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LOGISTICS AND SUPPLY CHAIN JOB PLACEMENT: THE 2007 PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

The development of an effective recruitment strategy that attracts and secures entry-level logistics talent is essential to maintain corporate performance. A critical aspect of job placement involves understanding the preferences of students and employers. This research presents results of parallel surveys of U.S. undergraduate logistics, transportation and supply chain student and employer preferences and perceptions regarding employment. Results provided include a demographic respondent profile, their organization/functional area preferences and their perspectives on selected entry-level employment issues. These research results are intended to provide employers, educators and students with information that can be used to improve job placement success.

INTRODUCTION

Six to ten percent of the U.S. workforce is likely to retire by 2010 creating a severe management shortage according to a recent 2010 Talent Readiness Survey (Miller, 2007). As the Baby Boomer generation retires over the next twenty years, labor supply will fall far short of labor demand (Wu, 2007).

In logistics, the management shortage will be exacerbated by the rapid growth of the field (i.e., as logistics management supply decreases, demand for logistics management is increasing). Logistics practitioners and

academics are concerned about the logistics management shortage as evidenced by the recent Logistics Education Summit held at the University of West Florida (Feb., 2008) to determine actions that could alleviate logistics management, student and faculty shortages.

The impending logistics management shortage should be a significant concern to all organizations. Logistics employees are a critical factor in generating sustainable competitive advantage (Daugherty et al. 2000; Richey, Tokman, and Wheeler 2006). Therefore, hiring talented logistics managers can have a significant positive impact on organizational

performance (Lambert and Burduroglu, 2002). Conversely, a shortage of logistics managers in the organization can lead to supply chain disruptions that can devastate organization performance and profitability (Hendricks and Singhal, 2005).

As a result of the current situation, it is essential for organizations to develop an effective recruitment strategy that will attract and retain logistics management at all levels including entry-level managers. A critical aspect of successful entry-level management recruitment involves understanding the perspectives and priorities of the key participants—employers and students.

The purpose of the current research is to present the results of two parallel surveys involving U.S. undergraduate logistics students and logistics employers. These surveys focused on each groups' preferences and perceptions regarding job placement issues. These research results will provide employers, educators and students with information that can be used to improve entry-level logistics management job placement.

The balance of the paper is presented in four sections. First, the background section provides a review of the relevant literature and identifies the need for this research. Second, the research methodology section contains the study design and data collection methods. Third, data analysis and key outcomes are presented in the research results. Fourth, a set of implications and a brief summary are presented.

BACKGROUND

In the past decade, several research studies that focus on human resource issues in logistics have been completed. Some research efforts shed light on career patterns and paths (Le May, 1999; Dischinger et al., 2006) including the annual Survey of Career Patterns in Logistics (e.g., Ginter and LaLonde, 2007).

Additionally, a number of research studies have focused on logistics manager training and retention issues (Cook and Gibson, 2000; Daugherty et al., 2000; Keller, 2002; Autry and Daugherty, 2003; Farris II and Pohlen, 2004; Ellinger, Ellinger and Keller, 2005). Also, some research has been conducted to improve knowledge regarding logistics manager skill requirements, recruitment and selection (Gibson and Cook, 2001; Knemeyer and Murphy, 2001; Razzaque and Bin Sirat, 2001; Myers et. al., 2004; Murphy and Poist, 2006; Richey, Tokman and Wheeler, 2006). However, limited research has been conducted to analyze the perceptions of logistics students regarding employment issues.

Only a handful of research efforts have captured logistics student perceptions. Knemeyer, Murphy and Poist (1999) analyzed undergraduate female logistics majors' perceptions regarding logistics career opportunities. Knemeyer and Murphy (2004) provided marketing student perceptions regarding logistics as a career field. In addition, a few research studies have compared logistics student and employer perceptions regarding employment issues. Gammelgaard and Larson (2001) reported that logistics student and employer perceptions regarding "most important skills for logistics managers" were very similar. Knemeyer and Murphy (2002) compared logistics student and employee perceptions regarding logistics internship issues and found a number of significant differences. Finally, Gibson and Cook (2003) provided insight into logistics student and employer perceptions regarding entry-level employment issues and found several significant differences between logistics student and employer perceptions regarding job selection criteria, the importance of job skills and salary and workload expectations.

Given the limited research pertaining to logistics student perceptions of employment issues, the divergent findings between student-

employer perceptual studies and the fact that perceptions change as the economy and culture change over time, additional and timelier research is required. The current study was undertaken to provide updated knowledge of student-employer perceptions regarding entry-level logistics job issues.

METHODOLOGY

Given the impending shortage of logistics management talent, it is essential for organizations to develop a successful entry-level management recruitment strategy. A critical aspect of a successful recruitment strategy involves the close alignment of student and employer perspectives regarding employment issues. As a result, three research questions guided the research effort: (1) Do employers understand logistics student preferences regarding job selection criteria? (2) Are logistics student—employer perceptions of job salary, benefits and workload requirements similar? and (3) Are logistics students and employers perceptually aligned regarding job and skill requirements?

The researchers developed similar surveys to query logistics students and employers. Research protocols for conducting these mail based surveys followed Dillman's Total Design Method (Dillman, 1978). Key steps included: a review of research studies related to job placement preferences and perceptions (described in the preceding section), survey instruments testing and revision, and data collection and analysis.

Student Survey

A four-page student questionnaire used in a prior study (Gibson and Cook 2003) was reviewed and minimally revised. The updated survey instrument was pre-tested by 67 logistics undergraduate students. Minor revisions were made to improve clarity and ease of completion.

