What do employers want? And how do State University of New York at New Paltz students do as interns, which is a form of employment?

Internships are a highly desirable form of employment for students and a highly desirable way for employers to assess the suitability of those students and their preparation for work. Internship supervisors in the 2011-2012 year were asked their opinions of the interns under their care in a survey. Of those queried, 153 responded and indicated a high level of satisfaction with the skills held by interns and needed by employers everywhere.

The survey asks the level of satisfaction with 10 skills. No skills had satisfaction levels lower than 80%, with satisfaction defined as those who responded Very Satisfied or Satisfied. The highest level of satisfaction (93%) concerned verbal communication, defined as ‘speaking in a clear, concise and correct manner. 92% were satisfied with the computer skills brought to the internship by SUNY New Paltz students, although 20% of those responding said that computer skills were not applicable. The same percentage – 92% - were satisfied with the interns’ teamwork skills. 91% were satisfied with both specific job-related knowledge and skills and the quality of the work performed. Written communication, critical thinking skills and understanding of the international context for business all prompting satisfaction levels of 89% or 88%. Interns’ understanding of the ethical dimensions of the work is next, with an 86% satisfaction rate. Leadership skills rated last, with an 80% satisfaction rate.

The order of satisfaction with skills in 2012 is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>This compares to the order of in 2011</th>
<th>And in 2010</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Communication</td>
<td>Computer skills</td>
<td>Computer skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer</td>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>Verbal communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>Verbal communication</td>
<td>Quality of work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of the work performed</td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>Specific, job-related skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Specific job-related knowledge</td>
<td>Specific job-related knowledge</td>
<td>Written communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Written communication</td>
<td>Quality of work performed</td>
<td>Ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
<td>Written Communication</td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global understanding</td>
<td>Globalization</td>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td>Globalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership skills</td>
<td>Leadership skills</td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Leadership is defined as the intern taking “… the lead on projects where appropriate.” Perhaps there
are few appropriate leadership opportunities for interns. Across the three years, verbal communication skills and computer skills are consistently at the top.

Internship supervisors, overall, were Very Satisfied with the interns in their offices (69%) and Satisfied (25%), for a 94% positive rating, which is slightly improved from 2011.

Moreover, 69% indicated they were Very Likely to have interns in the future and 25% are Likely. This is less than the 82% that indicated they were Very Likely and the 16% who are Likely to have future interns in 2011.

In 2012, a new question was added, asking internship supervisors if they would hire this intern, given an appropriate position. More than 2/3 (66%) said YES, 13% said NO and 21% said MAYBE.

Internship supervisors were asked to comment on their experience with interns. These comments paint a picture of the successful intern, which can be transferred to what makes up a successful employee.

The successful employee:

- Is professional...accurate and creative
- Is self-motivated, independent and very reliable.
- Does not needing much supervision.
- Is not afraid to learn new things...goes above and beyond.
- Follows directions, takes initiative, asks questions about what she does not know.
- Is eager to learn.
- Is organized, on time, professional.
- Works hard and is conscientious.
- Likes and gets along with people.
- Is prepared and cheerful.
- Has a great attitude and is enthusiastic and positive; engaged; respectful; mature.
- Is action-oriented; a ‘can-do’ attitude; independent.
- Contributes to the business of the business.

Among the many positive comments are the following:

- K___ would be a great addition to the staff. She will be greatly missed in our office and she has set the bar very high for future interns.
- By the end of the internship, M_____ was able to perform many if not all of the tasks as an entry level tech at (name of company).
- C________’s enthusiastic attitude was contagious. She carried out assigned tasks independently, clarifying things she was unsure of. “
- Z_____ did not understand the challenges of working with the (subject) population when he first started his clinical at (name of company). He learned a lot, asked questions and was a much stronger clinician when he left. I was impressed by his improvement over the course of his
placement. He had a good relationship with the residents he worked with and they asked about him after he left. He took constructive criticism and was interested and excited to learn.

- K_____ has a great work ethic and goes above and beyond on a daily basis. She excels in projects that require attention to detail and a focused attitude. She is fast and accurate in any project you give her and is not afraid to learn new things and ask questions.
- L_____ is exactly what our office wanted in an intern. She followed directions, took initiative, asked questions when she did not understand an assignment and her overall work quality was stellar. I cannot say enough good things about our experience with L_____. 