



Folsom Lake College Business Survey

Key Findings



CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE
Inform Connect Advance

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Introduction

Monitoring the region's workforce needs is essential to developing and maintaining career and technical programs that match local demand. As such, Folsom Lake College and the Los Rios Center of Excellence administered a needs assessment survey to identify the key workforce challenges facing businesses in the FLC service area. The survey was designed to meet the following research objectives:

- Identify the workforce challenges local businesses encountered in hiring, training and retaining employees
- Identify skill deficiencies with mid-level employees¹
- Assess the level of interest local organizations have in working with Folsom Lake College to inform the training and education platform

This research brief summarizes the findings from the business survey, including general information about the survey, local hiring and training challenges, perceived skill gaps, and employers' level of interest for participating in CTE training activities.

Geographic Scope

Folsom Lake College serves students, businesses and the community in the south-eastern area of Sacramento County and most of El Dorado County. Within this area, the largest cities include: El Dorado Hills, Folsom, Gold River, Placerville, and Rancho Cordova. As shown below, Folsom is the largest city with over 70,000 residents, nearly 1,400 businesses and 18,000 workers. Rancho Cordova, the second largest city in terms of population, has slightly fewer establishments and a third more employees. This suggests that Rancho Cordova's establishments on average employ a greater number of workers than in the City of Folsom. Alternatively, the El Dorado Hills/Cameron Park area has disproportionately fewer establishments and employees in relation to the population, indicating that many of the residents in these cities commute to work.

City	Population ²	No. of Establishments ³	No. of Employees ³
Folsom	72,203	1,378	18,081
Rancho Cordova	64,776	1,148	26,626
El Dorado Hills / Cameron Park	60,336	773	8,985
Placerville	10,389	419	5,060
Gold River	7,912	237	2,433

¹ Mid-level positions are defined as those jobs that require at least a certificate or Associate degree.

² U.S. Census, 2010 Population Data, <http://2010.census.gov>

³ U.S. Census, American Fact Finder, Economic Fact Sheet, 2007 Data, <http://factfinder.census.gov>. Note: excludes government data, as this information is not available at the city level.

Survey Overview

Administered in September and October of 2011, the FLC needs assessment survey targeted organizations and businesses of all sizes. To reach local employers, the survey was deployed through several methods: (1) emailed to a built database of more than 500 contacts; (2) disseminated through e-newsletters of local chambers of commerce and other business associations; (3) emailed to existing Folsom Lake College Advisory members; and (4) phone to web calls by a call center.⁴ In total, 100 employers completed the survey.

As shown in Exhibit 1, about one-third of the employers who responded to the survey are based in Folsom, followed by one-fifth in El Dorado Hills/Cameron Park, 12 percent in Placerville, 10 percent in Rancho Cordova, 7 percent in Pollock Pines and 6 percent in Gold River. The 'Other' write-in category represents firms primarily located in Sacramento.

Firms located outside of the Folsom Lake College service area were not disqualified from the survey either because they conduct business in the Folsom Lake College service area or they serve on a Folsom Lake College Advisory Board.

The survey respondents represent a wide variety of industries, with the largest concentration in Government, Healthcare, and Professional Services. The 'Other' write-in category includes self-identified firms working in insurance, retail, fitness, telecommunications, and utilities; 'Other' write-ins accounted for 35% of the sample.

