Mixed Signals: Do College Graduates Have the Soft Skills That Employers Want?

Carol Stewart, Southern Connecticut State University
Alison Wall, Southern Connecticut State University
Sheryl Marciniec, Southern Connecticut State University

ABSTRACT

Many employers consider job candidates’ soft skills as critical for professional success as traditional hard skills, especially in today’s global marketplace. College graduates are increasingly confident of their soft skills, believing these interpersonal, non-technical competencies enhance their value as prospective employees. Recent studies, however, show a widening gap between employer expectations and college graduate abilities. This paper reviews desired soft skills, along with college students’ self-ratings of these same competencies; explores how employers and job candidates ‘signal’ the need for and/or presence of these skills; and proposes further research to discern the true cause of this seeming “soft skill gap.”

Keywords: Soft Skill Gap, College Graduates, Signaling Theory