The potential study participants were identified as U.S. bachelor degree candidates from the December 2006—December 2007 timeframe with a primary interest in logistics, transportation, and supply chain management positions. The primary access to this population was through faculty involved in university SCM and logistics programs. Key programs were identified through the Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals (CSCMP) website, as well as information from the 2002 study (CSCMP Website 2007). Faculty contacts were identified through Supply Chain Management Educators' Conferences attendee lists (2005, 2006) and the CSCMP member directory (CSCMP Website 2007).

Faculty members at 24 institutions were contacted via telephone and e-mail about the study. They were asked to administer the student questionnaire to senior-level logistics classes in which the target population could be easily reached. Faculty at 23 different institutions agreed to serve as facilitators. The questionnaires were sent to the appropriate faculty members via email in .PDF format or U.S. mail in printed format with an explanatory cover letter.

Surveys representing 573 students from 20 different institutions were completed and returned. The institutions were: Auburn University, Central Michigan University, College of Charleston, Georgia Southern University, Grand Valley State University, Iowa State University, Michigan State University, Miami University, North Carolina A&T State University, Ohio State University, Southwest Missouri State University, Syracuse University, Texas Christian University, University of Arkansas, University of Memphis, University of North Florida, University of North Texas, University of Oklahoma, University of Tennessee and Western Illinois University.

Employer Survey

As was done with the student survey, updates were made to the employer questionnaire. New questions were added, creating a four-page document. It was pre-tested with a small sample of knowledgeable recruiters. Potential study participants were identified as organizations that recruit and hire U.S. undergraduate students for logistics, transportation and supply chain positions. These organizations were identified by their recruiting activities at multiple universities.

Cover letters and surveys were mailed to 200 logistics recruiters at organizations between December 2006 and February 2007. The cover letter requested participation and return of completed questionnaires via fax. All participants were promised a copy of the comparative student-employer survey results later in the year. A total of 96 completed surveys were returned, a return rate of 48 percent.

Analysis Methods Used

The completed surveys were coded, entered into a PC, and analyzed using Microsoft Access 2007 and Excel 2007. Responses containing nominal and ordinal data were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, and cross-tabulations. Responses containing ratio data were analyzed using means, medians, and standard deviations.

RESULTS

Survey results are grouped into three categories: demographics, student preferences with related employer perceptions, and

employer preferences with related student perceptions.

Respondent Demographics

A wide variety of students completed the questionnaire. The participants range in age from 20 to 58 years (mean age = 23.0 years). They are geographically well dispersed, including residents of 27 different U.S. states and 14 foreign countries. Additional demographic information regarding the student respondents is presented in Table 1.

The employers represented in the research range from very small organizations to Fortune 500 companies with multiple U.S. locations. The majority of respondents are logistics services providers (motor carriers, railroads, third party logistics firms, etc.) while manufacturers are strongly represented. Individuals completing the survey possess significant expertise on the research topic, with nearly 50 percent having five or more years of recruiting experience. Key demographic data for the employer respondents is presented in Table 2.

Logistics Student Preferences and Employer Perceptions

Students were asked a series of questions regarding their job search activities. General information was sought regarding organization and position preferences, as well as interview activities. Specific issues regarding job selection factors, benefits and compensation, geographic location, and workload levels were also studied. Parallel questions were asked of the employer respondents regarding the specific issues. They were asked to use their

TABLE 1
STUDENT SURVEY PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

	Frequency (n=573)	Percentage
Gender		
Male	367	64.1
Female	203	35.4
Not disclosed	3	0.5
Marital Status		
Not married	541	94.4
Married	30	5.3
Not disclosed	2	0.3
Primary Area of Study		
Logistics/Transportation/SCM	474	82.7
Marketing	24	4.2
Business Administration	23	4.0
Finance	18	3.1
Operations Management	14	2.4
International Business	10	1.8
Other	5	0.9
Not disclosed	5	0.9
Graduation Date		
December, 2006	34	5.9
May, 2007	377	65.8
Summer, 2007	74	12.9
December, 2007	43	7.5
May, 2008	25	4.4
Other	12	2.1
Not disclosed	8	1.4

TABLE 2
EMPLOYER SURVEY PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

	Frequency (n=96)	Percentage
Type of Organization		
Logistics services provider	56	58.3
Manufacturer	22	22.9
Retail / Wholesale	11	11.5
Other / Not Reported	7	7.3
Number of Employees		
Median	2,354	
Range	2-2,000,000	
Annual Sales		
Median	\$735 million	
Range	\$1 million - \$375 billion	
Respondents' Recruiting Experience		
Median	5 years	
Range	0 to 20 years	

recruiting experiences to predict how students would respond to each question.

Logistics Student Preferences and Employer Perceptions

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General Information

In an effort to understand preferences and potential competition for job openings, students were asked to identify the top three types of organizations they prefer to join and the top three types of positions that they are seeking. Most frequently cited organizations types among their three rankings included logistics services provider (429), transportation service providers (267), and consulting firms (267), followed by retailers and manufacturers. In general, these results are consistent with the previous study (Gibson and Cook, 2003).

It appears that today's students remain largely interested in staff-oriented responsibilities. Similar to 2003, the most desired position type

is supply chain management (266 top three rankings), purchasing and supply management (181), logistics analysis and planning (153), and international logistics (140) hold the second, third, and fourth positions. Transportation/traffic management was the lone management position to crack the five rankings at number five, with 125 students rating it among their preferred position types.