Exhibit 1: Respondents by Location

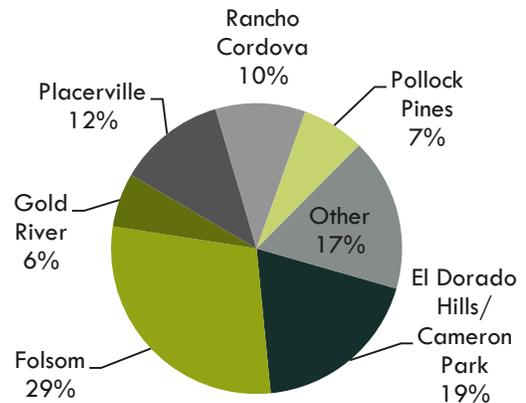
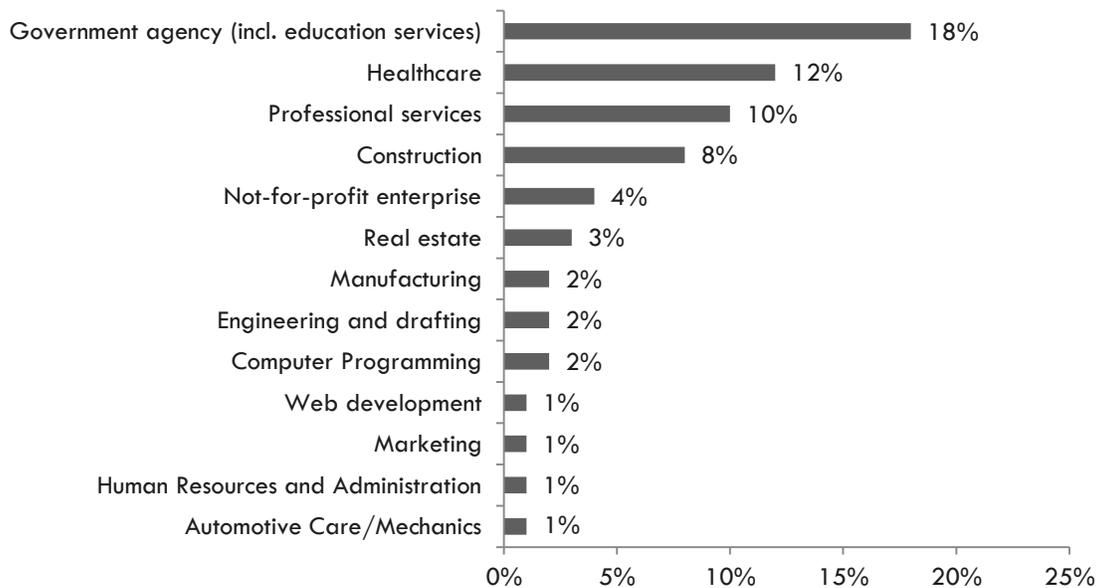


Exhibit 2: Respondents by Industry



⁴ "Phone to Web Calls" are scripted telephone calls to businesses conducted by a call center that describe the survey effort and encourage employer participation in the online survey.

The majority of organizations surveyed employ between one and 10 workers with the median at eight employees and mean at 622 employees.⁵ There are a small handful of very large organizations that participated in the survey with eight percent employing more than 1,000 workers. Most of the respondents (87 percent) are involved in the hiring or training of employees at their organization.

Exhibit 3: Size of Organization

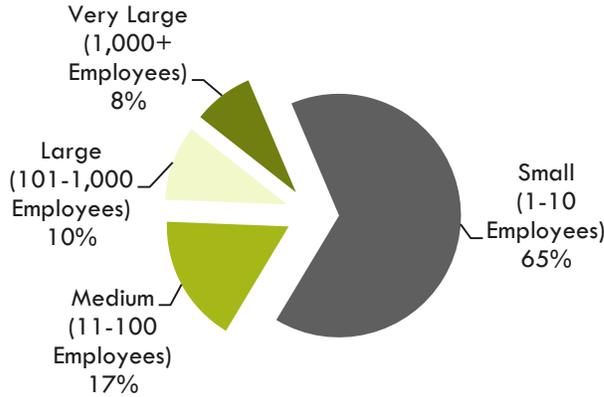
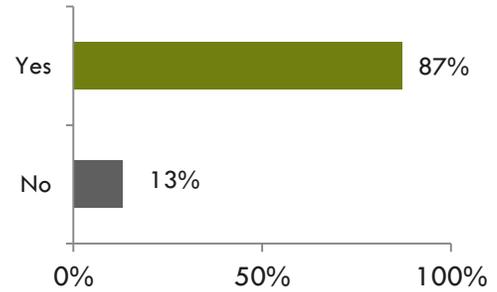


