

# Are Seniors Ready for the “Real World?”

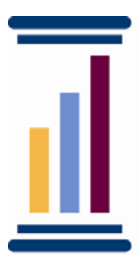
## Transitions, Plans, and Differences by Major Field

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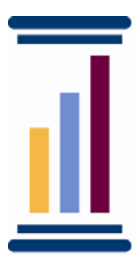
Indiana University Bloomington  
Center for Postsecondary Research

2015  
**Assessment** Institute  
in Indianapolis



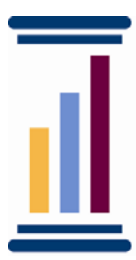
# OVERVIEW

- Introduction
- Data source
- Survey items
- Results
- Discussion



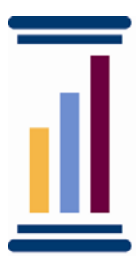
# INTRODUCTION

- Major function of higher education: to help students develop skills that lead to success in the workplace (Evers et al., 1998)
- Some skills are discipline-specific, but many others are transferable to a broad range of fields (Stasz, 1997)
- Students with these skills are more marketable to potential employers



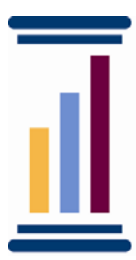
# INTRODUCTION

- Graduate success in the workplace is an important measure of institutional effectiveness (Cabrera et al., 2005)
- Pressure to produce “return on investment” with capable, productive graduates (Bogue & Johnson, 2010)
- Several benefits in tracking career plans and skill preparedness of graduating seniors as they transition into post-college settings



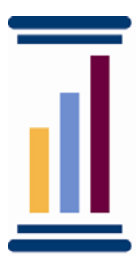
# INTRODUCTION

- Some majors have disappointingly low income levels (Carnevale et al., 2012) and are under fire for lack of “real-world” preparation
- Many perceived differences by discipline in graduate success
- Differences in curriculum by major
- Therefore, it is important to explore differences across the various major fields



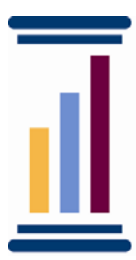
# PURPOSE

The current study utilizes information from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) to explore how the career plans and acquired skills of graduating seniors are reflected in workplace preparedness, specifically focusing on differences by major



# DATA SOURCE

- National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) Senior Transitions Module
- New module for 2015, more than 31,000 senior respondents from 126 four-year colleges and universities
- Developed in cooperation with Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP); grant funding from the National Endowment for the Arts
  - Several items adapted from SNAAP instrument to make student-alumni comparisons with potential for longitudinal tracking

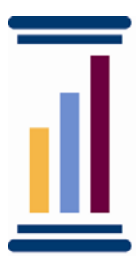


# RESPONDENTS

	Valid %
Traditionally-aged (23 or younger)	68%
Female	63%
<b><i>Race/ethnicity</i></b>	
White	65%
Asian/Pacific Islander	7%
African-American/Black	7%
Hispanic/Latino	8%
Multiracial	7%
All other race/ethnicity	6%

	Valid %
Private Institution	47%
<b><i>Undergraduate enrollment</i></b>	
Fewer than 1,000	4%
1,000 – 2,499	14%
2,500 – 4,999	16%
5,000 – 9,999	17%
10,000 – 19,999	25%
20,000 or more	24%
<b><i>Carnegie type</i></b>	
Research/Doc	43%
Master's	43%
Bac. colleges	15%





# MODULE ITEMS

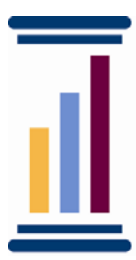
## 1a. After graduation, what best describes your immediate plans?

- Full-time employment
- Part-time employment
- Graduate or professional school
- Military service
- Service or volunteer activity (AmeriCorps, Peace Corps, Teach for America, etc.)
- Internship (paid or unpaid)
- Travel or gap year
- No plans at this time
- Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

*[Only if “Full-time employment” or “Part-time employment” are selected:]*

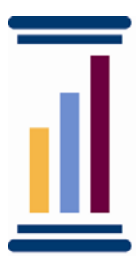
## 1b. Do you already have a job for after graduation?