Interview activity and success among the respondents is much higher in 2007 than in 2003. Figure 1 reveals that 69 percent of the Spring 2007 graduates have participated in campus interviews versus less than 50 percent in 2003. Importantly, more than 54 percent of this group has already received job offers compared to less than 25 percent in 2003.

Also, it should be noted that student participation in on campus interviews varies by university. Fewer than 50 percent of the respondents from six universities had actively engaged in the interview process. On a more positive note, at least 80 percent of the respondents at five universities had participated in interviews. It would be valuable to learn what steps are being taken at these universities to promote student engagement in the interview process.

While the state of the economy may contribute to the increased activity of the current students, it also appears that they are ramping up serious job search campaigns more quickly than their predecessors that are translating into greater employment opportunities. Still, there should be concern that approximately one-third of Spring 2007 graduates had not made much job search progress, despite being less than three months away from graduation!

Job Selection Factors

Regardless of their search and interview activity levels, the student respondents have a strong vision of what they desire in a position. Overall, the respondents rated 14 of the 19 job

selection criteria high (above 5.0 on a 7-point Likert scale where 1 = low importance to 7 = high importance). The 2007 participants are seeking growth opportunities within solid working environments that provide fulfillment, stability, and a challenge. Salary had the fourth highest mean rating. As in 2003, "frequent performance evaluations"—which has implications for advancement opportunities and salary increases—was at the bottom of the students' list.

The employer respondents rated the importance of the same criteria, based on their perceptions of student desires. Their predictions were on target for 13 of the 19 criteria. However, most of the discrepancies in prediction involved criteria rated high by students. In fact, employers differed on 4 of the top 8 criteria.

Both groups were also asked to rank order the top three factors in the job selection process. Table 3 reveals that the same five factors populate each group's list. However, the employers tended to overemphasize salary while failing to recognize the importance of job satisfaction to the students. Employers may need to adjust the focus of their recruiting messages to emphasize the appealing aspects of positions.

Compensation and Benefits

A critical aspect of the job evaluation and selection process is the compensation package offered. Student respondents were asked to provide information regarding anticipated salary offers and the importance of various benefits. Employers were asked to provide information on their range of starting salaries for undergraduate degree candidates.

Figure 2 reveals that the group means are not dramatically different in terms of the lower end of the salary scale. Student expectations tracked fairly well with employer offers. However, the same cannot be said for the high

FIGURE 1
INTERVIEW ACTIVITY LEVELS
PERCENTAGE OF SPRING 2007 GRADUATES

“How many interviews have you participated in for full-time positions?”

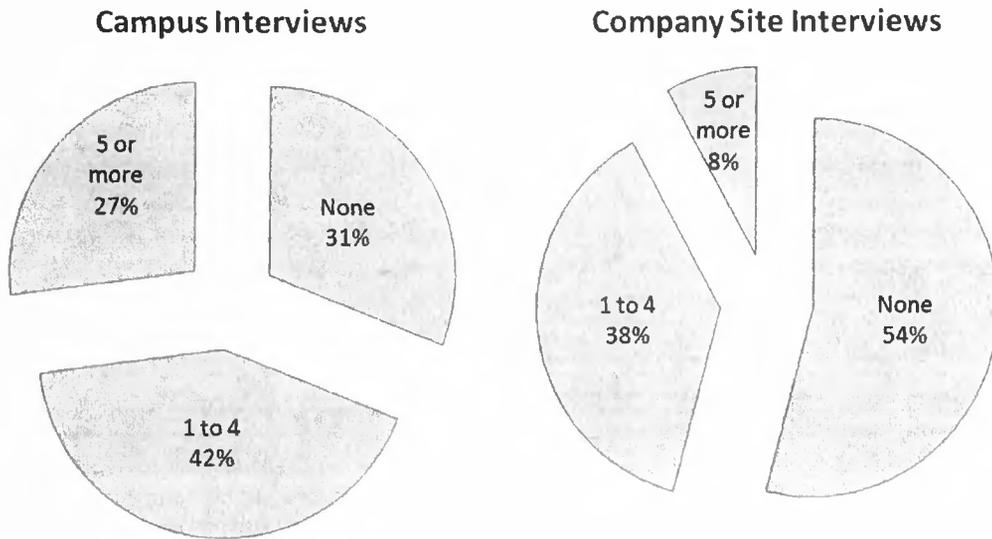


TABLE 3
JOB SEARCH AND SELECTION CRITERIA

Criteria	Student Mean Rating ^A	Employer Mean Prediction ^A	Student Rankings ^B	Employer Rankings ^B
Opportunity for advancement	6.52	6.34		
Positive company atmosphere	6.12	5.55		
Anticipated job satisfaction	6.11	5.73	2	5
Salary offered	5.95	6.32	3	1
Job security	5.87	5.14	1	2
Training provided	5.80	5.52		
Personal fit with corporate culture	5.77	5.07		
Challenging and interesting work	5.75	5.73	5	3
Benefits package offered	5.68	5.03		
Key job responsibilities	5.51	5.15		

