

An Executive Summary
of
Employer Survey and Focus Group Research Results
for
The University of Minnesota Crookston Baccalaureate Level Graduates

December 8, 2005

Employer Survey Conducted (June 2005 – October 2005)
Focus Group Session Conducted (November 8, 2005)

Research Committee Members:

Eric S. Burgess
Don R. Cavalier
David DeMuth Jr.
Owen E. Williams

Background:

The University of Minnesota Crookston (UMC) prides itself in placing a high percentage (92%) of its graduates with reputable organizations throughout the US and the world at large. UMC's last employer survey was completed on January 7, 1997 and they are long overdue for more current assessment data regarding the performance of their graduates in the workplace. UMC is also in the process of completing an institutional self-study in preparation for an upcoming Higher Learning Commission (HLC) visit. The timely results of the research conducted by this committee will enable UMC to provide current assessment information about its graduates for the HLC assessment team visit scheduled for April, 2006.

The Employer Research Committee designed and conducted two studies to gather data about UMC graduates to determine if they are meeting employers' expectations. The data collection methods selected by the Employer Research Committee were a survey questionnaire and a focus group. The data collected was based on the ability of graduates to demonstrate UMC's three Core Competencies in the areas of communication, critical thinking, and working with others. The following is a summary of the results and outcomes taken from a survey of 488 employers; and a focus group consisting of 21 regional employers.

Research Themes:

Common themes documented from the employers' responses are that: newly hired UMC graduates who make the most significant contributions to their organizations are those, who during their undergraduate experiences at UMC, had established clear records of active participation and involvement in campus clubs and organizations; and those who had demonstrated both academic and civic responsibility in the university and community respectively.

Significant findings regarding UMC graduates derived from the employer responses to the survey and focus group questions and categorized by Core Competency:

Core Competency 1:

Communication (listening, reading, speaking, using technology, and writing)

- Listening, reading, and speaking skills were identified as strengths in the survey results and by the focus group members
- Employers regard the ability of UMC graduates to use technology (i.e. GIS, Computer applications and maintenance, Microsoft Office Suite) as very important. This was also considered the area of highest competency by the employers.

- The focus group commented that “UMC students are able to hit the ground running and are able to assist and train other employees in the use of technology.”
- Writing skills were identified as important to employers and an area in need of improvement.

Core Competency 2:

Critical Thinking (problem solving and applied learning)

- Employers stated that UMC graduates demonstrated strong problem-solving skills and that they considered this competency to be critical for their operations.
- Applied learning through internships, service learning, community service, student organizations and study abroad were rated as very important learning experiences for UMC graduates.
- Abilities to adapt to change, be flexible, learn on-the-job, and be trainable, are viewed as positive characteristics displayed by UMC graduates.

Core Competency 3:

Working With Others (teamwork and diversity)

- Employers considered teamwork skills as positive attributes of UMC graduates. These include interpersonal, consensus building, networking, and negotiating skills.
- Diversity skills were acknowledged as being valuable to employers. They recognized a need for UMC graduates to experience more cultural awareness and to learn the importance of valuing diversity (ethnic, multicultural, intergenerational, gender, and race).

Employer Recommendations:

- Employers indicated the importance of changing the image of UMC from solely an Agricultural school to a comprehensive four-year university.
- New academic programs recommended by employers include psychology and criminal justice.
- Employers indicated that multiple internships would enhance student learning and make them more qualified candidates for employment.
- Employers recommended continuing to provide students with learning opportunities for improving job-seeking and career management skills like resume preparation, mock interviews, proper professional attire, appropriate business etiquette, and effective communication (speech, writing, non-verbal cues). See the attached appendix titled:
Employer Survey of Core Competencies and Employer Focus Group Responses
(Summary Report of Raw Data) – 20051104 for details.

**Employer Survey of Core Competencies and Employer Focus Group Responses
(Summary Report of Raw Data) - 20051104**

Researchers: Don Cavalier, Eric Burgess, Owen Williams, David DeMuth, Jr.

A confidential employer survey was initiated by Don Cavalier, Eric Burgess, and Owen Williams in June 2005 with the goal of measuring UMC’s effectiveness in meeting its educational mission. Below is a report summarizing the job performance of UMC graduates. A total of 53 employers responded.