- No
- Yes, I will start a new job
- Yes, I will continue in my current job



# MODULE ITEMS

- 2. To what extent have courses in your major(s) prepared you for your post-graduation plans?**
  - Very much
  - Quite a bit
  - Some
  - Very little
  
- 3. Do you intend to work eventually in a field related to your major(s)?**
  - Yes
  - No
  - Unsure
  
- 4. Do you plan to be self-employed, an independent contractor, or a freelance worker someday?**
  - Yes
  - No
  - Unsure
  
- 5. Do you plan to start your own business (nonprofit or for-profit) someday?**
  - Yes
  - No
  - Unsure

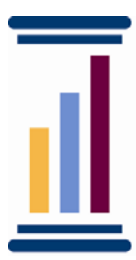


# MODULE ITEMS

**How much confidence do you have in your ability to complete tasks requiring the following skills and abilities?**

*Response options: Very much, Quite a bit, Some, Very little*

- a. Critical thinking and analysis of arguments and information
- b. Creative thinking and problem solving
- c. Research skills
- d. Clear writing
- e. Persuasive speaking
- f. Technological skills
- g. Financial and business management skills
- h. Entrepreneurial skills
- i. Leadership skills
- j. Networking and relationship building



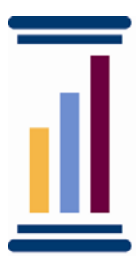
# MODULE ITEMS

**To what extent has your coursework in your major(s) emphasized the following?**

*Response options: Very much, Quite a bit, Some, Very little*

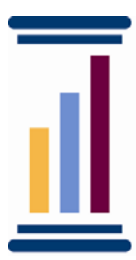
- a. Generating new ideas or brainstorming
- b. Taking risks in your coursework without fear of penalty
- c. Evaluating multiple approaches to a problem
- d. Inventing new methods to arrive at unconventional solutions

**Is there anything your institution could have done better to prepare you for your career or further education? Please describe.**



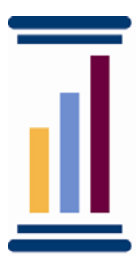
# SELECTED RESULTS: ALL MAJORS

Immediate Plans	
Full-time employment	60%
Part-time employment	4%
Graduate or professional school	23%
Military service	1%
Service or volunteer activity	1%
Internship	3%
Travel or gap year	3%
No plans at this time	3%
Other	3%



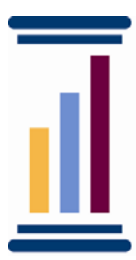
# SELECTED RESULTS: ALL MAJORS

<b>Already Have Job Secured? [If answered full- or part-time employment]</b>	
No	57%
Yes, I will start a new job	15%
Yes, I will continue in my current job	28%



# SELECTED RESULTS: ALL MAJORS

- 35% said their major coursework prepared them “very much” for their post-graduation plans; another 37% said “quite a bit”
- 85% intended to eventually work in a field related to their major
- 23% planned to be self-employed someday (and another 30% were unsure)
- Similarly, 25% planned to start their own business someday (and another 32% were unsure)



# SELECTED RESULTS: ALL MAJORS

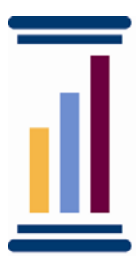
There was a wide range in confidence with skills and abilities:

- 60% reported “very much” confidence in creative thinking and problem solving
- 59% for critical thinking and analysis of information