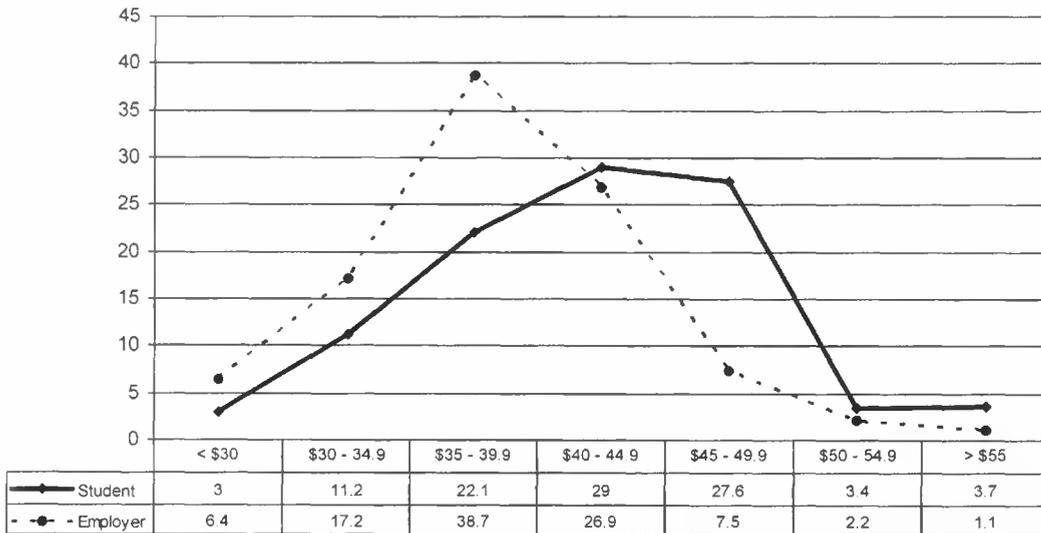
Table 3
(continued)

Criteria	Student Mean Rating ^A	Employer Mean Prediction ^A	Student Rankings ^B	Employer Rankings ^B
Company reputation and image	5.46	5.37		
Performance based bonuses	5.40	5.04		
Geographic location of the job	5.34	5.60	4	4
Limited night and weekend hours	5.12	5.53		
Job autonomy (independence)	4.84	4.73		
Flexible work schedule	4.84	4.57		
Opportunity to travel	4.84	4.89		
Signing bonus	4.65	4.66		
Frequent performance evaluations	4.25	4.17		

^A Based upon 7 point scale: 1 = Low Importance to 7 = High Importance

^B Based upon weighted rankings of "the three factors that are most important to the job selection process"

FIGURE 2
MINIMUM SALARY EXPECTATIONS VS MINIMUM OFFERS
Percentage of Respondents
In \$xx,000



end of the salary scale. Figure 3 indicates that the students were overly optimistic in these upper level "goals" versus employers' maximum offers.

Although it may appear that students' salary goals may be skewed, nearly 20 percent of the employer participants do have salary ranges that exceed \$50,000. Also, the students' mean "minimum acceptable annual salary" of \$39,347 was well within the mean starting salary range offered by the employers. While their desired compensation levels are higher than what they are willing to settle for, students appear to have a realistic perception of what the market will bear.

Students also pay close attention to the other key component of compensation—benefits. Similar to the 2003 respondents, the 2007 group rated eleven of 13 benefits as important in their job selection and evaluation process. Table 4 reveals that relatively long-range insurance and investment issues topped the list. The employers' ranking predictions were on target for most of the students' important benefits but did not recognize the perceived importance of life insurance. They also overestimated the relative value of training and education support.

Geographic Location Preferences

Another key factor in the job selection process is the locality of the positions offered. Employers and faculty often lament the lack of flexibility on the part of job candidates. Thus, a series of geographic location questions were asked to gain a better understanding of the students' perspectives on this topic. Employers were also asked to predict the students' preferences.

Figure 4 clearly indicates that the students are more geographically flexible than predicted by the employers. Over 43 percent of the students will consider a broad array of locations (either the U.S. or U.S. and international locations)

while less than 25 percent limit themselves to specific cities or states. Additionally, slightly more than half of the students that indicated a regional preference will consider positions in multiple regions.

A main focus of the students' geographic preferences is the desire for solid job opportunities. Today's students are willing to move, especially when prospects are good for advancement. Many also consider lifestyle and financial issues, with "close proximity to family" and "cost of living" receiving high mean scores and high importance ranking. However, other moderately rated issues like the desire to go somewhere new and significant other preferences received relatively high importance rankings. Ultimately, this paints a somewhat confusing picture and employers will need to diligently assess true geographic preferences on a candidate by candidate basis.

Workload Levels

The final job selection question focused on the weekly work hour expectations of the students. Student respondents were asked to provide a range of hours and a maximum level that they were willing to work each week. Employers were asked to predict the students' responses and to provide information on their range of weekly work requirements for new managers.

Figure 5 indicates that students underestimate the number of hours per week on the low end by approximately 4.1 hours. In contrast, they overestimate the number of hours per week required on the high end by 1.5 hours versus employers' mean requirements. While the 2007 students are not quite on target, they are much better informed than their 2003 counterparts who significantly *underestimated* the high end requirements by more than six hours.

