

# CAREER READINESS

## for the New College Graduate

### A DEFINITION AND COMPETENCIES



Career readiness of college graduates is of critical importance in higher education, in the labor market, and in the public arena. Yet, up until now, “career readiness” has been undefined, making it difficult for leaders in higher education, work force development, and public policy to work together effectively to ensure the career readiness of today’s graduates.

In accordance with its mission to lead the community focused on the employment of the new college graduate, the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), through a task force comprised of representatives from both the higher education and corporate sides, has developed a definition and identified competencies associated with career readiness for the new college graduate.

*Definition:*  
Career readiness is the attainment and demonstration of requisite competencies that broadly prepare college graduates for a successful transition into the workplace.

## COMPETENCIES:

**Critical Thinking/Problem Solving:** Exercise sound reasoning to analyze issues, make decisions, and overcome problems. The individual is able to obtain, interpret, and use knowledge, facts, and data in this process, and may demonstrate originality and inventiveness.

**Oral/Written Communications:** Articulate thoughts and ideas clearly and effectively in written and oral forms to persons inside and outside of the organization. The individual has public speaking skills; is able to express ideas to others; and can write/edit memos, letters, and complex technical reports clearly and effectively.

**Teamwork/Collaboration:** Build collaborative relationships with colleagues and customers representing diverse cultures, races, ages, genders, religions, lifestyles, and viewpoints. The individual is able to work within a team structure, and can negotiate and manage conflict.

**Digital Technology:** Leverage existing digital technologies ethically and efficiently to solve problems, complete tasks, and accomplish goals. The individual demonstrates effective adaptability to new and emerging technologies.

**Leadership:** Leverage the strengths of others to achieve common goals, and use interpersonal skills to coach and develop others. The individual is able to assess and manage his/her emotions and those of others; use empathetic skills to guide and motivate; and organize, prioritize, and delegate work.

**Professionalism/Work Ethic:** Demonstrate personal accountability and effective work habits, e.g., punctuality, working productively with others, and time workload management, and understand the impact of non-verbal communication on professional work image. The individual demonstrates integrity and ethical behavior, acts responsibly with the interests of the larger community in mind, and is able to learn from his/her mistakes.

**Career Management:** Identify and articulate one’s skills, strengths, knowledge, and experiences relevant to the position desired and career goals, and identify areas necessary for professional growth. The individual is able to navigate and explore job options, understands and can take the steps necessary to pursue opportunities, and understands how to self-advocate for opportunities in the workplace.

**Global/Intercultural Fluency:** Value, respect, and learn from diverse cultures, races, ages, genders, sexual orientations, and religions. The individual demonstrates openness, inclusiveness, sensitivity, and the ability to interact respectfully with all people and understand individuals’ differences.

## USING THE DEFINITION AND COMPETENCIES

How do the definition and competencies help those focused on ensuring new college graduates have the skills necessary to enter and become part of a strong, productive work force?

The definition and competencies provide for development of strategies and tactics that will close the gap between higher education and the world of work. They lay the foundation for the work necessary to prepare college students for successful entry into the work force by:

- Providing a common vocabulary and framework to use when discussing career readiness metrics on campus, within employing organizations, and as part of national public policy.
- Establishing defined competencies as guidelines when educating and advising students.
- Establishing defined competencies to identify and assess when hiring the college educated.

## NOW AVAILABLE: CAREER READINESS RESOURCES

NACE members have generously shared a variety of resources designed to support your efforts in integrating career readiness into your programs and services. You can access those materials and measurements at [www.naceweb.org/career-readiness/competencies/career-readiness-resources](http://www.naceweb.org/career-readiness/competencies/career-readiness-resources).



**The National Association of Colleges and Employers**  
*Advancing college talent together*

Established in 1956, the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) is the leading source of information on the employment of the college educated.

In carrying out its mission — to lead the community of professionals focused on the employment of the college educated by providing access to relevant knowledge, resources, insight, and relationships — NACE connects more than 9,000 college career services professionals at nearly 2,000 colleges and universities nationwide, and more than 3,200 HR/staffing professionals focused on university relations and recruiting, and business affiliates who serve this community.

Among colleges and universities, NACE represents more than 50 percent of all four-year colleges and universities in the United States, and 98 percent of all research universities. Approximately 30 percent of two-year public institutions count themselves as NACE members.

On the employer side, NACE members include mid-size and large national and global organizations, ranging from Fortune 500 organizations to start-up companies to government agencies. NACE employer members represent a wide range of industries, including finance, energy, retail, manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, insurance, consulting services (accounting, engineering, computer), government and nonprofits, and more.

Headquartered in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, NACE forecasts trends in the job market; tracks, analyzes, and reports on outcomes for new college graduates by discipline, degree level, and type of school through its First-Destination Survey; monitors legal issues in employment, the job search, and hiring practices; and provides college and employer professionals with professional standards as well as an ethical framework by which both groups can work together to benefit the college-educated candidate. NACE provides its members with benchmarks and metrics; research; resources, including a survey of starting salaries for new college graduates, a quarterly journal, and a biweekly newsletter; and professional development opportunities.

[www.naceweb.org](http://www.naceweb.org)

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