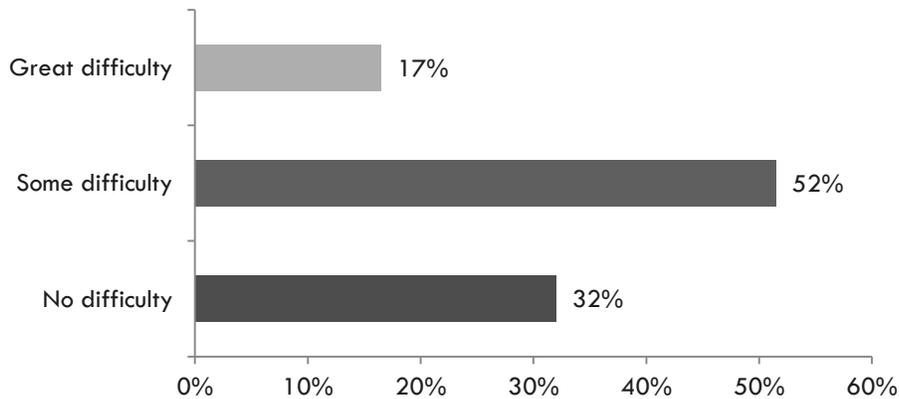
Exhibit 4: Involved in Hiring and Training of Employees



Local Workforce Challenges

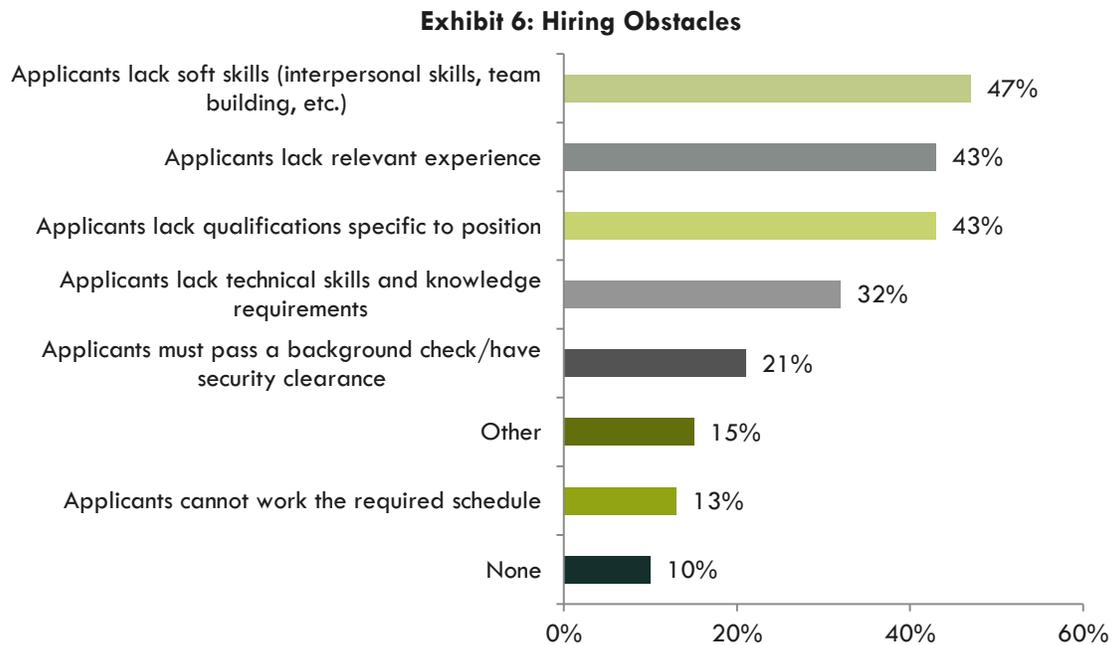
The majority of organizations surveyed reported difficulty finding qualified, well-trained job applicants for mid-level positions. Mid-level positions are those that require at least a certificate or an Associate degree. Some of the respondents reported challenges such as finding candidates with the appropriate education, training and experience. Soft skills were also noted as an important element in the selection process.

Exhibit 5: Level of Difficulty Finding Qualified, Well-trained Job Applicants for Mid-level Positions



⁵ Due to the inclusion of a few very large organizations the employment mean or average (622 employees) is less representative of the sample than the median (eight employees).

Local organizations face a variety of challenges when looking for qualified job applicants. As shown in Exhibit 6, nearly half (47%) identified lack of soft skills as a major hiring obstacle, followed by lack of qualifications specific to the position (43%), and lack of relevant experience (43%).⁶



Skill Requirements & Potential Gaps

One in six firms surveyed has hired a CTE graduate from Folsom Lake College. The majority of these graduates were ranked as adequate or excellent in all 11 skill areas included in the survey. One respondent commented that “All those who have attended or are attending Folsom Lake are our most responsible, dedicated staff.”