Data Acquisition

A web-based survey and analysis system was developed by Dr. David DeMuth in May 2004 which provided the framework for collecting employer feedback on UMC graduates online. A questionnaire asking the same questions as the electronic survey was also mailed to employers in early June 2005. Both survey tools included ten questions which are summarized below. The following company demographics were requested:

1. Company or Agency Name
2. Type of Business or Agency
3. Responder's Job Title or Position

Examples of Companies: UAP Northern Plains, Best Western Prairie Inn, Minnesota Crop Improvement Association, Bailey Nurseries, University of North Dakota, UMC Athletics, USDA Farm Service Agency, USDA/NRCS, Grand Forks Park District, Mahnomon County Extension Service.

Examples of Organization Types: university, public forest land management, cattle breeding, bank, agriculture retailer, child care center, financial services, natural resources, nursery, adolescent group home, therapeutic horseback riding program, manufacturer, retailer, etc.

Examples of Responder Titles: District Conservationist, Director of Admissions, Owner, Retail Manager, Land Commissioner, Web Manager, Wildlife Director, Executive Director, District Sales Coordinator, Horticulturalist, IT Manager.

Two questions regarding the student-employee were asked:

1. UMC graduate's position or role in the business?
2. Employee's major field of study while at UMC?

Example roles: soil conservation technician, IT programmer/Analyst, Office Manager, Executive Chef, Dairy Genetics Specialist, Administrative Assistant, Soil Conservationist Trainee, Herdsman, Crew Leader, Student Teacher, Co-op Park Ranger.

Example programs: Natural Resource Mgmt, ITM, Horticulture, Marketing and Management, Ag Business, Sport Recreation Management, Agriculture, Equine Science

Measurement of Core Competencies

The focus of the survey was in to measure the basic core learning competencies represented for all programs at UMC (1 communication, 2 critical thinking, and 3 working with others.

Core Competency I – Communication

To probe communication, questions on 1) Listening, 2) Reading, 3) Speaking, 4) Using Technology, and 5) Writing were posed with the following possible responses: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (AA), Neutral (NN), Disagree (DD), and Strongly Disagree (SD) basis and are weighted 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 respectively.

In Table I the results for Communication are presented. The employers regard for the ability of the students to use, understand, utilize, and implement technology was strikingly high. An average of 1.79 (0.9) suggests employers agree to strongly agree that UMC graduates understand, utilize, and implement technology.

Listening, Reading, and Speaking were responded to favorably with similar distributions.

However writing, that is applying appropriate creativity, drafting, revision, editing, and proofreading to the recognition and establishment of effective writing... scored lower in this group. The average of 2.34 (0.96) and a review of the histogram suggests employers are satisfied to neutral on graduates ability to communicate through writing.

Core Competency II - Critical Thinking

Problem solving and applied learning in UMC students were surveyed with similar results as in Core Competency I.

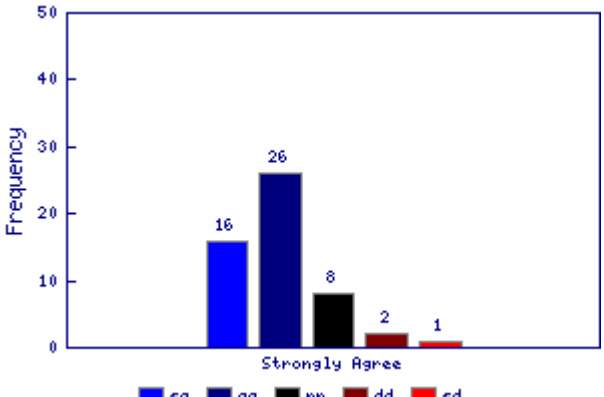
Core Competency III - Working With Others