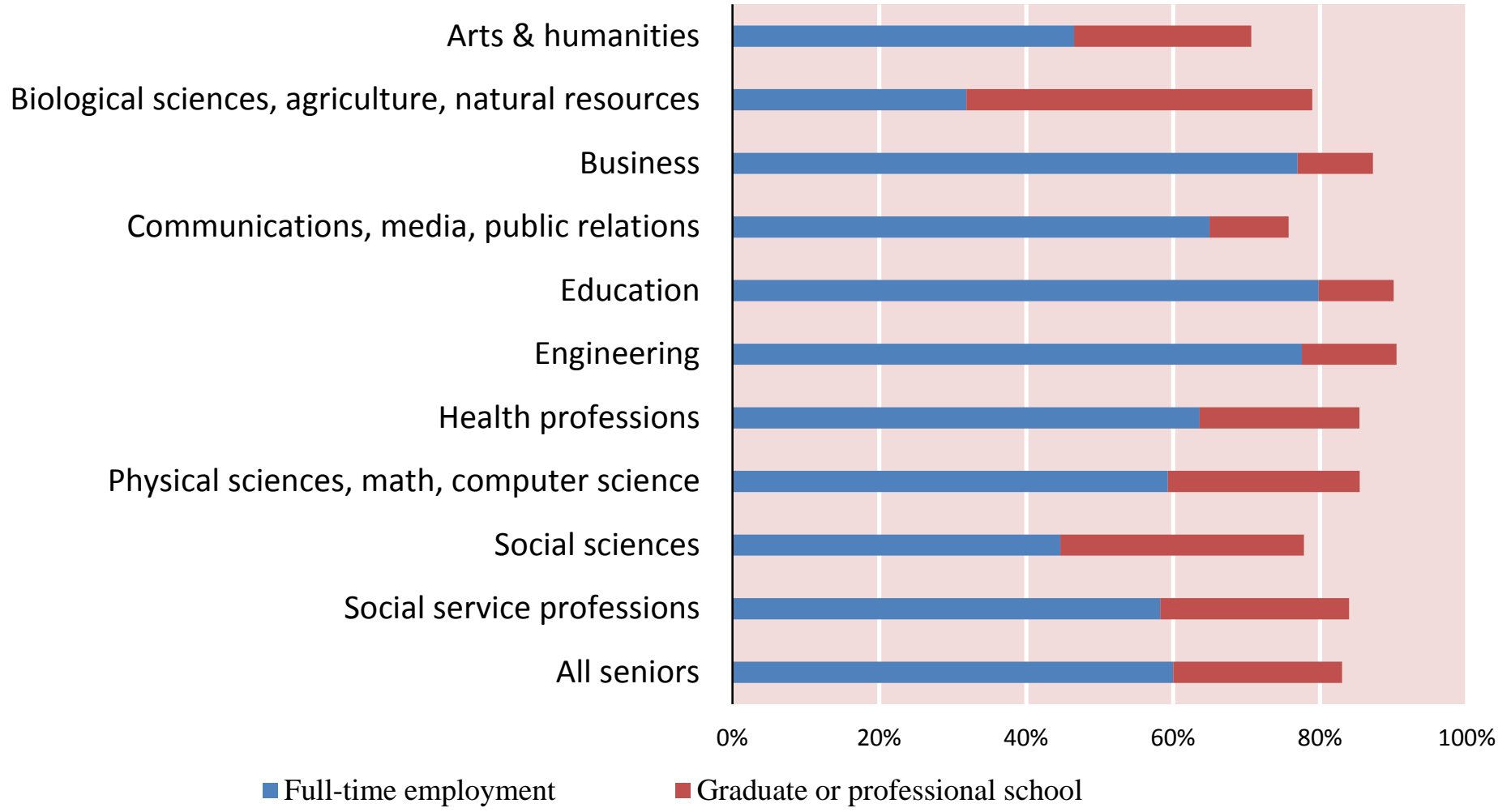
Contrasted with:

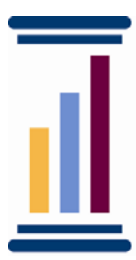
- 37% for networking and relationship building
- 23% for financial and business management skills
- 19% for entrepreneurial skills





