1	174	39.5	189	42.9
Work Culture	0	0	0	0	10	2.3	77	17.5	168	38.1	186	42.2
Organization/planning	0	0	7	1.6	19	4.3	82	18.6	135	30.6	201	45.6
Leadership	0	0	0	0	29	6.6	64	14.5	143	32.4	198	44.9
Learning theory and practice	5	1.1	28	6.3	35	7.9	76	17.2	183	41.5	114	25.9

Research Question 2

What employability skills or competency levels do employers expect for entry-level management/management-in-training positions in the hospitality industry?

In survey item 3, respondents were directed to indicate competency level expected for each employability skill in the workplace using the same Likert-type scale with responses ranging from 1 = Skill not needed to 5 = Expert. Responses to this question generated the data to answer Research Question 2. Standard descriptive statistics including means standard deviations, standard error of means, and sums for each employability skill were calculated to address this question. The means were compared and rank ordered. The sums were also compared and rank ordered. These results are presented in Table 10. Additionally, frequency tables were calculated for these data and are presented in Table 11. Based on the reported responses, the rank ordering from highest to lowest of employability skills competence was as follows; communication (M = 4.14), teamwork (M = 3.97), professional qualities (M = 3.97), conceptual/analytic (M = 3.73), work culture (M = 3.67), organization/planning (M = 3.59), leadership (M = 3.46), and learning theory and practice (M = 3.37).

Table 10

Rank Order of Expected Competency Levels for Employability Skills in the Workplace

Rank	Skills	N	Sum	Mean	SEM	SD
1	Communication	434	1,798	4.14	.031	.650
2	Teamwork	434	1,725	3.97	.037	.764
3	Professional qualities	434	1,721	3.97	.040	.836
4	Conceptual/analytic	434	1,620	3.73	.038	.797
5	Work Culture	434	1,594	3.67	.048	1.01
6	Organization/planning	434	1,559	3.59	.045	.943
7	Leadership	434	1,501	3.46	.051	1.07
8	Learning theory and practice	427	1,438	3.37	.040	.835

Table 11

Frequencies and Percentages of Expected Competency Levels for Employability Skills in the Workplace (N = 434)

Skills	No Response		Skill Not Needed		Novice		Competent		Proficient		Expert	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Communication	7	1.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	65	14.7	242	54.9	127	28.8
Teamwork	7	1.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	132	29.9	181	41.0	121	27.4
Professional qualities	7	1.6	0	0.0	23	5.2	90	20.4	167	37.9	92	20.9
Conceptual/analytical	7	1.6	0	0.0	13	2.9	172	39.0	167	37.9	82	18.6
Work culture	7	1.6	5	1.1	34	7.7	131	29.7	168	38.1	186	42.2
Organization/planning	7	1.6	2	.5	47	10.7	156	35.4	148	33.6	81	18.4
Leadership	7	1.6	4	.9	89	20.2	120	27.2	142	32.2	79	17.9
Learning theory and practice	14	3.2	28	6.3	60	13.6	189	42.9	139	31.5	39	8.8

Research Question 3

To what extent do employers perceive Rosen College of Hospitality Management interns and new graduates demonstrate the employability skills competence expected for entry-level management/management-in-training positions in the hospitality industry?

In survey items 4 and 5, respondents evaluated the employability skills of interns and new graduates, respectively, using a Likert-type scale with measures ranging from 1 = significantly below expectations to 5 = significantly above expectations. The responses of employers to these items were used to address the multiple parts of Research Question 3. First, standard descriptive statistics including means, standard deviations, standard error of means, frequencies, and sums for each employability skill were calculated. The means were compared and rank ordered. Next, the means and sums for interns and new graduates, respectively, were also compared to the rated importance of employability skills as reported in survey item 2. A series of one-way ANOVA tests were also used to determine the relationship between the performance evaluation for interns and specified demographic data (industry [survey item 10], major [survey item 12], academic class standing [survey item 13], and semester of internship [survey item 14]). Last, several one-way ANOVA tests were performed to determine the relationship between the performance evaluations for graduates and specified demographic data (industry [survey item 10] and degree [survey item 11]).

To conduct the one-way ANOVA tests, two dependent variables were formed. The first dependent variable addressed overall employability skill performance among

Rosen College interns and consisted of a composite score formed from the eight individual sub-skills on which employers rated interns. The composite variable was formed by adding the eight Likert-type scores and dividing by eight, so that the resulting composite variable would maintain the interpretability of being on a 1-to-5 scale of the original survey item 4. The second dependent variable addressed overall skill performance among Rosen College new graduates, as reported in answer to survey item 5 and was formed in an identical fashion as the intern-related composite variable.

Tables 12 and 13 provide a summary of the results regarding the employability skills performance of interns. Based on the reported responses, the rank ordering from highest to lowest, of interns' employability skills performance was as follows: teamwork (M = 3.60), communication (M = 3.43), work culture (M = 3.38), professional qualities (M = 3.35), organization/planning (M = 3.29), conceptual/analytic (M = 3.26), and learning theory and practice (M = 3.23), and leadership (M = 3.19).

Table 12

Rank Order of Employability Skills: Performance of Interns in the Workplace

Rank	Skill	N	Sum	Mean	SEM	SD
1	Teamwork	434	1561	3.60	.038	.796
2	Communication	434	1490	3.43	.038	.796
3	Work culture	434	1466	3.38	.037	.781
4	Professional qualities	434	1455	3.35	.044	.911
5	Organization/planning	434	1426	3.29	.039	.822
6	Conceptual/analytic	434	1417	3.26	.036	.742
7	Learning theory and practice	427	1378	3.23	.035	.720
8	Leadership	434	1384	3.19	.042	.866

Table 13

Frequencies and Percentages of Employability Skills: Performance of Interns in the Workplace (N = 434)

| | Level of Expectation | | | | | | | | | |
| | Significantly Below | | Below | | Meets | | Above | | Significantly Above | |
Skills	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Teamwork	5	1.2	17	3.9	179	41.2	180	41.5	53	12.2
Communication	5	1.2	28	6.5	216	49.8	144	33.2	41	9.4
Work culture	5	1.2	33	7.6	222	51.2	141	32.5	33	7.6
Professional qualities	8	1.8	39	9.0	196	45.2	149	34.3	37	8.5
Organization/planning	14	3.2	28	6.5	244	56.2	116	26.7	32	7.4
Conceptual/analytical	5	1.2	42	9.7	240	55.3	127	29.3	20	4.6
Learning theory and practice	8	1.9	27	6.3	274	64.2	96	22.5	22	5.2
Leadership	8	1.8	61	14.1	210	48.4	131	30.2	20	4.6

Table 14 displays the employer evaluations of the employability skills performance of new graduates. Table 15 displays the frequencies for employer evaluations of the employability skills competence of new graduates. The results indicated that the employers evaluated new graduates' performance in terms of employability skills from highest to lowest as follows: teamwork (M = 3.63), communication (M = 3.55), conceptual/analytic (M = 3.51), professional qualities (M = 3.50), organization/planning (M = 3.44), work culture (M = 3.42), learning theory & practice (M = 3.36), and leadership (M = 3.34).

Table 14

Rank Order of Employability Skills: Performance of New Graduates in the Workplace

Rank	Skills	N	Sum	Mean	SEM	SD
1	Teamwork	440	1596	3.63	.037	.771
2	Communication	440	1564	3.55	.040	.833
3	Conceptual/analytic	440	1545	3.51	.041	.856
4	Professional qualities	440	1539	3.50	.044	.913
5	Organization/planning	440	1513	3.44	.039	.816
6	Work culture	440	1504	3.42	.039	.814
7	Learning theory and practice	440	1480	3.36	.037	.778
8	Leadership	440	1469	3.34	.038	.802

Table 15

Frequencies and Percentages of Employability Skills: Performance of New Graduates in the Workplace (N = 441)

| | Level of Expectation | | | | | | | | | |
| | Significantly Below | | Below | | Meets | | Above | | Significantly Above | |
Skills	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Teamwork	7	1.6	22	5.0	213	48.4	135	30.7	63	14.3
Communication	4	.9	13	3.0	180	40.9	189	43.0	54	12.3
Conceptual/analytical	7	1.6	23	5.2	183	41.6	173	39.3	54	12.3
Professional qualities	9	3.0	26	5.9	197	44.8	148	33.6	60	13.6
Organization/planning	5	1.1	34	7.7	207	47.0	151	34.3	54	12.3
Work Culture	6	1.4	30	6.8	222	50.5	138	31.4	44	10.0
Learning theory and practice	6	1.4	23	5.2	257	58.4	113	25.7	41	9.3
Leadership	4	.9	42	9.5	233	53.0	123	28.0	38	8.6