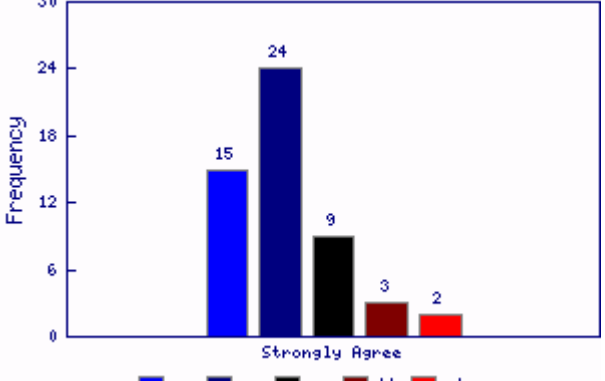
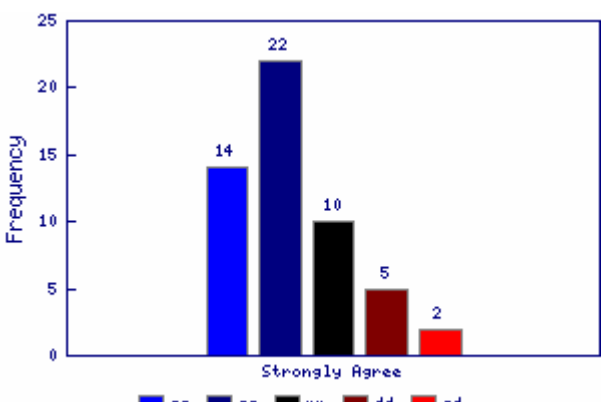
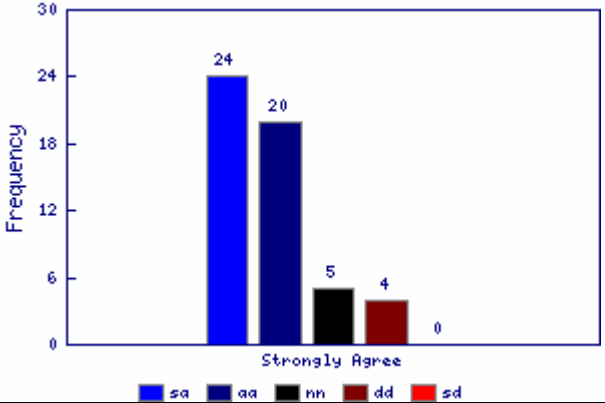

Employers suggested teamwork and diversity were both positive attributes of UMC graduates. Proactively a final question relating to current or future trends in skills for their employees was asked with very thoughtful responses. Examples follow in Appendix IV.

Summary

A core-component survey of employers of UMC graduates has been conducted where 53 employers have responded. Our study and analysis (Tables I-III) suggests listening, reading, speaking, teamwork are in good favor. Applied learning and technology use were markedly high. However, writing and diversity show more work is needed.

Table I – Communication

| Communication Question | Graphical Representation of the Response | Results |
|--|--|---|
| <p>Listening: Understands intended messages; Recognizes and compares multiple viewpoints; Responds by analyzing, evaluating, and Synthesizing information.</p> |  <p>A bar chart titled 'Strongly Agree' showing the frequency of responses for five categories: sa (16), aa (26), nn (8), dd (2), and sd (1). The y-axis is labeled 'Frequency' and ranges from 0 to 50 in increments of 10. The x-axis lists the categories. A legend at the bottom identifies the colors: sa (blue), aa (dark blue), nn (black), dd (red), and sd (light red).</p> | <p>Raw Data SA: 16 AA: 26 NN: 8 DD: 2 SD: 1</p> <p>Statistics Ave: 1.98 StdD: 0.88</p> |
| <p>Reading: Probes and researches to gain</p> | | |

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| <p>knowledge or information; restructures meaning through interpreting and summarizing information; Responds to text by analyzing.</p> |  <p>Frequency</p> <p>Strongly Agree</p> <p>sa aa nn dd sd</p> | <p>Raw Data SA: 15 AA: 24 NN: 9 DD: 3 SD: 2</p> <p>Statistics Ave: 2.11 SD: 1.0</p> |
| <p>Speaking: Applies basic speech principles; Applies audience analysis to topic selection and speech organization; Presents well organized, careful supported speeches, which demonstrate mastery of content and sophistication of oral style.</p> |  <p>Frequency</p> <p>Strongly Agree</p> <p>sa aa nn dd sd</p> | <p>Raw Data SA: 14 AA: 22 NN: 10 DD: 5 SD: 2</p> <p>Statistics Ave: 2.23 StdD: 1.06</p> |
| <p>Using Technology: Understands technology applications; Utilizes technology for desired results; Implements complex new technology.</p> |  <p>Frequency</p> <p>Strongly Agree</p> <p>sa aa nn dd sd</p> | <p>Raw Data SA: 24 AA: 20 NN: 5 DD: 4 SD: 0</p> <p>Statistics Ave: 1.79 StdD: 0.9</p> |
| <p>Writing: Applies appropriate creativity, drafting, revision, editing, and proofreading to the recognition and establishment of effective writing; Carefully considers audience in the creation of logical and coherent documents.</p> |  <p>Frequency</p> <p>Strongly Agree</p> <p>sa aa nn dd sd</p> | <p>Raw Data SA: 8 AA: 27 NN: 13 DD: 2 SD: 3</p> <p>Statistics Ave: 2.34 StdD: 0.97</p> |