The 2007 students' input regarding the maximum number of hours they are willing to work each week (mean = 57.9 hours per week) reveals a stronger willingness to work than

FIGURE 3
MAXIMUM SALARY EXPECTATIONS VS MAXIMUM OFFERS
 In \$xx,000
 Percent of Respondents

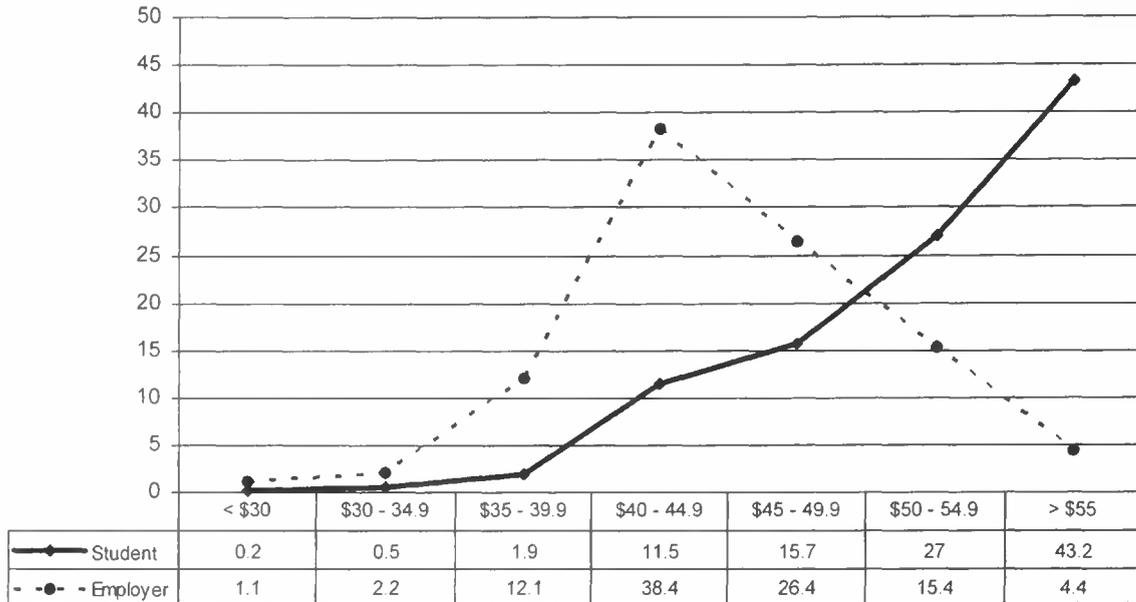


TABLE 4
IMPORTANCE OF BENEFITS

Criteria	Student Mean Rating ^A	Employer Mean Prediction ^A	Student Rankings ^B	Employer Rankings ^B
Medical insurance	6.38	5.87	1	1
Retirement plan (401K, pension)	6.26	5.51	2	3
Vacation and personal days	6.00	6.12	4	2
Dental insurance	5.65	4.90		
Training & certification support	5.55	5.25		5
Life insurance	5.45	4.13	3	
Paid sick leave	5.39	4.78		
Tuition support / reimbursement	5.39	5.51	5	4

Table 4
(continued)

Criteria	Student Mean Rating ^A	Employer Mean Prediction ^A	Student Rankings ^B	Employer Rankings ^B
Relocation expense support	5.37	5.06		
Stock options / purchase program	5.35	4.49		
Profit sharing program	5.05	5.07		
Tailored benefits (cafeteria plan)	3.87	3.63		
Company car / car allowance	3.23	2.88		

^A Based on 7 point scale: 1 = Low Importance to 7 = High Importance

^B Based on weighted rankings of "the three factors that are most important to the job selection process"