Table 16 features the comparison of results for employability skills importance, intern performance, and new graduates performance. In comparing the intern and new graduates performance, the rankings are almost identical. The only difference occurs with conceptual/analytic and work culture skills. Conceptual/analytic is ranked third and work culture is ranked sixth in terms of new graduates' performance. The rankings of these skills are flipped for interns' performance with work culture ranking third and conceptual/analytic skills ranked sixth. The rank order of employability skills in terms of importance did not mirror the results for either intern performance or new graduate performance. The two of the top three ranked skills in terms of importance, communication (M = 4.80) and teamwork (M = 4.51), were also the top two ranked skills for both the interns and new graduates, however, the rank order was reversed. Teamwork was the highest ranked skill in terms of performance for both interns (M = 3.60) and new graduates (M = 3.63). Communication was the second highest ranked skill in terms of performance for interns (M = 3.43) and new graduates (M = 3.55). The two lowest scored skills, leadership and learning theory and practice were also the lowest scored skills for both interns and new graduates performance; however, again, the positions were flipped. Leadership (M = 4.11) garnered the second lowest importance score, however, the respondents rated both interns (M = 3.19) and new graduates (M = 3.34) the lowest performance evaluation on this skill. Learning theory and practice (M =3.73) received the lowest importance score while the interns (M = 3.23) and new graduates (M = 3.36) received the second to lowest performance scores for this skill. There was not a consistent pattern for the other importance scores in comparison to the performance

scores of either interns and new graduates. The relevant findings in this comparison of means is that communication and teamwork, the skills, in addition to professional qualities, ranked as most important by employers, were also the highest evaluated skills in terms of performance for both the interns and the new graduates. Similarly, leadership and learning theory and practice, the skills ranked as least important by employers, were also the lowest evaluated skills in terms of performance for both the interns and the new graduates.

Table 16

Employability Skills Importance Rankings: Interns and New Graduates

	Importance			Interns			New Graduates		
Skill	N	Sum	Mean	N	Sum	Mean	N	Sum	Mean
Communication	441	2,118	4.80	434	1,490	3.43	440	1,564	3.55
Professional qualities	441	2,000	4.54	434	1,455	3.35	440	1,539	3.50
Teamwork	441	1,990	4.51	434	1,561	3.60	440	1,596	3.63
Conceptual/analytical	441	1,863	4.22	434	1,417	3.26	440	1,545	3.51
Work culture	441	1,853	4.20	434	1,466	3.38	440	1,504	3.42
Organization/planning	441	1,829	4.15	434	1,426	3.29	440	1,513	3.44
Leadership	441	1,812	4.11	434	1,384	3.19	440	1,469	3.34
Learning theory and practice	436	1,628	3.73	427	1,378	3.23	440	1,480	3.36

Intern Performance by Respondents' Industry

        To address the disparity in group size of reported industry, travel and tourism was merged with other in the calculation of the ANOVA. The remaining segments were independently considered in the evaluation. The institutional food service category was excluded because it did not have any respondents. Prior to conducting the ANOVA, the skewness (-0.12) and kurtosis (1.37) values were calculated and indicated that a normal distribution could be assumed. Additionally, due to the unequal sized groups within the independent variables, Levene's Test was used to test homogeneity of variance. The results of the Levene's Test $F(4, 413) = 0.36$, $p = .84$, indicated that the variances were homogeneous, and the assumptions were not violated. The results of the calculated ANOVA indicated that there was no statistically significant difference, $F(4, 413) = 2.36$, $p = .05$, in rated intern performance between employers in different industries. The partial-η^2 value of .02 indicated that 2% of the variability in rated intern performance was accounted for by employer industry. The mean performance ratings by industry are located in Table 17. Those in the transportation, travel, tourism, and other industries ($M = 3.25$, $SD = 0.60$, $n = 35$) indicated the lowest competency rating, while those in the event management industry ($M = 3.54$, $SD = 0.65$, $n = 81$) indicated the highest performance rating.

Table 17

Intern Total Performance by Employer Industry

Industry	N	M	SD	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower	Upper
Attractions	78	3.31	0.72	3.15	3.47
Event management	81	3.54	0.65	3.40	3.69
Hotels and lodging	152	3.28	0.65	3.18	3.39
Restaurant	72	3.32	0.71	3.15	3.48
Transportation, travel, tourism, and other	35	3.25	0.60	3.05	3.46

Note. $F(4, 413) = 2.36$, $p = .05$, $\eta^2 = .02$.

Intern Performance by Intern Major

The major categories of hospitality management and event management were used in the calculation of the ANOVA. The major unknown response category was omitted due to lack of value to the interpretation of results. The restaurant and foodservice management major, with only two responses, was also omitted for statistical reliability reasons. Prior to conducting the ANOVA, the skewness (-0.08) and kurtosis (1.45) values were calculated and indicated a normal distribution could be assumed. Additionally, due to the unequal sized groups within the independent variables, Levene's Test was used to test homogeneity of variance. The results of the Levene's Test $F(1, 372) = 0.49$, $p = .49$, indicated that the variances were homogeneous, and the assumptions were not violated.

The results of the calculated ANOVA indicated that there was no statistically significant difference, $F(1, 372) = 0.01$, $p = .92$, in rated intern performance between

interns with different majors. The partial-η^2 value of < .001 indicated that there was almost no variability in rated intern performance accounted for by intern major. It is of interest to note that those interns who majored in hospitality management had nearly identical performance ratings (M = 3.34, SD = 0.65, n = 229) to those who majored in event management (M = 3.35, SD = 0.68, n = 145). These results are summarized in Table 18.

Table 18

Intern Total Performance by Intern Major

				95% Confidence Interval	
Industry	*N*	*M*	*SD*	Lower	Upper
Hospitality management	229	3.34	0.65	3.26	3.43
Event management	145	3.35	0.68	3.24	3.46

Note. $F(1, 372) = 0.01$, $p = .92$, $\eta^2 < .001$.

Intern Performance by Intern Academic Year

Intern academic year categories of senior, junior, and freshmen, and sophomore were combined due to minimal response size and were used in the calculation of the ANOVA. The academic year unknown response category was omitted due to lack of value to the interpretation of results. Prior to conducting the ANOVA, the skewness (-0.10) and kurtosis (1.71) values were calculated and indicated a normal distribution could be assumed. Additionally, due to the unequal sized groups within the independent variables, Levene's Test was used to test homogeneity of variance. The results of the

Levene's Test $F(2, 361) = 0.66$, p = .52, indicated that the variances were homogeneous, and the assumptions were not violated.

The results of the calculated ANOVA indicated that there was no statistically significant difference, $F(2, 361) = 0.55$, p = .58, in rated intern performance between interns with different academic standing. The partial-η^2 value of .003 indicated that no variability in rated intern performance could be accounted for by intern academic standing. It is of interest to note that despite a lack of statistical significance, interns who were in their freshman or sophomore years had the highest performance ratings (M = 3.43, SD = 0.76, n = 32), and those in their senior year had the lowest performance ratings (M = 3.32, SD = 0.66, n = 167). These results are summarized in Table 19.

Table 19

Intern Total Performance by Intern Academic Year

| | | | | 95% Confidence Interval | |
Industry	n	M	SD	Lower	Upper
Freshman or sophomore	32	3.43	0.76	3.16	3.71
Junior	165	3.38	0.62	3.29	3.48
Senior	167	3.33	0.66	3.22	3.43

Note. F(2, 361) = 0.55, p = .58, η2 = .003.

Intern Performance by Semester of Internship

Interning semesters consisted of first semester, second semester, and third semester (of the intern's participation in an internship with the employers). Internship

semester information unknown was omitted due to lack of value to the interpretation of results. Prior to conducting the ANOVA, the skewness (-0.13) and kurtosis (1.51) values were calculated and indicated a normal distribution may be assumed. Additionally, due to the unequal sized groups within the independent variables, Levene's Test was used to test homogeneity of variance. The results of the Levene's Test $F(2, 321) = 1.67$, $p = .19$, indicated that the variances are homogeneous and the assumptions were not violated.