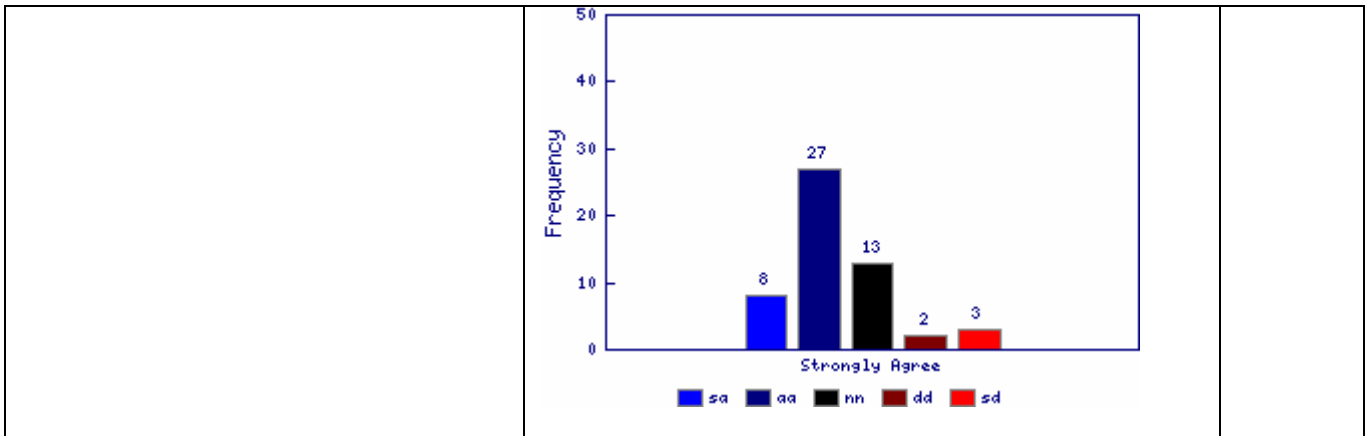


Table II – Critical Thinking

| Communication Question | Graphical Representation of the Response | Results | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|----------|-----------|----|----|----|----|----|---|----|---|----|---|---|
| <p>Problem Solving: Identifies and describes problems; Creates and collects data related to problems for effective decision making; Creates solutions to problems.</p> | <p>A bar chart titled 'Strongly Agree' showing the frequency of responses for five categories: sa (blue), aa (dark blue), nn (black), dd (dark red), and sd (red). The y-axis is labeled 'Frequency' and ranges from 0 to 50. The x-axis is labeled 'Strongly Agree'. The bars have the following heights: sa (15), aa (26), nn (8), dd (2), and sd (2).</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Frequency</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>sa</td> <td>15</td> </tr> <tr> <td>aa</td> <td>26</td> </tr> <tr> <td>nn</td> <td>8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>dd</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>sd</td> <td>2</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | Category | Frequency | sa | 15 | aa | 26 | nn | 8 | dd | 2 | sd | 2 | <p>Raw Data SA: 15 AA: 26 NN: 8 DD: 2 SD: 2</p> <p>Statistics Ave: 2.06 StdD: 0.96</p> |
| Category | Frequency | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| sa | 15 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| aa | 26 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| nn | 8 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| dd | 2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| sd | 2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <p>Applied Learning: Identifies and follows oral and written procedures; Proposes basic technological solutions; Implements processing using technological improvements and changes.</p> | <p>A bar chart titled 'Strongly Agree' showing the frequency of responses for five categories: sa (blue), aa (dark blue), nn (black), dd (dark red), and sd (red). The y-axis is labeled 'Frequency' and ranges from 0 to 25. The x-axis is labeled 'Strongly Agree'. The bars have the following heights: sa (19), aa (22), nn (6), dd (6), and sd (0).</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Frequency</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>sa</td> <td>19</td> </tr> <tr> <td>aa</td> <td>22</td> </tr> <tr> <td>nn</td> <td>6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>dd</td> <td>6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>sd</td> <td>0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | Category | Frequency | sa | 19 | aa | 22 | nn | 6 | dd | 6 | sd | 0 | <p>Raw Data SA: 19 AA: 22 NN: 6 DD: 6 SD: 0</p> <p>Statistics Ave: 1.98 StdD: 0.96</p> |
| Category | Frequency | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| sa | 19 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| aa | 22 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| nn | 6 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| dd | 6 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| sd | 0 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Table III – Working With Others