FIGURE 4
GEOGRAPHIC JOB PREFERENCES

Percentage of Respondents

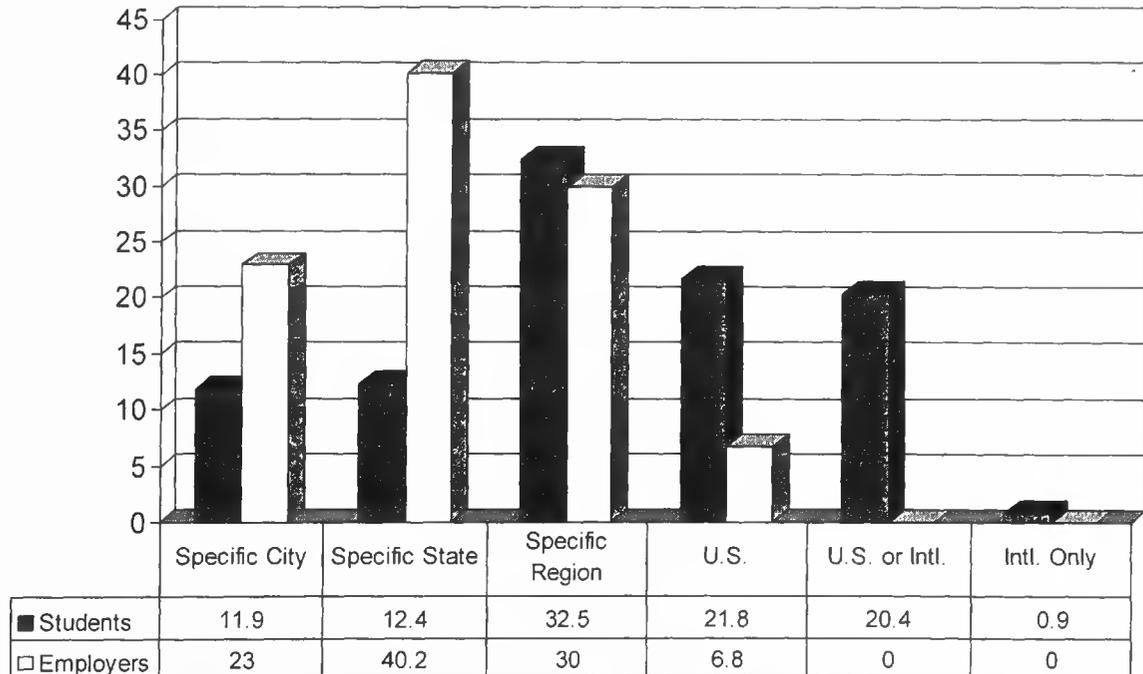


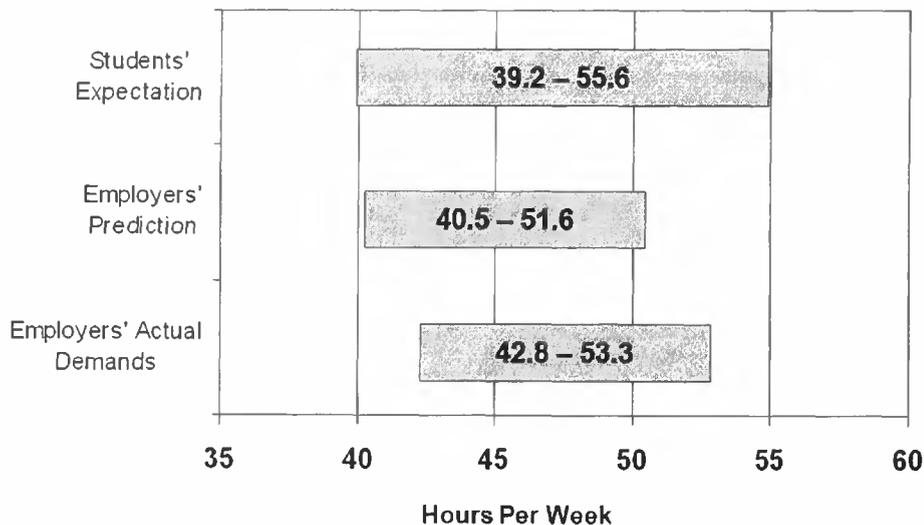
TABLE 5
REASONS FOR GEOGRAPHIC PREFERENCES

Criteria	Student Mean Rating ^A	Student Rankings ^B
Job opportunities in area	5.70	2
Close proximity to family	5.30	1
Cost of living	5.05	4
Social and cultural opportunities	4.94	
Close proximity to friends	4.74	
Desire to go somewhere new	4.46	3
Climate	4.32	5
Educational opportunities in area	4.28	
Familiarity with area	3.92	
Spouse / significant other preferences	3.86	
Opportunity to live at home	3.14	

^A Based on 7 point scale: 1 = Low Importance to 7 = High Importance

^B Based on weighted rankings of "the three geographic preference factors that are most important to you"

FIGURE 5
WEEKLY WORKLOAD EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS
AVERAGE OF MINIMUM TO MAXIMUM HOURS ANTICIPATED



found in the 2003 study (mean = 56.8 hours per week). Figure 6 reveals that over 61 percent of the current respondents are willing to work more than 55 hours per week. These individuals will meet the workload needs of all but the most demanding employers represented in the survey.

Employer Preferences and Student Perceptions

Two employer-focused issues were also addressed in the study. Data were collected regarding the importance of various factors: (1) criteria used to review candidates' credentials in the screening process; and, (2) criteria used in candidate evaluation and selection. In the student questionnaire, respondents were asked to predict how employers would rate each criterion.

Screening Criteria and Factors

During the screening process, employers place the greatest emphasis on the ability of candidates to communicate effectively. Skills, leadership, and practical experiences and skills are also important screening criteria. Notably, internships and co-operative education experience jumped four spots in the ratings from eighth most important in 2003 to fourth most important in 2007. A corresponding drop in the importance of general work experience was found, moving from third to eighth position. Table 6 provides additional information regarding the screening evaluation criteria.

Both groups provided rankings of the top five factors in the screening process. Table 6 indicates that students recognize the emphasis that employers place upon communication skills and internship/coop experience. However, the students tended to believe that employers focus more heavily on degree and major than occurs in reality. Overall, the results suggest that students must demonstrate skills, capabilities, and

experiences on resumes and in interviews. Less emphasis should be focused on moderately important employer issues such as objective statements, supervisory experience, and reference lists.

Selection Criteria and Factors

Although the employers stressed one criterion above all others in the screening process, the list of important criteria dramatically expands in the evaluation and selection process. Table 7 reveals that among the 23 employer evaluated criteria, six were rated as very important (mean > 6.0) and 15 others were rated as important (mean > 5.0). Cognitive abilities (e.g., ability to prioritize, plan, and organize, ability to learn quickly, etc.), communication skills, and other interpersonal issues were among the most important factors. Only one criterion dropped out of the top five from the 2003 study, that being the ability to work on teams.

Finally, each group was asked to rank the three most important candidate selection criteria. While the students' predictive rankings were reasonably similar to the employers for three criteria, they overestimated the importance of teamwork, and underestimated employers' perceived value of the ability to learn quickly, and organizational and oral communication skills. Table 7 provides additional details.

Overall, the results reveal important insights into the placement preferences and perceptions of the key stakeholders. Notably, the 2007 students are better aligned with employers on many key issues than the 2003 student participants. Still, opportunities exist to make the search and placement process more productive. Recruiters can use the updated information regarding student preferences and beliefs to develop more tailored hiring practices. Students should use the employer insights to better prepare for interviews and establish reasonable expectations about employment. Finally, educators should use the results to better