The results of the calculated ANOVA indicated that there was a statistically significant difference, $F(2, 321) = 3.66$, $p = .03$, in rated intern performance between interns with differing numbers of semesters of intern participation. The partial-η^2 value of .02 indicated that only 2% of variability, a small effect, of rated intern performance could be accounted for by number of interning semesters. The Scheffe post-hoc tests were run to determine which specific intern experience groups differed significantly from one another. There was a statistically significant difference ($p < .05$) between first and third semester interns. First semester interns had significantly higher performance ratings ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 0.69$, $n = 102$) than did those in their third semester ($M = 3.23$, $SD = 0.70$, $n = 127$). Second semester interns did not differ significantly ($M = 3.40$, $SD = 0.54$, $n = 95$) from those in their first or third semesters. Results are summarized in Table 20.

Table 20

Intern Total Performance by Semesters of Experience

| | | | | 95% Confidence Interval | |
Industry	N	M	SD	Lower	Upper
First semester	102	3.45	0.69	3.32	3.59
Second semester	95	3.40	0.54	3.29	3.51
Third semester	127	3.23	0.70	3.11	3.35

Note. $F(2, 321) = 3.66$, $p = .03$, $\eta^2 < .02$.

New Graduate Performance by Respondent's Industry

To address the disparity in group size of reported industry, travel and tourism was merged with other in the calculation of the ANOVA. The remaining segments were independently considered in the evaluation, and the institutional food service category was excluded because there were no respondents. Prior to conducting the ANOVA, the skewness (-0.02) and kurtosis (.76) values were calculated and indicated that a normal distribution could be assumed. Additionally, due to the unequal size groups within the independent variables, Levene's Test was used to test homogeneity of variance. The results of the Levene's Test, $F(4, 430) = 2.09$, $p = .08$, indicated that the variances were homogeneous, and the assumptions were not violated. The results of the calculated ANOVA indicated that there was no statistically significant difference, $F(4, 430) = 2.06$, $p = .09$, in rated new graduate performance between employers in different industries. The partial-η^2 value of .02 indicated that only 2% of variability, a small effect, in rated new graduate performance accounted for by employer industry. Although the differences were not statistically significant, the mean performance ratings by industry are displayed

in Table 21. Those respondents in the attractions industry (M = 3.31, SD = 0.67, n = 82) indicated the lowest performance ratings, and those in the event management industry (M = 3.58, SD = 0.78, n = 85) indicated the highest performance ratings.

Table 21

New Graduate Total Performance by Employer Industry

				95% Confidence Interval	
Industry	*N*	*M*	*SD*	Lower	Upper
Attractions	82	3.31	0.67	3.17	3.46
Event management	85	3.58	0.78	3.41	3.75
Hotels and lodging	158	3.52	0.66	3.41	3.62
Restaurant	74	3.41	0.72	3.24	3.57
Transportation, travel, tourism, and other	36	3.39	0.58	3.19	3.59

Note. $F(4, 430) = 2.06$, $p = .09$, $\eta^2 = .02$.

New Graduate Performance by New Graduate Degree

The degree categories of hospitality management and event management were used in the calculation of the ANOVA. Categories of (a) degree program not known and (b) do not hire Rosen College new graduates were omitted due to lack of value to the interpretation of results. The restaurant and foodservice management degree, with only four responses, was also omitted due to lack of statistical reliability. Prior to conducting the ANOVA, the skewness (-0.14) and kurtosis (1.25) values were calculated, and the results indicated that a normal distribution could be assumed. Additionally, due to the unequal sized groups within the independent variables, Levene's Test was used to test

homogeneity of variance. The results of the Levene's Test, $F(1, 378) = 1.06$, $p = .30$, indicated that the variances were homogeneous, and the assumptions were not violated.

The results of the calculated ANOVA indicated that there was a statistically significant difference, $F(1, 378) = 6.83$, $p = .01$, in rated new graduate performance between new graduates with different degrees. The partial-η^2 value of .02 indicated that only 2% of variability, a small effect, in rated new graduate performance was accounted for by degree. It is of interest to note that those new graduates who majored in hospitality management had significantly lower performance ratings ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 0.68$, $n = 309$) than did those who majored in event management ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 0.78$, $n = 71$). These results are summarized in Table 22.

Table 22

New Graduate Total Performance by Major

				95% Confidence Interval	
Industry	*n*	*M*	*SD*	Lower	Upper
Hospitality management	309	3.44	0.68	3.37	3.52
Event management	71	3.68	0.78	3.50	3.87

Note. $F(1, 378) = 6.83$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2 = .02$.

Narrative Questions

Respondents were also provided the opportunity, through narrative, open-ended questions on the survey, to provide additional information regarding existing employability skills. Of the four open-ended questions provided on the instrument,

respondents chose to only address those relating to training/interventions their organization offered to develop new graduates' and interns' employability skills and suggestions for curricular/co-curricular enhancements in higher education. The respondents did not provide narratives detailing skills deficiencies nor did they provide any general comments regarding any aspect of the study or subject of employability skills. Less than 6.3% (n = 28) of respondents took advantage of the opportunity to offer comments on these topics. Interestingly, those that did identified the same developmental and engagement activities to address employability skills as proposed by many researchers. The responses clustered categorically into two groups. The first category was comprised of interventions appropriate for integration into the postsecondary setting, such as career development programming (n = 6), partnering with employers (n = 4), integration of skills in the curriculum (n = 9), and integration of skills in experiential learning activities (n = 7). The second category was comprised of interventions employed in the workplace, such as onboarding (n = 4), on-the-job training and development programs (n = 26), and mentoring (n = 19). These responses informed some of the implications for practice and policy discussed in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into the employability skills of the new graduates of the University of Central Florida (UCF) Rosen College of Hospitality Management (RCHM). Specifically the goals were to (a) clarify employer expectations of employability skills needs and the expected level of competence for entry-level management/management-in-training positions, (b) identify any gaps in employability skills competence of RCHM graduates between college preparation and workplace expectations, and (c) reveal opportunities to better prepare graduates to meet employability skills expectations of employers.

Chapter 5 contains a discussion and interpretation of the results generated to address the purpose and goals of this study. Additionally, implications for practice and policy as well as recommendations for future research are presented.

Discussion

Three research questions guided this study. The employability skills considered in the research questions included: (a) communication, (b) work culture, (c) leadership, (d) professional qualities (ethics and self-management), (e) teamwork, (f) conceptual/ analytic skills, (g) learning theory and practice, and (h) organization/planning.

Research Question 1

What employability skills do employers perceive to be important for entry-level management/management-in-training positions in the hospitality industry?

For the survey item that addressed this question, respondents' rating options ranged from 1 to 5 where 1 = not important, 2 = slightly important, 3 = moderately important, 4 = somewhat important, and 5 = most important. Based on the reported responses, the rank order, from highest to lowest, of employability skills importance was as follows; communication ($M = 4.80$), professional qualities ($M = 4.54$), teamwork ($M = 4.51$), conceptual/analytic ($M = 4.22$), work culture ($M = 4.20$), organization/planning ($M = 4.15$), leadership ($M = 4.11$), and learning theory and practice ($M = 3.73$). All the skills, excluding learning theory and practice, were rated at least somewhat important. Within these findings, communication was rated considerably higher than the other skills. A total of 83.9% of respondents rated communication skills as 5 or most important. Professional qualities and teamwork scores were in the midpoint range with ratings between somewhat important and most important. Conceptual/analytic, work culture, organization/planning, and leadership scores were at the lower end of this midpoint range, closer to a true rating of somewhat important. Learning theory and practice scored as moderately important, just short of the somewhat important rating, but considerably lower than the scores received by each of the other skills. Additionally, compared to other skills, there was a greater dispersion of scores for learning theory and practice with 6.3% of respondents indicating the skill was not important. Although afforded the opportunity to do so, respondents did not indicate other skills they deemed important.

Based on these findings, it may be interpreted that the skills list set forth in this study was representative of those skills valued in the hospitality industry, and should be addressed in preparing students for entry into the workplace. Additionally, employers indicated that communication was the most important skill and that learning theory and practice was the least important skill for entry-level management/management-in-training positions in the hospitality industry. The importance of communication skills was not surprising considering the hospitality industry's reliance on direct, personal interactions with guests and customers to deliver most services. Conversely, learning theory and practice may be deemed less important than the other skills because it is not viewed as essential to performing the day-to-day responsibilities of the entry-level management/ management-in-training positions within the hospitality industry. A final finding of note was that leadership was ranked second to last in terms of importance. This result was also unexpected considering the attention the topic of leadership is routinely given in both curricular and co-curricular activities at the Rosen College, and most other institutions of higher education.