| Working With Others Question | Graphical Representation of the Response | Results | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|----------|-----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|----|---|--|
| <p>Teamwork: Participates in and assumes responsibility for accomplishing team goals; Understands team strengths and limitations; Encourages, supports and evaluates team activities.</p> | <table border="1"> <caption>Data for Teamwork Bar Chart</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Response</th> <th>Frequency</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>sa</td> <td>17</td> </tr> <tr> <td>aa</td> <td>21</td> </tr> <tr> <td>nn</td> <td>9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>dd</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>sd</td> <td>1</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | Response | Frequency | sa | 17 | aa | 21 | nn | 9 | dd | 5 | sd | 1 | <p>Raw Data SA: 17 AA: 21 NN: 9 DD: 5 SD: 1</p> <p>Statistics Ave: 2.09 StdD: 1.01</p> |
| Response | Frequency | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| sa | 17 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| aa | 21 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| nn | 9 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| dd | 5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| sd | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <p>Diversity: Recognizes and values differences in people; Responsibly challenges discriminatory practices and procedures; Assesses works to modify procedures that could be discriminatory.</p> | <table border="1"> <caption>Data for Diversity Bar Chart</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Response</th> <th>Frequency</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>sa</td> <td>12</td> </tr> <tr> <td>aa</td> <td>25</td> </tr> <tr> <td>nn</td> <td>12</td> </tr> <tr> <td>dd</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>sd</td> <td>1</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | Response | Frequency | sa | 12 | aa | 25 | nn | 12 | dd | 3 | sd | 1 | <p>Raw Data SA: 12 AA: 25 NN: 12 DD: 3 SD: 1</p> <p>Statistics Ave: 2.17 StdD: 0.91</p> |
| Response | Frequency | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| sa | 12 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| aa | 25 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| nn | 12 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| dd | 3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| sd | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Appendices: Text data from the survey follows

Question 1: Enter your Company or Agency Name

USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service
 Please Describe - 120 character max
 Bailey Nurseries, Inc
 University of MN, Crookston
 Imitation
 Minnesota Crop Improvement Association
 Blue Marble Technology, Inc.

Fraser, Ltd.
Best Western Prairie Inn
The Evangelical Lutheran Good Samaritan Society
Steve Larson Studio
Nelson Farms
UAP Northern Plains
Central Coop
Blue fin Bay Resort
Stone Dairy
Great Northern Nursery
USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service
UAP Distribution
USDA NRCS
USDA Farm Service Agency
Gerrells Sports Center
Cass County land Department
Genex Inc
University of ND
Midway Farm Equipment
Ultimo Bank Minnesota
Tom Hruby and Associates
UMC Athletics
Red Lake Department of Natural Resources
AFLAC District Office
Morrison FSA
Grand Forks Park District
Circle C Seeds Inc
US Army COE Gull Lake Recreation Area
Crookston Headstart
Mahnomen County Extension Service
USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service
Land O Lakes
Marsh Lake Hunting Preserve Inc
USDA Farm Service Agency
Sunrise Center for Children and Families
Hugos #4
Ben Brovold Agency
USDA/NRCS
USDA Farm Service Agency
Sheyenne Gardens
Adams Dairy
Western WI Ag Supply
Kairos House, LSS of MN
We Can Ride, Inc
Bremer Bank
Bergeson Nursery

MN DNR, Division of Parks & Recreation, Itasca State Park
USDA - Farm Service Agency
Villa St. Vincent/ A'vianns Foodservice Management
UND Aerospace Foundation
UND Aerospace

Question 2: Type of Business or Agency (Some Duplicates May be Removed)

Government
Agronomy Inputs and Services
Wholesale Nursery Production
Admissions Office
Manufacturing
Certification agency
We are an inbound 800# internet helpdesk service ISP's customers
Child Care Center
Hotel, Restaurant, Lounge
Long Term care with Senior Services
Photography
Farm
Whole sale & retail seed, chemical & fertilizer supplier
Agronomy sales
Resort
Nursery
Agricultural / Natural Resources
Ag Retailer
Conservation
Government
Farm
Retail
Public Forest Land Management
Cattle breeding company
University
Farm equipment dealership
Bank
Financial Services
Educational Inst.
Natural Resources
Insurance / Benefits
USDA Farm Service Agency
Government / city
Seed Processing Plant
Recreation / Dam Operations
HS
Service & education
Morris Field Office

Agriculture
Hunting Club
Distribution of Gov. Aided Farm Programs
Child Care Center
Retail Grocery
Insurance
Field office for conservation service
USDA
Nursery/Greenhouse
Dairy Farm
Ag Retail
Adolescent group home
Therapeutic Horseback Riding Program
Financial Services Provider
Horticulture
State Park
Non-disclosed
Nursing Home/Foodservice
Flight Training Center
Flight Training
Aviation Education

Question 3: Your Job Title or Position (Some Duplicates may be removed)