FIGURE 6
MAXIMUM ACCEPTABLE WORKLOAD
Percent of Respondents

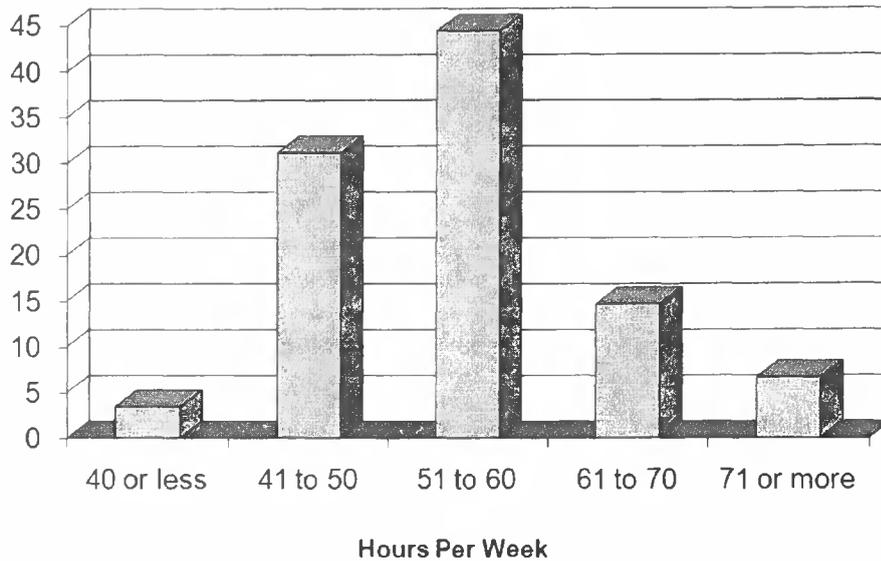


TABLE 6
CANDIDATE EVALUATION CRITERIA

Criteria	Employer Mean Rating ^A	Student Mean Prediction ^A	Employer Rankings ^B	Student Rankings ^B
Communication skills	6.40	6.40	1	1
Computer/technical skills	5.62	5.52		
Leadership experience	5.56	6.04	2	4
Internship / coop experience	5.56	5.86	3	3
Industry work experience	5.35	5.60	4	5
Education - degree and major	5.31	5.89	5	2
Quantitative skills	5.27	5.34		
General work experience	5.18	5.77		
Classroom performance (GPA)	4.75	4.87		
Customer service experience	4.71	5.11		
Professional organization activity	4.68	5.00		

Table 6
(continued)

Criteria	Employer Mean Rating ^A	Student Mean Prediction ^A	Employer Rankings ^B	Student Rankings ^B
Extracurricular activities	4.37	4.85		
Education - university attended	4.33	5.09		
Date of availability	4.27	4.59		
Supervisory experience	4.23	4.90		
Individual's stated objective	4.04	4.64		
Reference list	3.76	4.38		

^A Based on 7 point scale: 1 = Low Importance to 7 = High Importance

^B Based on weighted rankings of "the three factors that are most important to the job selection process"

TABLE 7
CANDIDATE SELECTION CRITERIA

Criteria	Employer Mean Rating ^A	Student Mean Prediction ^A	Employer Rankings ^B	Student Rankings ^B
Ability to prioritize, plan, & organize	6.27	6.28	3	5
Ability to learn quickly	6.22	6.14	1	2
Oral communication skills	6.21	6.24	5	
Ability to manage relationships	6.19	6.19	4	4
Motivation / enthusiasm	6.15	6.08		
Ability to perform under pressure	6.04	6.25		
Problem solving skills	5.97	6.09		
Decision making skills	5.95	6.18		
Ability to work on teams	5.94	6.53		3
Initiative / resourcefulness	5.90	5.74		
Listening skills	5.88	5.96		
Leadership skills	5.80	6.25	2	1
Time management skills	5.74	5.96		
Self-confidence	5.67	5.82		
Ability to see the "big picture"	5.63	5.96		
Maturity	5.58	5.91		
Critical reasoning skills	5.57	5.78		

Table 7
(continued)

Criteria	Employer Mean Rating ^A	Student Mean Prediction ^A	Employer Rankings ^B	Student Rankings ^B
Ability to think creatively	5.52	5.95		
Assertiveness	5.51	5.58		
Goals / ambitions	5.44	5.73		
Written communication skills	5.39	5.49		
Willingness to relocate	4.88	5.08		
Industry knowledge / awareness	4.81	5.73		

^A Based on 7 point scale: 1 = Low Importance to 7 = High Importance

^B Based on weighted rankings of "the three factors that are most important to the job selection process"

understand and bridge the perceptual gaps between recruiters and students.

IMPLICATIONS AND SUMMARY

Logistics and supply chain employers and students generally have a good understanding of the other group's preferences and requirements as evidenced by the similarities in top five rankings and importance ratings for numerous criteria. Numerical salary and workload estimates of student preferences by logistics employers were also more accurate than those found in the parallel study in 2003.

These more closely aligned results are a testament to the industry orientation of the logistics/supply chain discipline. In recent years, the increased educational-professional interaction in the form of tours, internships, guest lectures, shadow days, and professional meetings has fostered mutual understanding of key placement issues. As a result, students gain a more realistic perspective of the "real world" and employers become better "tuned in" to the desires and expectations of prospective employees.

The results, however, indicate that the situation is not perfect. The level of understanding between the "buyers" of entry-level management talent and the "sellers" of their employment services could be improved in many ways. Hence, a set of research-based recommendations has been developed for the employers, educators and students.