<div align="center">Research Question 2</div>

What employability skills competency levels do employers expect for entry-level management/management-in-training positions in the hospitality industry?

For the survey item that addressed this question, respondents chose ratings that ranged from 1 to 5 where 1 = skill not needed, 2 = novice, 3 = competent, 4 = proficient, and 5 = expert. Based on the reported responses, the rank order, from highest to lowest,

<div align="center">119</div>

of employability skills competence was as follows: communication (M = 4.14), teamwork (M = 3.97), professional qualities (M = 3.97), conceptual/analytic (M = 3.73), work culture (M = 3.67), organization/planning (M = 3.59), leadership (M = 3.46), and learning theory and practice (M = 3.37).

Only communication scored in the proficient to expert range of expected skill level. In rating communication skills, 28.8% of respondents chose a rating of expert, and 54.4% chose a rating of proficient. Thus, the score was at the low end of this range, much closer to proficient than to expert in terms of employer expectations of competence for this skill. Once again, due to the nature of the hospitality industry, with a primary focus on customer interactions and service delivery, it was not unexpected that communication competence was required at a higher level than the other skills.

Respondents indicated all remaining skills were required at the competent to proficient level. In reviewing the ratings for teamwork and professional qualities, 41.0% and 37.9%, respectively, of employers selected proficient competence levels. Conceptual/analytic, work culture, and organization/planning skills were clustered above the midpoint of the range, also approaching proficient.

Leadership and learning theory and practice, however, fell below the midpoint in the range, indicating competence, not proficiency, was expected. These scores were less clustered and were more widely dispersed with responses recorded at all rating levels. The majority of responses spanned the three rating categories of novice, competent, and proficient. In combining the results for these rating categories, the percentage of responses were reported as follows: leadership (79.6%) and learning theory and practice

(88.0%). As the employers asserted these rankings for entry-level management/

management-in-training positions, it may be assumed that they perceived candidates at

this level to have had limited leadership experience. Learning theory and practice,

specifically, may be undervalued for entry-level management/management-in-training

positions by employers, making a lower level of competence acceptable. Also,

employers may be more concerned with the new graduates' skills that are relevant to

present job requirements and can be immediately applied in the workplace as opposed to

those that are more developmental or focused on future performance requirements. From

these results, it may be inferred that although employers expected graduates to perform

along these skill dimensions, they did not expect them to perform these skills at high

levels of proficiency at the start of their careers.

<div align="center">Research Question 3</div>

To what extent do employers perceive Rosen College of Hospitality Management
interns and new graduates demonstrate the employability skills competence expected for
entry-level management/management-in-training positions in the hospitality industry?

For the survey items that addressed this question, respondents chose measures

which ranged from 1 to 5, where 1 = significantly below expectations, 2 = below

expectations, 3 = meets expectations, 4 = above expectations, and 5 = significantly above

expectations. Based on the reported responses for interns, the rank order, from highest to

lowest, of interns' employability skills performance was as follows: teamwork (M =

3.60), communication (M = 3.43), work culture (M = 3.38), professional qualities (M =

<div align="center">121</div>

3.35), organization/planning (M = 3.29), conceptual/analytic (M = 3.26), learning theory and practice (M = 3.23), and leadership (M = 3.19). Respondents indicated that interns' performance in regard to all of the skills, at minimum, met expectations.

For teamwork, 41.2% of respondents indicated interns met expectations, and 41.5% indicated interns demonstrated skills above expectations. This result may be attributed to the widespread practice in the Rosen program, as in most hospitality programs, of assigning group projects throughout the curriculum. Student exposure to teaming in academic settings may have better prepared them for similar activities in the workplace.

Clustered just below the midpoint of this range were communication, work culture, and professional qualities skills. Last, organization/planning, conceptual/analytic, learning theory and practice, and leadership scores were positioned near the lower extreme of meeting expectations. For the lowest scored skill, leadership, students may not be given a forum to demonstrate leadership skills during their internship experience. During internships, students are likely to spend more time shadowing and modeling behaviors of more experienced individuals in the organization with only limited opportunity for leading projects or work groups.

Additionally, the results indicated that employers evaluated new graduates' performance in terms of employability skills from highest to lowest as follows: teamwork (M = 3.63), communication (M = 3.55), conceptual/analytic (M = 3.51), professional qualities (M = 3.50), organization/planning (M = 3.44), work culture (M = 3.42), learning theory and practice (M = 3.36), and leadership (M = 3.34). New

graduates' performance for all of the skills were deemed, at minimum, to at least meet expectations by the respondents. The performance scores were clustered around the midpoint between meets and above expectations. The percentages ranged from 78.4% to 83.9%, for all the skills within the meets expectations and above expectations categories. These results signaled that employers were finding a consistent level of acceptable performance from Rosen graduates. Although it was satisfying to learn that the program prepared graduates to perform at or above employer expectations, the percentages indicated there remained broad opportunity to improve performance.

In considering the performance evaluations for both interns and graduates, the performance evaluation score was only slightly higher on each skill for the new graduates compared to the interns. These results were not surprising as it may be expected that interns' skills would be evaluated as emerging and in need of further improvement through subsequent internship experience and coursework. New graduates, on the other hand, would have completed all the requisite coursework and internship experiences which would have provided them with the skill sets necessary to launch their professional careers.

In comparing rank order of skills associated with interns' and new graduates' performance, the rankings were almost identical. The only difference occurred with conceptual/analytic and work culture skills. Conceptual/analytic ranked third and work culture ranked sixth in terms of new graduates' performance. The rankings of these skills were reversed for interns' performance with work culture ranking third and conceptual/analytic skills ranking sixth. The rank order of employability skills in terms

of importance did not mirror the results for either intern performance or new graduate performance. The top two ranked skills in terms of importance, communication (M = 4.80) and teamwork (M = 4.51), were also the top two ranked skills for both the interns and new graduates, but the order was reversed. Teamwork was the highest ranked skill in terms of performance for both interns (M = 3.60) and new graduates (M = 3.63). Communication was the second highest ranked skill in terms of performance for interns (M = 3.43) and new graduates (M = 3.55).

The two lowest scoring skills in terms of importance, leadership and learning theory and practice, were also the lowest scoring skills for both interns and new graduates' performance. Once again, the positions were reversed in that leadership (M = 4.11) garnered the second lowest importance score. In terms of performance, respondents gave both interns (M = 3.19) and new graduates (M = 3.34) the lowest ratings on this skill. Learning theory and practice (M =3.73) received the lowest importance score, and interns (M = 3.23) and new graduates (M = 3.36) received the second lowest performance scores for this skill. There was not a consistent pattern for the remaining importance scores in comparison to the performance scores of either interns or new graduates.

The relevant findings in this comparison of means were that communication and teamwork, the skills ranked most important by employers, were also the highest evaluated skills in terms of performance for both the interns and the new graduates. Similarly, leadership and learning theory and practice, the skills ranked as least important by employers, were also the lowest evaluated skills in terms of performance for both the

interns and the new graduates.   These findings suggest that appropriate levels of

attention, as evidenced by the performance scores and their top importance rankings, has

been devoted to the correct employability skills, communication and teamwork.

The final analyses conducted to address Research Question 3, were a series of

ANOVA tests to study interns' and new graduates' performance in consideration of

demographic variables. It is important to note that there were too few respondents

indicating restaurant majors ($n = 2$) and restaurant degrees ($n = 4$) to be included in the

analysis.

In addressing intern performance with respect to the following criteria (hospitality

industry segment, intern major, and intern academic year), there was no statistical

significance in the findings. This result indicated that these variables had no statistically

significant impact on employability skills performance of interns. Only in considering

the variable, number of internship semesters completed, was there a statistically

significant difference, however, it was determined that only 2% of variability of rated

intern performance was accounted for by number of interning semesters. Due to this

small effect, the difference was not of any practical importance. The findings of the

Scheffe post-hoc tests determined there was a significant difference ($p < .05$) between

first and third semester interns with no difference identified with the second semester.