District Conservationist
Human Resources Recruiter
Interim Director of Admissions
IT Manager
Manager - Field Services
Owner
Director of Child Care Services
Administrative Assistant
Director, Administrator Services and Education
Retail manager
Location Supervisor
HR Director
President
Gen. Mange.
District Conservationist
Manager
Director
Owner operator
President
Land Commissioner
Sire procurement manager
Web manager
GM

VP Operations
Pres.
AD
Wildlife Director
District sales coordinator
County executive director
Horticulturist
Office Manager
Park Manager
Center Directory
Support state
District Conservationist
Staffing Manager
District Director
Store Manger
Agent
District Conservationist
County Director
Agronomy Sales Manager
Coordinator
Executive Director
President
Park Manager
District Director
Foodservice Director/Clinician
Site Manager - Crookston Flight Training Center
Chief Instructor of Extension Programs

Question 9: SKILLS: What skills do you value most in all newly hired employees?

CORE COMPETENCIES:

I. Communication (listening, reading, speaking, using technology, and writing)

Employer's comments:

- Ability to embrace technology and give 110% each and every day to providing the best customer service possible.

- Attention to detail Writing and speaking skills Creativity
- Being current with technology skills, relating to people.
- Computer related skills - professional attitude and appearance - common sense
- Use of technology (2)
- Tech knowledge
- Has fantastic potential when focused, listens, & pays attention
- communication skills (5)
- Good listening skills (2)
- technology skills (6)
- On time, will to work, & need to be able to communicate with others
- Writing
- Critical thinking, honesty about what they know and don't know
- Speaking Skills

II. Critical Thinking (problem solving and applied learning)

Employer's comments:

- Good strong work ethic received from education and background work history.
- Ability to adapt to change with a positive attitude.
- Dependability, showing up for work when scheduled. The ability to learn the job requirements.
- The ability to adjust to the changing dynamics of the Ag Supply business
- Agronomy Background
- Able to think for themselves
- Willingness to learn new skills
- A hard worker, honest, on time
- common sense skills
- A willingness to learn, excitement to job
- Understanding the value of our natural resources. Primarily wetlands and native prairie. Desire to ensure supervisors job approval. Courtesy to Landowners and coworkers.
- problem solving (2)
- Work ethic
- Multi-Tasking
- Time management

III. Working With Others (teamwork and diversity)

Employer's comments:

- Flexibility, willingness to learn, creative thinking, needs people skills.
- Confidence, a newly hired employee will face many different situations when they are new to a job. If they are confident in themselves and their abilities, they have the building blocks to be successful. Positive Attitude, approaching any situation with the right attitude, and an open

mind will allow an individual to grow in leaps and bounds. We can teach anyone how to identify weeds, enter data into a computer, spread fertilizer, apply chemical, etc; but if you don't have an open mind and a desire to grow and learn then your basic knowledge won't get you far. Organizational skills, several employees lack basic organizational skills and time management. The simplest of tasks like keeping a calendar, whether it is on a hand held device, or a date book, is a critical business skill.

- Ability to work well with people within the office and also throughout campus.
- Effective team work skills with a solid technical base. (I)
- As alumni of UMC I am particularly disappointed and frustrated with the level of incompetence that the folks who apply to work for me demonstrate (Not necessarily from UMC). Both in the application process, and in those who do end up working for our company. With 2 exceptions in 10 years, they don't understand even the most basic principals of business, are ill-equipped to hold down a regular job with my company at even the most basic and starting off employment level. Particular frustrations over the years include no understanding of proper dress, basic phone answering skills, understanding the importance of a paper/electronic trail, the requirement of following through on promises to customers, the inability to express a problem with a supervisor or associate to try to find a solution, not showing up on time and not understanding why that is a problem in our
- Someone with the knowledge base to do their job. Someone that is able to work well with others, provide direction, and problem solve (II) on their own.
- Leadership, innovation, human resource skills along with basic supervisory skills, finance analysis
- Willingness to learn, good attitude
- Ability to work hard and follow directions, honest, team player
- Honesty
- People skills (2) - getting along with others. He can see what needs to be done & does it.
- Attitude managerial, being positive, willingness to generate conversation
- Self motivation, good people skills, high standards for both quantity and quality of work completed
- Practical intelligence and communication, team work.
- A good working attitude
- Teamwork (6)
- teamwork qualities
- Ability to communicate well with others; work as a team, self-starter, visionary thinker
- Customer services

- Must be both outgoing and people-oriented with education, knowledge and experience. People skills, the ability to associate/relate with customers
- Friendliness, dependability, great customer service skills
- Determination to succeed and good with people
- experience w/ youth
- Punctuality, responsibility
- capability to get along with people, natural science understanding
- Team work
- Customer service, problem solving, people skills
- People skills, team player, practical experience (interns)

Question 10: SKILLS: What future skills do you anticipate needing in your employees?