# RESULTS BY MAJOR: Career Plans





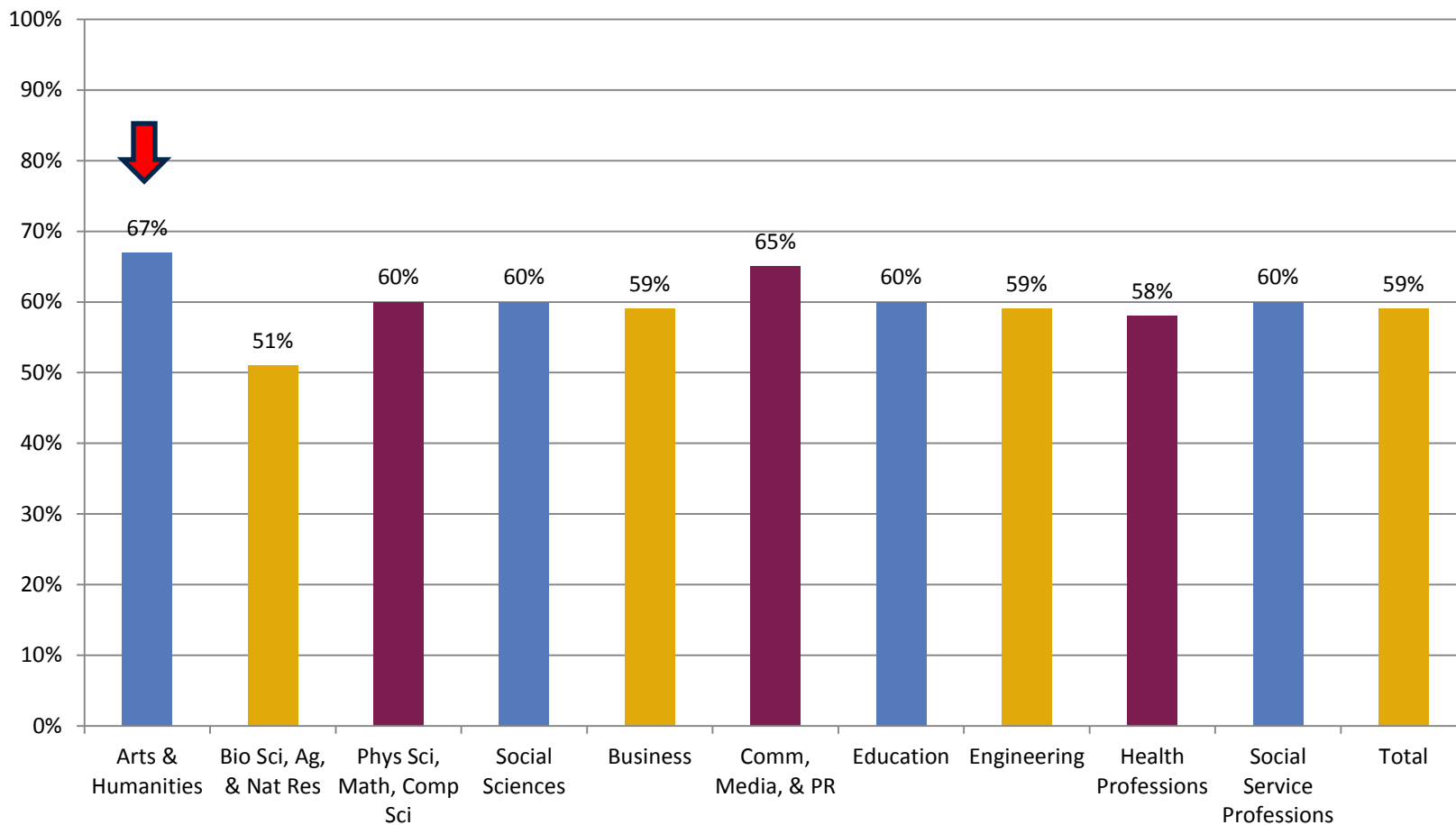
# RESULTS BY MAJOR: Career Plans

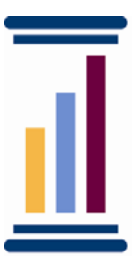
- Arts and humanities; social sciences; and communications, media, and public relations express the most uncertainty about their eventual career plans
  - More likely to say “no plans at this time” and to be “unsure” about working in their major field, being self-employed, and starting a business
- Arts and humanities majors (35%) are most likely to plan on being self-employed at some point
- Education and health professions majors (94%) are most likely to plan on working in their major field