Also, it was interesting to note that first semester interns had statistically significant

higher performance ratings ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 0.69$, $n = 102$) than did interns in their third

semester ($M = 3.23$, $SD = 0.70$, $n = 127$). This ran contrary to conventional logic. One

would assume that the performance rating would improve as the student completed

progressive internship experiences because the student was not only completing

additional coursework in the major but also was gaining more workplace experience.

Although this study did not seek to make such a determination, one might hypothesize

that the expectations for interns' performance would increase with each subsequent

experience and therefore the respondents may evaluate performance more critically in the

third versus first semesters, resulting in lower scores.

In addressing new graduates' performance with respect to the following criteria

(hospitality industry segment and degree), there was no statistical significance in the

findings related to the hospitality industry segment.   However, in reviewing the

relationship between new graduate performance and degree, statistical significance in the

results was determined. Those graduates with a hospitality management degree had

significantly lower performance ratings (M = 3.44) than did those who majored in event

management (M = 3.68). However, only 2% of variability of rated new graduate

performance was accounted for by degree. Due to this small effect, the difference was

not of any practical importance.

Of interest was that the respondents indicated, regardless of importance level of

employability skills, the interns and graduates had met their expectations in performance

of the skills. There was no consistent finding among the skills that demonstrated success

in significantly exceeding employers' expectations for performance. Consequently, it is

paramount to their reputation that the Rosen College addresses employability skills

performance and strive to improve employer perceptions of the quality and talent of

Rosen graduates.

126

Narrative Questions

As stated in Chapter 4, respondents provided a limited number of comments in the narrative, open-ended questions on the survey. The responses were clustered into two categories: (a) those interventions to be integrated into the postsecondary setting such as career development programming, partnering with employers, integration of skills in the curriculum, and integration of skills in experiential learning activities and (b) those interventions employed in the workplace such as onboarding (orientation, policies, procedures), on-the-job training and development programs, mentoring, and performance evaluation. The results of these inquiries formulated the basis for some of the implications for practice and policy content of this chapter.

Significant Findings

This study revealed several findings critical to the purpose and goals of this study. First, the following employability skills: communication, work culture, leadership, professional qualities (ethics and self-management), teamwork, conceptual/analytic skills, learning theory and practice, and organization/planning were important to employers. As such, it may be inferred that this research captured for study those skills most valued in the hospitality industry. Consequently, these skills belong on the Rosen College agenda of skills to be better addressed in preparing students for entry into the workplace.

Second, employers indicated that communication was the most important skill for entry-level management/management-in-training positions in the hospitality industry. Within the study results, communication scored considerably higher than the other skills

with 83.9% of respondents ranking it most important. The importance of communication skills was not surprising considering hospitality is a service industry focused on guest and customer interactions in order to deliver most services. Furthermore, the quality of the service or product offered is often inseparable from the communication style, professional demeanor, and overall conduct of the employee who delivers it. Correspondingly, communication was the only skill scored above competent, just within the proficient to expert range, for the expected skill level in entry-level management/management-in-training positions. This result further supports that emphasis be placed on communication in preparing graduates. Thus, strong communication skills are essential to ensure standards and expectations of the hospitality organization are upheld.

A third finding was that employers indicated that leadership and learning theory and practice were the least important skills, requiring the lowest level of competency. These skills may be deemed less important than the other skills because employers did not perceive them as vital to fulfilling the day-to-day responsibilities of the entry-level management/ management-in-training positions within the hospitality industry. Subsequently, learning theory and practice and leadership may be more highly valued as one develops professionally over the course of a career. As the employers asserted these rankings for entry-level management/management-in-training positions, it may be assumed that they perceived candidates at this level to have had limited leadership experience. Furthermore, in recognizing that leadership skills are often cultivated through experience and maturation, employers may think it is not necessarily appropriate

or even relevant to have high expectations of leadership skills for someone initially launching his or her professional career. Learning theory and practice may be undervalued for entry-level management/management-in-training positions by employers, resulting in a lower accepted level of competence. Employers may be more concerned with the new graduates' skills that are relevant to present job requirements and can be immediately applied in the workplace as opposed to those that are more developmental or focused on future performance requirements.

The fourth important finding focused on the performance evaluations for both interns and new graduates. All of the skills were deemed by respondents to, at minimum, meet their expectations for interns' and new graduates' performance. For interns, only teamwork recorded a result slightly over the mid-point between meets and above expectations. The new graduates' performance scores clustered around the midpoint between meets and above expectations. These results clearly signaled that employers were finding a consistent acceptable level of performance from Rosen graduates that was needed for entry-level management/management-in-training positions. Though it was satisfying to learn that the program was preparing graduates to perform at, or marginally above, employer expectations, there still exists ample opportunity to improve performance to further exceed expectations. Through better employability skills preparation, the talent and skills of new graduates grows, as does their value to their future employers. In turn the reputation of the Rosen College of Hospitality Management is enhanced.

<u>Implications for Practice and Policy</u>

As previously noted, the employability skills studied in this research were all found to be important to employers. Specifically, communication was rated the most important skill while learning theory and practice and leadership were rated least important. The study did not reveal an employer perception of a significant employability skills deficiency in terms of the preparation and performance of Rosen College of Hospitality Management new graduates. At the same time, the study did not reveal these same new graduates were especially impressing their new employers with exceptional employability skill sets. Consequently, there exists an opportunity and imperative to enhance employability skills development at the Rosen College.

In revisiting the conceptual frameworks of identity theory posed in this study, implications regarding practice and policy were revealed. Within the classroom and in partnership with employers, Chickering's Theory of Student Identity Development may serve as a framework to integrate employability skills in the preparation of students for the professional workplace. The significant findings detailed above and specific to the importance, competence, and performance evaluations of interns' and new graduates' employability skills serve as a basis for the recommendations set forth. In addition, prevailing themes from the narrative questions revealed interventions to address the employability skills gap and contributed to this practice and policy discussion.

The interventions proposed by respondents aligned to other study results, and may be categorized as those relevant to the academic setting or the workplace setting. Throughout the narrative responses, employers stressed that more employability skills

development needed to occur at the Rosen College. The employers proposed several opportunities to develop employability skills that coincided with recommendations of researchers, including career development programming, partnering with employers, and integration of skills in the curriculum and in experiential learning activities (Andrews & Higson, 2008; Cox & King, 2006; McQuaid, 2006; Raybould & Sheedy, 2005).

As previously discussed in introducing Chickering's Theory of Student Identity as a framework for this study, employers have long espoused the imperative of balancing intellectual, technical, and psychosocial development in higher education (Hersh, 1997). This discourse was especially important in considering employability skills development needed for transition to the workplace and future career success (Terenzini, 1987; Thieke, 1994). Within their narrative submissions, employers stated that enhancing career development programming with workshop series and for-credit courses offers significant opportunity to do so. University career services offices have often served as a forum for engaged discussion and collaboration on programs and services regarding graduate preparation and employability skills. This opportunity simultaneously encourages the application of Chickering's theory and incorporation of the developmental vectors into the co-curricular content of this career programming. Aligning the employability skills content to the vectors as previously proposed allows for organized and defined progression in skill development that contributes to a higher caliber of prepared, professional graduates.

In addition to the aforementioned implications for practice, a policy issue associated with this recommendation centers on the mission of career services specific to

offering courses for credit. As UCF Career Services is a unit of a traditional student

affairs division, Student Development and Enrollment Services, and not an academic

division, it is not organized in terms of personnel, resources, and funding to coordinate

and facilitate credit courses. Subsequently, shifts in departmental mission and allocation

of resources would need to be considered should the decision be made to offer credit

courses addressing employability skills through Career Services.

Casner-Lotto and Barrington (2006) supported Harkin (2003) in stressing that

only through the partnership of higher education and employers, to integrate

employability skills into the core of academics, would graduates truly be prepared to

succeed in the contemporary workplace. Employer involvement in curriculum

development and review, academic program advisory committees, course content, and

other student programs such as student project mentorship and judging, ensures that there

is alignment between the preparation of the graduate and the expectation of the employer.

Specifically, the respondents emphasized that employability skills integration into the

curriculum must expand beyond the internship experience, a concept fostered by

researchers engaged in the employability skills debate (Herr & Johnson, 1989; Stasz et

al., 1993). According to Stasz et al. (1993), the best format for students to learn

employability skills occurs when skills are featured in the course goals. These skills must

be specifically and explicitly addressed in the curriculum. When clearly acknowledged

in the course content, according to Herr and Johnson (1989) and Stasz et al. (1993),

employability skills and traits are easily teachable.