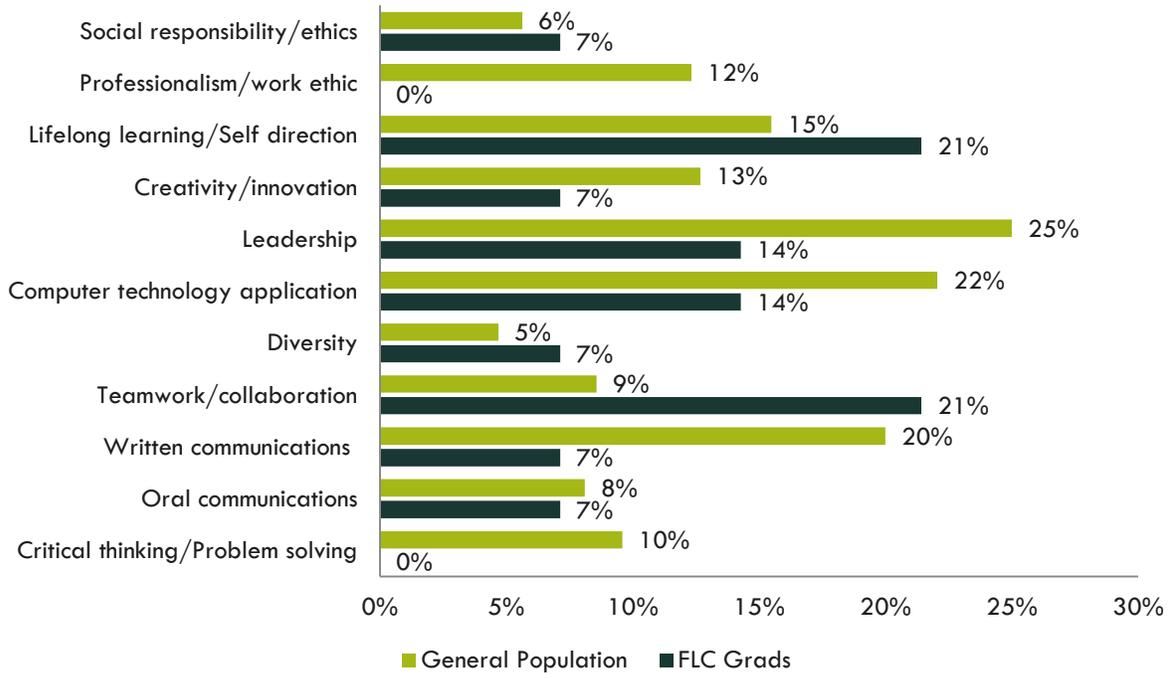
Similar to graduates from Folsom Lake College, the majority of mid-level workers in the general population were ranked as adequate or excellent in all 11 of the skill areas. Although employers in both camps were generally satisfied with their mid-level employees, there were a few skill areas with notable deficiencies. Exhibit 7 compares the deficiencies of mid-level workers in the general population to the FLC graduates. As shown, a larger percentage of the general population was ranked with a skill deficient in the following skill areas:

- Professional/Work Ethic
- Creativity/Innovation
- Leadership
- Computer Technology Application
- Written Communications
- Critical Thinking/Problem Solving

FLC graduates tend to be less proficient at teamwork/collaboration and lifelong learning. To improve these ratings, Folsom Lake College should review how these topics are integrated into their CTE curriculum. For a complete description of each skill area (as described in the survey), see Appendix A.

⁶ Multiple responses to this question were allowed. The combined total percentages will exceed 100%.