# RESULTS BY MAJOR: Selected Skills

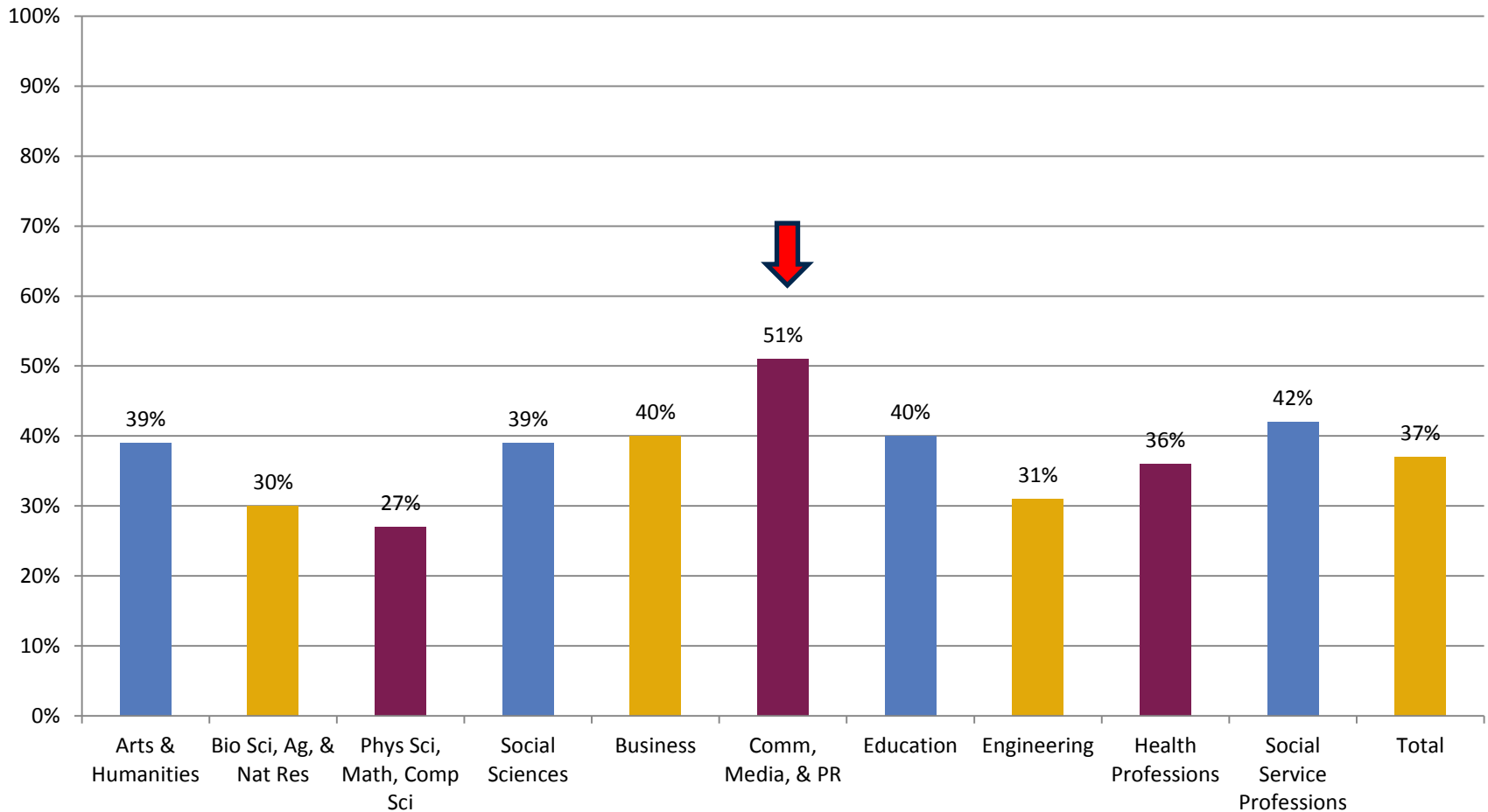
## Creative Thinking

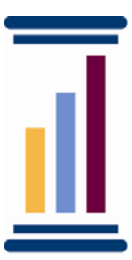




# RESULTS BY MAJOR: Selected Skills

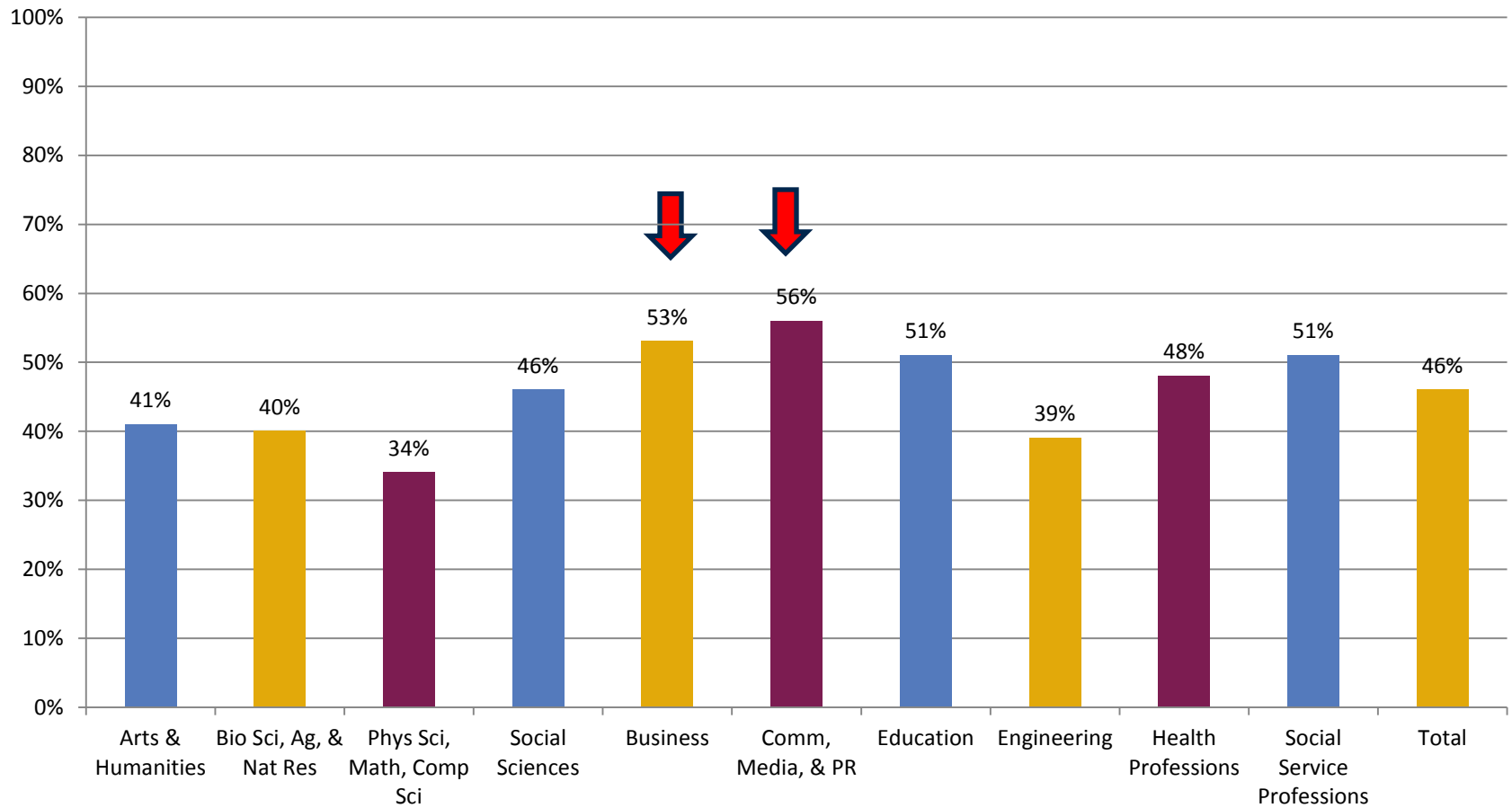
## Persuasive Speaking

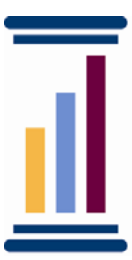




# RESULTS BY MAJOR: Selected Skills

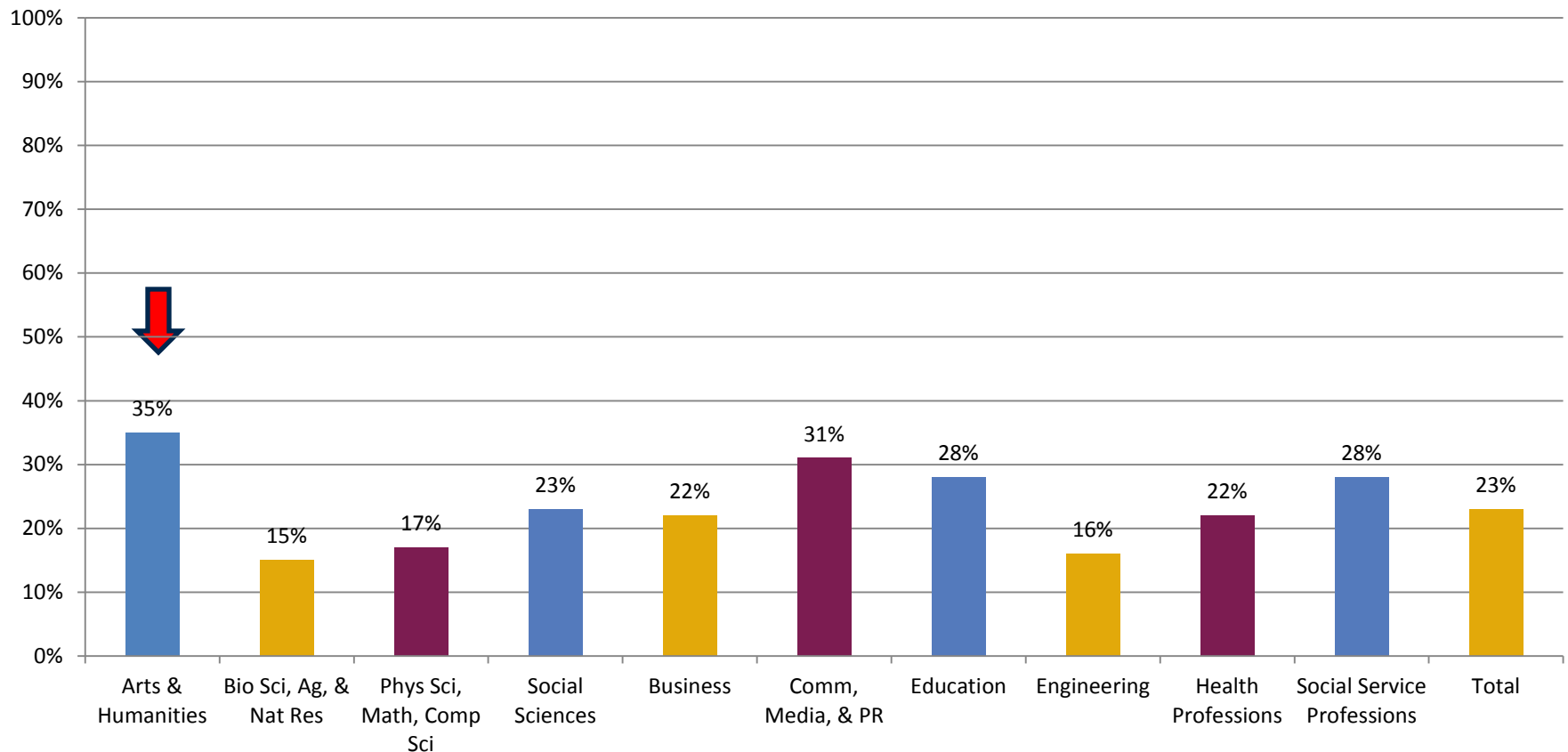
## Leadership

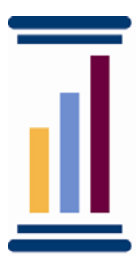




# RESULTS BY MAJOR: Selected Skills

## Coursework Emphasis: Taking Risks Without Fear of Penalty

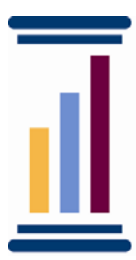