I. Communication (listening, reading, speaking, using technology, and writing)

Employer's comments:

- Information technology - GIS, a good basic natural resource/farming background or education.
In addition to those items listed in question 9, advanced communication, advanced technology and specialized training are some of the key future skills I anticipate needing. Advanced communication, this goes beyond the ability to clearly and effectively speak and write. There are so many underutilized resources for enhancing communication. Some examples: email etiquette, Microsoft Outlook (great time management tool). Employees need to know how to properly ask for what they want. Advanced technology, aside from using computers for email, Internet, and typing a report; employees should come equipped with the skills to set up a spreadsheet (know how to write basic formulas), how to produce an electronic presentation, understand basic computer troubleshooting. Employees should come equipped with basic understanding of the technology they will face when they are in the "real world". Specialized training, every employee needs to come with the basic knowledge for the industry in which they will work. However employers in the ag industry continue to find ways to set themselves apart from the competition and identify niche markets so do employees. Since I have an Ag Business degree, I will use this as an example. What is Ag Business? This seems like a pretty generalized degree, a minor should be required of this degree at all institutes of higher education. Is it Ag Business with a Finance emphasis, agronomy emphasis, marketing emphasis, sales emphasis? It is my opinion that if there was an area of emphasis, it would make prospecting employees more marketable and assist them in finding a future direction.
- Having the ability to adapt to change and keeping current with technology
- GPS knowledge, Ag experience
- Technological savvy

- Computer use & plant knowledge
- Agriculture, precision farming techniques, natural resources rules and regulations
- communication skills (4)
- problem solving
- Ag background, computer skills Enhanced public relations, oral and written
- Technology Skills (5)
- Business contract background skills and then the usual major field of study, communications, technology/computer, and great team working skills. At all the universities I interview at, Phil Baird is the best of the best; at getting his students ready for the interviews, having their paperwork ready, setting up an interview room etc... Phil is a very dedicated, thoughtful advisor/teacher - Crookston University is fortunate to have him.
- Communications, sales, technical Ag information. Communications, sales, technical Ag information.
- Enhance technology will continue to be important
- greater emphasis on writing greater emphasis on writing
- More computer knowledge
- continued emphasis on new technology student was a nontraditional student (25-30) had experience in the service industry
- GTS, GPS, communication
- enhancement of tech skills, Gps

II. Critical Thinking (problem solving and applied learning)

- Hands on labor. The work is very labor intensive but well worth the effort in the finished product.
- Knowledge of quality and process management, auditing skills and
- More hands on
- Self driven, business owner mindset, employee mindset
- Self driven, business owner mindset, employee mindset
- Problem solving skills are definitely required with this type of work. We appreciate all of the hard work completed by these students
- basic knowledge of field
- advanced horse skills including, instruction, barn management and people skills
- Thinking outside of the box, flexible, adapt to change, aware of needs for change

III. Working With Others (teamwork and diversity)

Employer's comments:

- Ability to travel and recruit students from various territories.
- Management, fairness.

- Innovation, what other services are out there for seniors besides long term care or skilled beds. Knowledge in senior housing, home health, technology
- people skills
- The main skill here is being able to work with costumers
- people skills and work ethic will always be most important
- leadership
- supervisory skills & record keeping & government form filing

**UMC Career Services/PIAC Focus Group Minutes
Cavalier, Burgess, Williams, DeMuth
Kiehle Hall-Room 116
Wednesday, Oct. 26 11 a.m.**

UMC Employer Focus Group Goals:

- **To gather information from employers of the attributes or qualities that the professions consider important in UMC graduates from a degree program**
- **To gather information on skills that employers desire in their graduate employees**
- **To begin and/or continue a dialogue with employers in that employee UMC graduates**
- **To increase awareness amongst key employers of the type of graduates that UMC majors are producing**
- **To ensure that the curriculum of all degree programs are taking into account the needs of key stakeholders, in particular, future employers and relevant industry groups**

An employer focus group was held at UMC during the Program Improvement Advisory Committee day held at UMC on Wednesday, October 26, 2005, to determine what employers expected from UMC graduates and to discuss ways in which the programs could be improved and developed.