In consideration of this philosophy, it is important to note that the Rosen College currently offers Hospitality Communications (HFT4286) which proposes the following course learning goals: (a) students will understand the critical role of effective communications in hospitality management, (b) students will learn effective communications to prepare them to be a leader in hospitality management, and (c) students will cultivate communication and marketing skills to ensure they are professionally prepared (Rosen College, n.d.). Clearly, the intent to foster strong communication skills already exists. However, as the results imply, there is further opportunity to advance the Rosen graduates' talents in this area. Therefore, a review of this specific curriculum involving input from employers is essential to ensuring that correct communication content (skills and knowledge) is being addressed and to identifying modifications to improve performance of new graduates in the workplace.

Additionally, it is important to note that the Rosen College also currently offers a course in leadership entitled Leadership and Strategic Management in Hospitality Industry (HFT 4295). Although such coursework may prove important to long-term professional performance, the study results indicate it is not imperative to the new graduates' success in his/her first position after graduation. Therefore, in consideration of employers' low evaluation of leadership in terms of importance and expected competence level, the Rosen College might want to consider de-emphasizing leadership in the curriculum. The time and attention within the course, at least at the undergraduate level, may be better used in cultivating those skills (communication, professional qualities, and teamwork) which were more highly valued by the employers in the study.

133

Respondents also provided feedback and recommendations regarding the Rosen College internship program. First, respondents overwhelmingly indicated that the internship was an essential element to employability skills development and an overall effective program. As supported by decades of research, when integrated with academics, internships, and experiential learning opportunities in general, offer an exceptional forum for students to validate and affirm classroom learning. This is a principle consistent with Holmes' Graduate Identity Approach (Andrews & Higson, 2008; Cox & King, 2006; McQuaid, 2006; Raybould & Sheedy, 2005).

Second, within classroom settings, students learn employability skills best when there is an integration of content and activities that mirror those experienced in the workplace (U.S. Department of Labor, 1991). According to Berryman (1991), a consistent challenge in higher education is teaching skills and knowledge in a classroom setting independent of the environment in which they will ultimately be employed. In this study, some respondents, however, recommended increasing the rigor and critical assessment of students in the Rosen internship program by instituting a more formalized curriculum and course structure. It was suggested that content be developed with a specific focus on employability skills and a direct application and assessment in the internship workplace.

As proposed by Harkin (2003) and seconded by the respondents in this study, faculty should be encouraged and supported to cultivate an understanding of their roles and responsibility in aligning curriculum to workplace performance standards determined by employers (Junge et al., 1984). Thus, in terms of implications affecting policy,

professional development release should be provided for faculty members to better understand employability skills and to ascertain knowledge and skills on how to incorporate such content into their courses.

Additionally, in order to incorporate more employability skills content, and specifically communication, professional qualities, and teamwork content, across the curriculum of the college, there may be specific implications for the curriculum committee of the Rosen College. Should adjustments be made and employability skills coverage across the curriculum initiated, the evaluation of instruction in the college may need to be adjusted to respond to these changes.

A promising implication lies in communication, not only as the most valued skill, but the ease of its integration into content across the curriculum and within co-curricular programming. For example, regardless of subject matter, most classes can readily incorporate writing and presentation assignments into the syllabus. Integration enables students to hone their skills in communication and to be better prepared to excel in the workplace with a skill set that consistently exceeds employers' expectations.

Furthermore, in accord with Holmes' (1993) Graduate Identity Approach, it was proposed that employers influence the transition process for graduates into the workplace by addressing socialization and expectancy. It is concerns, such as socialization and expectancy that, if not appropriately managed during the transition from college to the workplace, contribute to graduate performance issues and manifest as feelings of isolation and disenfranchisement (Wilton, 2008). Another opportunity exists in sharing

Chickering's Student Identity Theory with employers as a framework to ease graduate transition to the professional workplace.

From the narrative responses, employer enhancement of onboarding (orientation, policy and procedure manuals, socialization with new colleagues) and training and development programs that address the unique personalities and contributions of new graduates as employees as they enter the workplace was proposed (Mason et al., 2009).

Additionally, consistent with prior research, assigning new graduates a more experienced employee as a mentor was recommended repeatedly by the survey respondents (Mason et al., 2009; Tomlinson, 2007). It has been asserted that, through mentor relationships, understanding of the culture and adjustment to the organization can be enhanced for new employees (Tomlinson, 2007). Mentoring also provides long-standing employees the opportunity to get to better understand new employees. Through building rapport and identifying shared experiences as well as goals, Tomlinson (2007) argues that the graduates are more likely to be welcomed and nurtured in their new roles and less likely to feel marginalized and isolated.

Finally, the concept of performance management, to include goal setting and formative evaluation, was suggested as a process that offers opportunities to improve graduate performance, retention, and success through guidance, motivation, and encouragement. Clearly, this study has revealed several opportunities for employers to enhance and expand practices that positively influence the transition of new graduates into the professional workplace.

136

<u>Recommendations for Future Research</u>

The exploratory nature of this study and its focus on a highly specific population of students and employers limits the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, this research should be applied with caution to populations and situations outside of this study context.

As a result, there exists the opportunity to conduct similar research with other populations, academic programs, and other industries. Further research involving the replication of this study, using human resources professionals instead of supervisors as the population may prove valuable. A comparative study among various industries or among peer institutions, for example, affords an excellent opportunity to better understand the skills agenda from a macro-perspective. Additionally, as hospitality is the most globalized industry in the world, research with an international focus should be undertaken to explore the skills required of graduates seeking employment outside the United States. Furthermore, the effect of generational differences on employability skills is also a topic that it is important to explore in future study.

This study has also revealed the necessity to explore the topic of employability skills via other research methods. A triangulated study in which evaluation data is gathered from students, faculty, and employers and compared may provide insight into gaps that exist between preparation and performance standards and expectations. A qualitative study involving any or all of the aforementioned populations may reveal highly specific information that informs on existing and potential interventions. A longitudinal study tracking the population's performance as interns, new graduates and

young professionals also offers a significant opportunity to gather information regarding further learning and development of skills, workplace application of skills, and implications of skills competence or deficiency on workplace success.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this exploratory study provided insight into the employability skills of the new graduates of the University of Central Florida (UCF) Rosen College of Hospitality Management. The results, when analyzed and interpreted, informed on employer expectations of employability skills needs, competence level for skills expected for entry-level management/management-in-training positions and employability skills performance gaps that exist in performance of RCHM graduates related to employer expectations. Specifically, the employers indicated that communication and teamwork were the most important employability skills and leadership and learning theory and practice were the least important employability skills. Furthermore, new graduates were found to be meeting employers' expectations. However, there exists a definite potential to improve the employability skills performance of new graduates. Also realized was the final goal of the study, to identify interventions in the higher education and career environments that bridge the employability skills gap. Specific interventions presented included: career development programming, partnering with employers, integration of skills in the curriculum and experiential learning activities, onboarding (orientation, policies, procedures), on-the-job training and development programs, mentoring, and performance evaluation. The findings in this study have contributed to the global

138

discourse surrounding the employability skills agenda and the goal of ensuring that

graduates are prepared to launch and sustain their professional careers.

APPENDIX A
DISSERTATION INSTRUMENT: EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS EXPECTED OF NEW
GRADUATES IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

32826-3246, by E-mail at irb@mail.ucf.edu, or by phone at (407) 823-2901.

By checking the box below you are acknowledging that you understand the purpose of this study and that you consent to your responses contributing to the dataset for this dissertation study.

◯ I consent

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS EXPECTED OF NEW GRADUATES IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS: PLEASE REFER TO THESE DEFINITIONS AS YOU COMPLETE THIS SURVEY

COMMUNICATION: speak, write, present, listen

CONCEPTUAL/ANALYTIC SKILLS: evaluate situations, problem-solve, make decisions, identify/suggest solutions

PROFESSIONAL QUALITIES: assume responsibility, accountable, self-confidence, honesty, integrity, ethical, initiative, positive attitude

WORK CULTURE: understand & work within culture of group, respect diversity, politics, & social implications of actions

TEAMWORK: work with others, contribute to shared goals, flexible, adaptable, collaborate on multidisciplinary teams

ORGANIZATION/PLANNING: manage projects/resources/time, set goals/priorities, multi-task

LEADERSHIP: give direction, guidance & training, motivates, manage conflict

LEARNING THEORY & PRACTICE: learn quickly, access/apply knowledge/classroom learning to work

2. Please indicate the IMPORTANCE of each skill for entry-level management/ management-in-training positions in the workplace.