# RESULTS: DOUBLE MAJORS

Students with more than one major had some noted advantages:

- They were more likely to plan on attending graduate or professional school (29% compared to 22% for students with only one major)
- They were more likely to have high confidence in their critical thinking (66% said “very much” compared to 58% for single majors) and creative thinking abilities (64% compared to 60%)

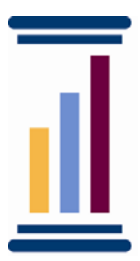


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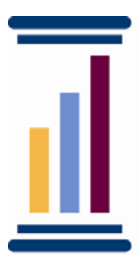
- Also more likely to have high confidence in persuasive speaking (42% compared to 37%) and clear writing skills (53% compared to 48%)
- Same pattern found for leadership (52% compared to 46%) and networking skills (41% compared to 37%)





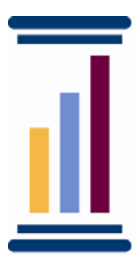
# DISCUSSION

- Benefits to institutions:
  - Guide curricular revisions for adequate skill development across all disciplines
  - Inform career advising and programming
  - Develop advice for plans for further education
  - Other potential areas of use?



# DISCUSSION

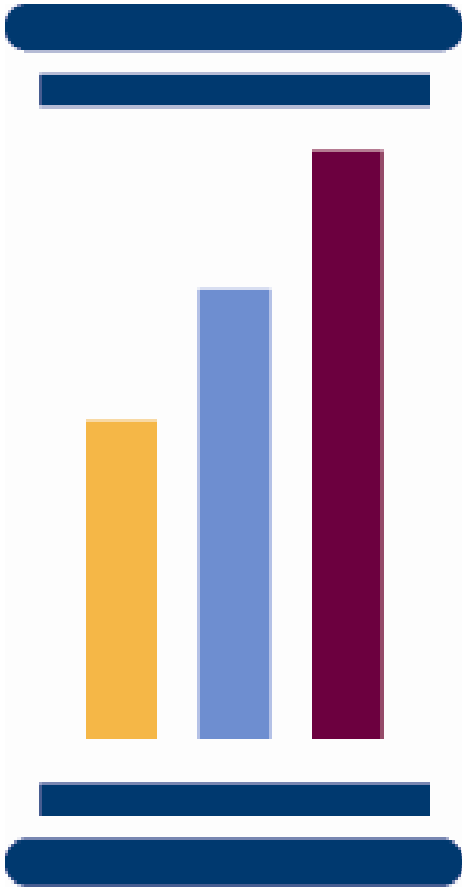
- Limitations
  - Institutions choose to participate (although they seem to span institutional types, sizes, etc.)
  - Self-reports (although self-reports have been show to be correlated with actual abilities (Anaya, 1999; Hayek, Carini, O’Day, & Kuh, 2002; Laing, Sawyer, & Noble, 1988; Pace, 1985; Pike, 1995))



# DISCUSSION

- Direction for future research
  - Look within the broader major categories (for example: Arts & Humanities) to explore the more specific major categories (for example: Fine Arts, History, and Philosophy)
  - Use results from the SNAAP survey to see how career plans get enacted

# Questions? Comments?



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\*Cited references available on request