Members Attending: Jeff Faught, Don B. (UND Dir. Aerospace Program), Ron Moga, Paula Snider, Mike Kavakavich, Deb Boardman (CEO-Riverview Healthcare Association), Gail Flom (Recruiter IRS), Rob Jacobsen (President-Bremer Bank), Craig Hanson (Partners Advantage), Marve Bradly, Mark Bertram, Lea Melsa (Food Service Director-Villa St. Vincent), Adam Voltz, Eric Bergesson,

UMC Basic Competencies Survey

Cavalier et. al. opened the session with a welcome, where introductions followed. Owen Williams then facilitated by asking the following questions (responses follow each below).

The most significant findings and comments are recorded below:

1. What skills and competencies do you value most in your employees?

- * People skills: teamwork skills, negotiating skills, interpersonal communication skills, honest
- * Communication skills: oral and written skills, the ability to get along with people some practical experience in the fields (internships adding value) integrity and ethics, listening skills, optimizing interactions -- to be able to hear what the customer is saying, asking, and being able answer
- * Team players: one that does not try to run their own show, buy-in is needed, recognition that others might have good ideas
- * Negotiating skills, conflict resolution and consensus building skills
- * New employees (former students): an absolute need for punctuality and attendance - no excuses please
- * Technology: knowledge of software (finding UMC students are able to hit the ground running, and able to help the other employees get going on the same software) -- word processing skills (reduced support staff is the norm) - Microsoft Access (formatting data, information), Excel - the office suite.
- * GIS is very important: a strong need for proficiency.
- * Health care: knowledge of unique software in the field.
- * Power Point Technology (PPT)?: nearly unanimous need and ask our graduates to use PPT to present.
- * Interns are used to teach managers to do PPT
- * Hardware?: PC, Mac -- Linux systems are obscure
- * Some employers have IT staff to help and train employees about technology.

2. What difficulties does your business experience?

- * Technology: PowerPoint ok, Excel ok, but what is needed is a general proficiency and problem solving skill with new technologies. Better understanding of delivery modes.
- * Internship: Multiple internships are increasingly more beneficial and important, both from a skill developing perspective, and to compete with current employee applicants.
- * Graduates need to have a willingness and desire to learn on site and be trainable in new areas.

- * Problem solving skills: MIS, people problem, leadership - critical thinking skills (to reason through problems, where to go, who to contact, how to maneuver).
- * Campus Activities: Involvement in activities on campus are helpful to develop the necessary leadership skills for on the job (student groups)
- * Teaching Styles: Delivery of courses (style - lecture format) are important models for teaching students how to think and behave.
- * Future Planning: Looking to the future:
- * Adapting to Chang: Being able to adapt to change, flexibility, recognizing improved ways to do this.
- * GIS is again pointed out as important (a second person).
- * Suggesting courses to be taught in people skills - working with others
- * Recognition of intergenerational differences - ethics may be different - understanding these differences help
- * More diversity training, more cultural awareness for our increased multicultural society
- * Example airline training: first officer, captain, interacting, determining what is it to be provocative while being politically correct.
- * Technology can make us efficient, but often these activities remove us from other work - charting on computer, not analog format, data entry, sometimes hard to do (customer service, health care).

3. What are we doing well?

- * Hands on experience in the courses - applied learning.
- * Technology
- * UMC is providing office manager level students
- * Writing skills: good results, hard to find, but these will tell us if we are doing a good job teaching writing. Need more writing samples.

4. Where could we do better?

- * Understanding civil engagements beyond the job (e.g. joining groups), it then promotes communication skills.

5. Career Services, is there any thing we should or could be doing?

- * Resume preparation? Interviewing skills?
- * Some, not necessarily from UMC, being able to be professional (attire, behavior, body language) at the interview. Prepare student for the interview.
- * Involvement in Clubs are most important to developing skills.
- * Mock interviews are vital - students can sometimes drone on to long and nearly talk themselves out of the job.

6. What new programs, if any, should we consider?

- * Fulltime recruiters IRS - thinking the Agriculture-base is too profound.
- * Business and Accounting -- in particular accounting,, Intro to tax, (skills assessments are typical - scenario based, writing)
- * Accounting, budgeting, (small parks)

7. What opportunities are there for us to work closer w/ Industry?

- * Internships, a stronger emphasis (paid are typical)
- * How else to get students into your organization? -- this type of process increase interactions and thus have these employers thinking more about our students. More contact with Faculty.
- * When short in staff, relying on students can sometimes be helpful -- service learning.
- * Managers would be the useful contacts for establishing service learning.

8. New Programs, one more time, are there any that we should consider?

- * Quality management, patient safety.
- * Applied Psychology -- human resource skills, counseling skills?? some questions, no real interest?
- * Applied Biology? No comment
- * Criminal Justice? Some interest
- * Strengthen Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Program

Minutes recorded by D. DeMuth, Jr.