	Not important	Slightly important	Moderately important	Somewhat important	Most important
Communication	○	○	○	○	○
Conceptual/Analytic Skills	○	○	○	○	○
Professional Qualities	○	○	○	○	○
Work Culture	○	○	○	○	○
Teamwork	○	○	○	○	○
Organization/ Planning	○	○	○	○	○
Leadership	○	○	○	○	○
Learning Theory & Practice	○	○	○	○	○

Other (please specify)

[   ]

143

3. Please indicate the LEVEL OF SKILL that you expect for entry-level management/ management-in-training positions in the workplace.

	Skill not needed	Novice	Competent	Proficient	Expert
Communication	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Conceptual/Analytic Skills	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Professional Qualities	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Work Culture	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Teamwork	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Organization/ Planning	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Leadership	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Learning Theory & Practice	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Other (please specify)

[   ]

4. Please indicate to what extent Rosen College INTERNS employability skill competence meets your expectation for entry-level management/management-in-training positions in the workplace.

	Significantly below expectations	Below expectations	Meets expectations	Above expectations	Significantly above expectations
Communication	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Conceptual/Analytic Skills	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Professional Qualities	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Work Culture	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Teamwork	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Organization/ Planning	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Leadership	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Learning Theory & Practice	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Other (please specify)

[   ]

5. Please indicate to what extent Rosen College NEW GRADUATES employability skill competence meets your expectation for entry-level management/management-in-training positions in the workplace.

	Significantly below expectations	Below expectations	Meets expectations	Above expectations	Significantly above expectations
Communication	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Conceptual/Analytic Skills	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Professional Qualities	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Work Culture	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Teamwork	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Organization/ Planning	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Leadership	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Learning Theory & Practice	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Other (please specify)

[   ]

6. If you perceive a gap between employability skills competence and your expectations of Rosen College interns and new graduates, please identify which elements of the skills are missing/deficient.

Interns [   ]

New
Graduates [   ]

7. Please describe training/interventions (on-the-job training, professional development course, mentoring, etc.) you/your organization offer to develop employability skills.

Interns [   ]

New Graduates [   ]

8. Please share any ideas for curricular/co-curricular interventions/activities/programs that the Rosen College might implement to improve employability skills of graduates.

[   ]

9. Please provide any additional information and comments not addressed in previous questions.

[   ]

✱10. Please indicate the hospitality industry/field in which you work.

○ Attractions

○ Event Management

○ Hotels & Lodging

○ Institutional Food Service

○ Restaurant

○ Transportation

○ Travel & Tourism

Other (please specify)

[_____]

✱11. Please indicate from which degree program you hire Rosen College NEW GRADUATES.

○ Hospitality Management

○ Event Management

○ Restaurant and Foodservice Management

○ Degree program is not known.

○ Do not hire Rosen College new graduates.

✱12. Please indicate the major of your Rosen College INTERN.

○ Hospitality Management

○ Event Management

○ Restaurant and Foodservice Management

○ Intern's major is not known.

✱13. Please indicate intern's academic year.

○ Senior

○ Junior

○ Sophomore

○ Freshman

○ Academic year is not known.

✱14. Please indicate if this is the student's first, second, or third internship experience.

◯ Third internship

◯ Second internship

◯ First internship

◯ Information is not known.

Thank you for your time and participation in completing this research survey.

APPENDIX B
PILOT STUDY: EMPLOYER PERCEPTIONS OF EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

Dissertation research pilot study: *Employer Perceptions of Employability Skills*

Thank you for agreeing to pilot this survey which will contribute to dissertation research being conducted regarding employability skills preparation of internship students and new college graduates at the University of Central Florida. The purpose of the study is to elicit employer perceptions of employability skills needed in the professional workplace and to determine if UCF interns and new graduates are meeting the expectations of employers, in terms of employability skills preparedness. The employability skills or "soft skills" addressed in this instrument include communication, conceptual/analytic skills, professional qualities, work culture, teamwork, organization/ planning, leadership, and learning theory and practice. These skills are defined within the survey.

Please note: survey participants must be 18 years of age or older. Please complete the survey, addressing every question, as possible. Your responses to the survey questions are very important but so too is any feedback that you may provide regarding the structure and clarity of the survey instrument itself. Please return the survey to either a University of Central Florida Career Services staff member or you may leave the instrument on your table for pick-up at the close of today's career fair.

Best Regards,

Amy Kleeman

Time needed to complete survey instrument:

Terminology: *Please indicate any terms/phrasing that you did not understand or that were confusing.*

Directions: *Please indicate any issues with knowing how to complete the survey instrument.*

Clarity: *Please indicate any issues with understanding the questions.*

Structure: *Please indicate any issues regarding the logical ordering of questions and the appearance of the instrument (for example font size or style, spacing, etc.).*

   Thank you for your time and participation in completing this research survey.

Dissertation research pilot study: *Employer Perceptions of Employability Skills*

Please indicate the academic college(s) that you are recruiting from today.		
Arts & Humanities	Engineering & Computer Science	Biomedical/ Medicine/ Nursing
Business	Health & Public Affairs	Optics & Photonics
Education	Hospitality Management	Sciences

Employability Skills: *please refer to these definitions as you complete this survey*
Communication: *speak, write, present, listen*
Conceptual/Analytic Skills: *evaluate situations, problem-solve, make decisions, identify/suggest solutions*
Professional Qualities: *assume responsibility, accountable, self-confidence, honesty, integrity, ethical, initiative, positive attitude*
Work Culture: *understand & work within culture of group, respect diversity, politics, & social implications of actions*
Teamwork: *work with others, contribute to shared goals, flexible, adaptable, collaborate on multidisciplinary teams*
Organization/ Planning: *manage projects/resources/time, set goals/priorities, multi-task*
Leadership: *give direction, guidance & training, motivates, manage conflict*
Learning Theory & Practice: *learn quickly, access/apply knowledge/classroom learning to work*

Please refer to the beginning of the survey instrument for definitions of the following employability skills.	Please indicate the importance of each skill for entry-level management/ management-in-training positions in the workplace.					Please indicate the level of skill that you expect for entry-level management/ management-in-training positions in the workplace.				
	Not important	Slightly important	Moderately important	Somewhat important	Most important	Skill not needed	Novice	Competent	Proficient	Expert
Communication	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Conceptual/Analytic Skills	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Professional Qualities	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Work Culture	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Teamwork	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Organization/ Planning	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Leadership	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Learning Theory &Practice	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Please add other skills below.										
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

Please continue to the next page.

Please indicate to what extent UCF interns' and new graduates' employability skill competence meets your expectation for entry-level management/management-in-training positions in the workplace.											
Please refer to the beginning of the survey instrument for definitions of the following employability skills.	**INTERNS**						**New GRADUATES**				
	Significantly below expectations	Below expectations	Meets expectations	Above expectations	Significantly above expectations		Significantly below expectations	Below expectations	Meets expectations	Above expectations	Significantly above expectations
Communication	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
Conceptual/Analytic Skills	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
Professional Qualities	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
Work Culture	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
Teamwork	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
Organization/ Planning	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
Leadership	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
Learning Theory & Practice	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
Please add other skills below.											
	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5

Please indicate how UCF interns and new graduates compare to those you recruit from other universities.											
"UCF interns/new graduates are _____ as compared to those from other universities."	**INTERNS**						**New GRADUATES**				
	Significantly less prepared	Less prepared	Equivalently prepared	More prepared	Significantly more prepared		Significantly less prepared	Less prepared	Equivalently prepared	More prepared	Significantly more prepared
Academics *(academic/program knowledge)*	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
Functional Job Skills *(skills specific to career/field)*	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
Employability Skills *(as listed previously)*	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
Overall Preparation	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5

Please continue to the next page.

If you perceive a gap between employability skills competence and your expectations, please identify which elements of the skills are missing/deficient and any ideas to further teach/develop those skills.	
INTERNS	**New GRADUATES**

Please describe training/interventions (on-the-job training, professional development course, mentoring, etc.) you/your organization offer to develop employability skills.	
INTERNS	**New GRADUATES**

Please provide any additional information and comments not addressed in previous questions.