Employer Implications and Recommendations

The active job market will create a challenge for employers seeking entry-level talent. First, talented candidates will be in relatively short supply. As a result, competition for their services will remain keen. Second, although job websites may help employers cast a wider net, they still have to work hard to sift through the larger "catch" quickly to find the candidate with the right "fit" and talents. They must continue to refine their understanding of student perceptions and expectations in order to hire and develop a satisfied, productive, low turnover staff. Key recommendations and implications from the research include:

- Recognize the students' holistic approach to evaluating job opportunities. The student responses regarding job search and selection criteria revealed that they rank opportunity for advancement and job satisfaction ahead of salary offered. Therefore, employers should demonstrate opportunities for advancement within their supply chain organization and show job satisfaction of current employees during recruitment efforts.
- Expand corporate recruiting horizon. As a group, the employer respondents were fairly pessimistic regarding the geographic flexibility of students. In fact, over forty percent of students expressed a strong willingness to relocate anywhere in the U.S. or overseas based upon the job opportunity. In addition, nine percent of students desired to have a base of operation in close proximity to their families. Still, this finding signals an opportunity for employers to recruit on a wider geographic basis rather than limit activities to a single state or specific region.
- Focus on total compensation package. The employer respondents underestimate the importance of benefits to students as part of the overall compensation package. Specifically, employers underestimate the importance that students place on medical, dental and life insurance plus retirement benefits. In fact, three of these four benefits were among the top five benefits in student rankings. Employers perceived that students would be more interested in training and tuition support. It is critical that employers effectively communicate the array of benefits offered and focus on those benefits that student's desire.

Faculty Implications and Recommendations

Faculty can make use of the study results to help bridge the student and employer knowledge gaps. Key recommendations and implications from the research include:

- Promote students' development of key skills and abilities focusing on: ability to prioritize, plan and organize; leadership skills; ability to manage relationships; technical/oral communications skills and problem solving skills. To accomplish this task, the faculty should develop a supply chain curriculum that focuses on team based active learning (cases, team projects, corporate projects) that requires computer technology, quantitative analysis and oral presentations.
- Provide vital logistics, transportation and supply chain related experiences. These experiences should include: tours of facilities, internships, coops. In fact, a business experience should be part of the requirements for completing a supply chain major.
- Mold realistic expectations for students regarding logistics job requirements. Students should be educated regarding the time and techniques required to find a job that fits their needs, issues related to salary levels and other aspects of compensation and interview techniques. Students can be better prepared in these areas through the use of university and college career services, professional service organizations (student memberships) and career development websites.

- Share information with peers regarding student engagement in on campus interviews. Work to identify best practices for boosting career fair and interview participation levels by juniors and rising seniors.

Student Implications and Recommendations

The robust job market in logistics/supply chain management may make students complacent regarding job search. However, the reality is that an increasing number of opportunities and choices will require more not less screening and comparison to identify an opportunity that fits the individual students' requirements. Therefore, students must take a more aggressive role in pursuing logistics/supply chain positions. Key recommendations and implications from the research include:

- Recognize that the job search will require a significant time and effort. Nearly one-third of students had not participated in a single on-campus interview despite being well into their senior year (the survey was conducted in the November to February time frame). Many students indicated a desire to work for logistics or transport service providers and consulting firms. Also, students expressed a great interest in supply chain management, purchasing and supply management, logistics analysis and planning, and international logistics positions. Students must be willing to aggressively search for these "staff" positions among the myriad of service providers. Locating a desirable position is a multi-pronged endeavor—networking, participating in career fairs, using career services resources, conducting internet searches, posting resumes on corporate websites, and coordinating efforts with supply chain faculty—that must begin much sooner than the last few months of the senior year.

- Students must complete an internship or have relevant supply chain experience. Employers indicated that internship/co-op experience and industry work experience were two of the top five entry-level job candidate evaluation criteria. As the supply chain field has matured, more internship opportunities have been created by companies and as a result, most students have had an internship experience. By comparison, students without the necessary experience on their resume will not be competitive.

- Sell your unique capabilities, skills, and attributes. The employer respondents look for specific competencies and experiences that students must be able to communicate and demonstrate during interviews. Clearly, it's not about where you went to school or "who you know" (e.g., your references). In the minds of the employers, it's what you bring to the table in terms of ability to plan and organize, leadership, work experience, interpersonal skills and geographic flexibility that sets you apart from the other candidates.

Summary, Limitations, and Future Directions

The development of effective job placement programs is important for organizations that hire entry-level logistics, transportation and supply chain managers and university logistics/supply chain programs and their students. An important, but not often addressed aspect of the search, evaluation, and selection process in logistics is the student perspective.

This study provides insight into the views of 573 students at 20 U.S. universities regarding logistics job placement. Comparative insights are also provided for the 96 organizations that participated in the study. Analysis of the survey responses revealed many similar

perceptions between the groups and some noteworthy differences.

Employers can use the study findings and recommendations to benchmark their placement processes and to assess their understanding of student views in order to enhance their potential for recruiting success. Faculty can use the results to identify key employment and career issues that warrant additional coverage in the classroom. Finally, students can use the information to develop job search strategies and compensation expectations.

Appropriate methodological steps were taken to ensure that the research results are reliable, valid, and unbiased. However, the authors make no pretense that the results are all-encompassing or present the definitive study on logistics job placement preferences and perceptions. The information contained in the tables and figures are presented with the

caution that students from a few major logistics programs did not participate in the study and logistics services providers were heavily represented in the employer survey. However, the authors believe that the results adequately depict the current issues in logistics job placement.

The topic of logistics job placement is important and deserves additional study. Perhaps the most valuable effort would be to conduct similar studies of logistics students and employers in different countries to analyze variances in perspectives and preferences regarding job placement. Also, it would be beneficial to assess the views of graduate logistics students and the employers who recruit them. Finally, it will be important to repeat this study periodically to assess the trends in student and employer preferences, as well as the impact of economic conditions on placement perspectives and practices.

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