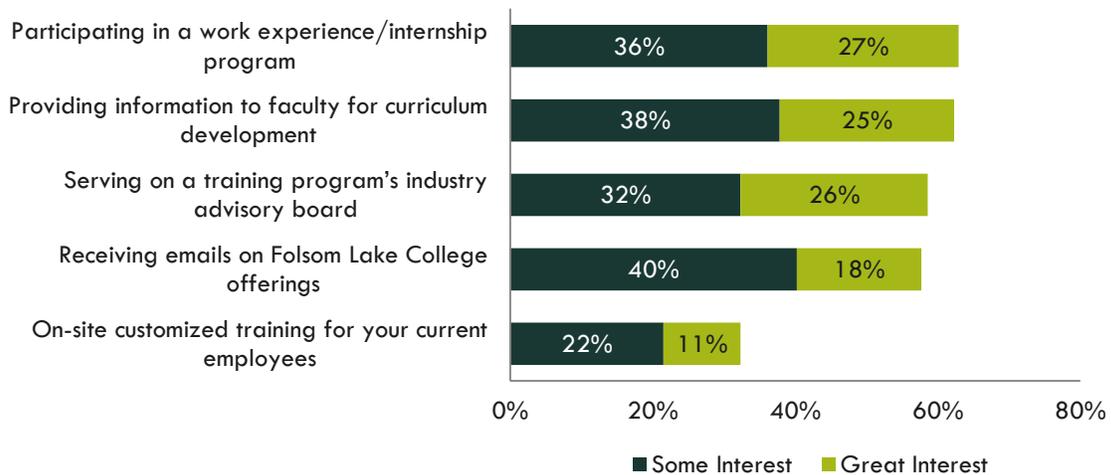
Exhibit 7: Skill Deficiencies of Mid-Level Workers in the General Population compared to FLC Graduates



Community Interest

Sixty of the 100 survey respondents expressed interest in four Folsom Lake College activities. The respondents expressed the greatest interest in participating in a work experience or internship program (63%) and providing information to faculty for curriculum development (62%). The respondents also expressed interest in serving on an advisory board as well as receiving emails about future offerings. However, when asked if they would like to be contacted by Folsom Lake College, only 26 out of the 100 respondents provided their contact information.

Exhibit 9: Level of Interest in Folsom Lake College Programs



Conclusion and Recommendations

With 100 responses, this survey provides an excellent snapshot of the workforce challenges faced by organizations in the Folsom Lake College service area. Ranging from training to hiring issues, these findings highlight that:

- Two-thirds of the organizations surveyed reported difficulty finding qualified, well-trained job applicants for mid-level positions.
- Nearly half of the organizations surveyed identified lack of soft skills as a major hiring obstacle. Lack of qualifications specific to the position and lack of relevant experience were also major hiring obstacles.
- CTE graduates from Folsom Lake College were ranked as adequate or excellent in all 11 skill areas identified as important for mid-level workers.

Although most firms were generally satisfied with their employees' skills, Folsom Lake College's CTE programs could build on their success by incorporating more activities that teach to the 11 skill areas identified as important for mid-level workers. The Center of Excellence recommends that additional research be conducted to identify specific business interests by industry group or CTE topic area. Small focus groups or one-on-one interviews with businesses would provide the kind of detailed information necessary for revising or adjusting curriculum.

Appendix A: Skill Definitions

The Conference Board identified the following 11 skill areas as important for mid-level workers across the nation:⁷

CRITICAL THINKING / PROBLEM SOLVING: Using logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions to problems. Analyzing information and evaluating results to choose the best approach and solve problems.

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS (SPEAKING AND LISTENING): Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times. Articulating thoughts and ideas clearly and effectively.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS: Communicating clearly and effectively in writing as appropriate for the needs of the audience. Ability to construct letters, memos, and reports or perform other writing tasks as needed.

TEAMWORK / COLLABORATION: Ability to build collaborative relationships, work with diverse teams, demonstrate respect and cooperation, and manage conflicts.

DIVERSITY: Learning from and working collaboratively with individuals representing diverse cultures, races, ages, gender, religions, lifestyles, and viewpoints.

COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY APPLICATION: Selecting and using an appropriate technology to accomplish a given task; applying computing skills to problem solving.

LEADERSHIP: Leveraging strengths of others to achieve common goals; using interpersonal skills to coach and develop others.

CREATIVITY / INNOVATION: Demonstrating originality, inventiveness in work; integrating knowledge across different disciplines. Developing, designing, or creating new ideas, relationships, products, applications or processes, including artistic contributions.

LIFELONG LEARNING / SELF DIRECTION: Ability to learn from mistakes and to continuously acquire new knowledge and skills. Self directing and monitoring one's own learning needs.

PROFESSIONALISM / WORK ETHIC: Demonstrating personal accountability and effective work habits, such as punctuality, time and workload management.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY / ETHICS: Demonstrating integrity and ethical behavior; acting responsibly, and keeping the interests of the larger community in mind.

⁷ The Conference Board is a global, independent business membership and research association whose mission is "to provide the world's leading organizations with the practical knowledge they need to improve their performance and better serve society." The Conference Board is a non-advocacy, not-for-profit entity. For more information, go to www.conference-board.org.