Thank you for your time and participation in completing this research survey.

APPENDIX C
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD PILOT STUDY APPROVAL

From: Joanne Muratori
Sent: Tuesday, May 17, 2011 3:20 PM
To: Amy Kleeman
Subject: RE: Dissertation Pilot Study

Amy:

Sorry for the delay. Per our phone conversation, if you are using the pilot to refine the survey questions, establish validity and reliability, then you do not need to get IRB approval at this time. If you were planning to use the survey responses as part of your research data, then you would.

If you have other questions, please phone the IRB office.

Regards,

Joanne

Joanne Muratori, M.A., CIM
IRB office
University of Central Florida
Office of Research & Commercialization
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501
Orlando, FL 32826-3246
Phone: 407-823-2901
Fax: 407-823-3299
joanne.muratori@ucf.edu

NOTE: Change in e-mail address

APPENDIX D
EMPLOYER COMMUNICATION (PILOT STUDY)

From: csrecruit@mail.ucf.edu [mailto:csrecruit@mail.ucf.edu]
Sent: Wednesday, May 11, 2011 3:39 PM
To: xxx
Subject: Statewide Job Fair: Pilot Study Survey Request

Greetings from UCF Career Services! We are looking forward to welcoming you to campus tomorrow for the annual Florida Career Centers Statewide Job Fair.

I have a special request of all of our employer representatives attending tomorrow. I am in the dissertation process for my doctorate in Educational Leadership- Higher Education Administration at UCF. As part of this process, I will be conducting research regarding employer perceptions of UCF internship students and new baccalaureate graduates in terms of employability skills competence. At this point, I am conducting a pilot study to ensure the validity of the survey instrument I will be using in my final research (basically ensuring that the terminology and questions are clear, the structure and format are well-ordered, etc.). More details are included in the survey instrument (which I have attached).

We will be handing out the survey at the career fair tomorrow and hope that you will take a few minutes to complete the survey and provide feedback.

Your participation is completely voluntary and of course greatly appreciated.

Thank you!

Amy Kleeman
Director, Employer Relations
Career Services
University of Central Florida

This email message and any attachments contain information which may be privileged and confidential. If you are not the intended recipient or have received this transmission in error, please notify the sender immediately and destroy all electronic and hard copies of the communication, including attachments. Any disclosure, copying, distribution or use of this information is strictly prohibited. Please consider the environment before printing this e-mail.

APPENDIX E
EMPLOYER COMMUNICATIONS (STUDY SURVEY)

From: xxx
Sent: Thursday, July 07, 2011 4:14 AM
To: xxx
Subject: UCF Survey

Greetings from the University of Central Florida Office of Experiential Learning! We appreciate your ongoing support and partnership in providing Rosen College of Hospitality Management students invaluable internship experiences which enhance their learning and contribute to their academic success.

We are requesting your participation in a dissertation survey being conducted by Amy Parker Kleeman, doctoral candidate in the University of Central Florida, College of Education. The dissertation study is entitled *EMPLOYER PERCEPTIONS: Employability Skills expected of new graduates in the Hospitality Industry.*

If you graciously choose to participate, your responses to the survey questions will form the dataset for the dissertation study regarding employer perceptions of employability skills needed in the hospitality industry and expectations of hospitality management interns and new graduates competence at those employability skills.

The information gained through this research will inform the current status of preparation in terms of employability skills, identify gaps in student preparation, and indicate opportunities to better prepare graduates with employability skills needed and expected by employers in the hospitality industry workplace. Ultimately, this information may be shared with the Rosen College of Hospitality Management, UCF Career Services, and the UCF Office of Experiential Learning for use in curricular/co-curricular program design and modification.

Your participation is completely voluntary and of course greatly appreciated.
Your responses will remain confidential and the data collected will be analyzed at the group level only. The survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Please access the survey online at: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Employability_skills

If you have questions or concerns regarding this study, or would like a copy of the final results as published in the dissertation, please contact Amy Parker Kleeman, at (407) 590-9666 or by e-mail at Amy.Kleeman@ucf.edu.

Thank you in advance!

From: xxx@ucf.edu]
Sent: Wednesday, July 13, 2011 2:19 PM
To: xxx
Subject: UCF Survey - Reminder

Greetings from the University of Central Florida Office of Experiential Learning! This is a reminder encouraging you to participate in a dissertation survey being conducted by Amy Parker Kleeman, doctoral candidate in the University of Central Florida College of Education. The dissertation study is entitled *EMPLOYER PERCEPTIONS: Employability Skills expected of new graduates IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY*.

If you have already completed the survey, thank you for your assistance, and please disregard this E-mail. If you have not, please take a few moments to read on and consider assisting with this request.

If you graciously choose to participate, your responses to the survey questions will form the dataset for the dissertation study regarding employer perceptions of employability skills needed in the hospitality industry and expectations of hospitality management interns and new graduates competence at those employability skills.

The information gained through this research will inform the current status of preparation in terms of employability skills, identify gaps in student preparation, and indicate opportunities to better prepare graduates with employability skills needed and expected by employers in the hospitality industry workplace. Ultimately, this information may be shared with the Rosen College of Hospitality Management, UCF Career Services, and the UCF Office of Experiential Learning for use in curricular/co-curricular program design and modification.

Your participation is completely voluntary and of course greatly appreciated. Your responses will remain confidential and the data collected will be analyzed at the group level only. The survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Please access the survey online at: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Employability_skills

If you have questions or concerns regarding this study, or would like a copy of the final results as published in the dissertation, please contact Amy Parker Kleeman, at (407) 590-9666 or by e-mail at Amy.Kleeman@ucf.edu.

We appreciate your ongoing support and partnership in providing Rosen College of Hospitality Management students invaluable internship experiences which enhance their learning and contribute to their academic success.

Thank you!

APPENDIX F
EXPLANATION OF RESEARCH

EXPLANATION OF RESEARCH

Title of Project: EMPLOYER PERCEPTIONS: EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS IN THE
HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

Principal Investigator: Amy Kleeman
Faculty Supervisor: Tammy Boyd, Ph.D.

You are invited to participate in a research study. Your responses to the following
questions will form the dataset for a dissertation study regarding employer perceptions of
employability skills needed in the hospitality industry and expectations of hospitality
management interns' and new graduates' competence at those employability skills.

The information gained through this research will inform on the current status of
preparation in terms of employability skills, identify gaps in student preparation, and
indicate opportunities to better prepare graduates with employability skills needed and
expected by employers in the hospitality industry workplace. Ultimately this information
may be shared with the Rosen College of Hospitality Management, UCF Career Services,
and The UCF Office of Experiential Learning, for use in curricular/co-curricular program
design and modification.

Your participation is completely voluntary and involves answering the following
questions, which will take less than 10 minutes to complete.

Your responses will remain confidential and the data I collect will be analyzed at the
group level only. You do not have to answer any question you'd rather not answer.
There are no consequences if you decide to, or not to, complete the questions. There is
no compensation, benefit, or known risk associated with participation. By completing
the following survey questions you are consenting to participate.

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, please contact Amy Kleeman, Doctoral
Student, Educational Leadership, Higher Education Track, UCF College of Education at
(407) 590-9666 or by E-mail at Amy.Kleeman@ucf.edu or Dr. Tammy Boyd, Faculty
Supervisor, Department of Educational and Human Sciences, UCF College of Education
at (407) 823-5179 or by E-mail at Tammy.Boyd@ucf.edu

Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (UCF IRB). This research has been reviewed and approved by the IRB. For information about the rights of people who take part in research, please contact: Institutional Review Board, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Ste. 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 or by phone at (407) 823-2901.

APPENDIX G
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL TO CONDUCT STUDY

University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board
Office of Research & Commercialization
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276
www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html

Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1**
FWA00000351, IRB00001138

To: **Amy P. Kleeman**

Date: **June 23, 2011**

Dear Researcher:

On 6/23/2011, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review:	Exempt Determination
Project Title:	EMPLOYER PERCEPTIONS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS EXPECTED OF NEW GRADUATES IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY
Investigator:	Amy P Kleeman
IRB Number:	SBE-11-07737
Funding Agency:	
Grant Title:	
Research ID:	N/A

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

On behalf of Kendra Dimond Campbell, MA, JD, UCF IRB Interim Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 06/23/2011 10:42:19 AM EDT

IRB Coordinator

Page 1 of 1

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