THE LEADERSHIP SKILLS SOUGHT BY EMPLOYERS OF COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE GRADUATES

Abstract

There is a need to enhance and develop leadership skills in students to meet the demands of industry (Birkenholz & Schumacher, 1994). As a result, supervisors of college of agriculture graduates at a Midwestern institution were surveyed to determine the leadership skills most important to their careers and the perception with which they were able to perform those skills. Supervisors perceived the three most important leadership skills for graduates to possess were: "working well with others," "functioning well in stressful situations" and "ability to work independently." Supervisors perceived graduates to be most competent at: "maintaining a positive attitude," "relating well with supervisors" and their "ability to work independently." The Borich (1980) needs assessment model revealed that 23 items could be employed to modify and enhance the existing college curriculum. The Borich needs assessment model also revealed that one of the leadership skills least in need of enhancement was in the area of written communication.

Introduction/Theoretical Framework

There is a need to enhance and develop leadership skills in students to meet the demands of industry (Birkenholz & Schumacher, 1994) because "employers value leadership" (Greiman, Addington, Larson & Olander, 2006, p.2). Effective leadership skills have been judged as necessary for success in the complex and rapidly changing agricultural industry. "Employers frequently say they want to recruit potential leaders… who are good at stimulating their colleagues to take reasonable initiatives" (Coplin, 2003, pg. 69).

Employers in agriculture have the same desire. McKinley, Birkenholz, & Stewart (1993) stated that "most agricultural employers report a need for effective leaders to aid in meeting their goals and objectives" (p. 76) and often rely on college graduates to satisfy leadership positions. However, employers and colleges do not necessarily agree on the qualities a college graduate should possess, especially when it comes to leadership (Shivpuri & Kim, 2004). Although there is much support for leadership development and improvement in preparing students to be effective leaders, it has all too often been an afterthought of university programs due to the rigor of course content (Cress, Astin, Zimmerman-Oster, & Burkhardt, 2001).

In a study conducted to determine the level of importance of certain qualities assessed by department heads of colleges and employers, a discrepancy existed in the area of leadership (Shivpuri & Kim, 2004). Leadership was deemed "important" to employers but was not as important to department heads. As a result, the leadership quality that employers are searching for in candidates has continued to go unnoticed by colleges (Shivpuri & Kim, 2004). Shivpuri and Kim (2004) noted that a "skills gap" exists in college graduates by stating that students are not attaining the skills most important to employers**.** Therefore, it is crucial that institutions strive to develop leadership skills in its students and not neglect this "call of duty" from society.

One reason for the growing need of leadership development is due to the ever changing, fast paced, multifaceted society in which citizens currently live (McKinley et al., 1993). Because agriculture is an industry that is ever changing, the need for agricultural leaders is high (Birkenholz & Schumacher, 1994). Birkenholz and Schumacher (1994) encouraged colleges of agriculture to take an initiative in developing the leadership traits of its undergraduate students. Fritz and Brown (1998) agreed that additional effort must be made to further enhance and improve leadership development in departments of agriculture.

The demands for improving leadership skills extend beyond industry needs. Research shows that students have a desire to participate in leadership training opportunities. Schumacher and Swan (1993) found that college students recognize the need to improve their leadership skills and are willing to do so if provided the opportunity. What are the leadership skills needed by employers? Coplin (2003) identified problem-solving and people skills as being direct qualities leaders should possess. In addition, Coplin (2003) suggested that initiating and completing an activity increased ones' leadership ability.

Currently, many university courses are diverting their attention to and preparing students for leadership theory and practice (Boyd & Murphrey, 2001). However, many teacher educators feel the pressure of teaching technical content leaves little time to teach life-long leadership skills to students (Baer, 1980, as cited by Birkenholz and Schumacher, 1994). To teach the leadership skills needed for employment success, one must first know which skills are in need?

The theoretical framework for this study was based off the work of Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, Jacobs and Fleishman (2000, as cited in Northouse, 2004) and Katz (1955, as cited in Northouse, 2004). Mumford et al. (2000) developed a skills-based model of leadership. Based on this model, leaders must possess three components: individual attributes (general cognitive ability, crystallized cognitive ability, motivation, and personality), competencies (problem-solving skills, social judgment skills, and knowledge), and leadership outcomes (effective problem-solving and performance). Katz (2004) developed a three-skill approach to leadership consisting of technical skills, human skills, and conceptual skills. Katz (1955) defined technical skills as those "specialized" skills, important to a particular job, that leaders are proficient at performing. Technical skills deal with the ability to "work with things" (Northouse, 2004, p.37). Human skills can be associated with "soft skills." Human skills deal with interpersonal relations and are needed for "working with people" (Northouse, 2004, p.37). Lastly, conceptual skills are needed for visualization and assist leaders in working "with ideas" (Northouse, 2004, p.38).

Methods

The purpose of the study was to assess the leadership skills needed by graduates of a college of agriculture (COA) as perceived by graduates' supervisors. The following objectives were developed to guide the study:

1. Assess supervisors' perceptions of the importance of the leadership skills needed by graduates in industry.

2. Assess supervisors' perceptions of the competence level of their graduate employees at performing the leadership skills.

3. Prioritize the leadership skills, according to supervisors, in need of curriculum enhancement using the Borich needs assessment model.

The design of this study was survey research. A need existed to determine the leadership skills desired in industry from the immediate supervisors of college of agriculture graduates. Because the COA has no frame for such supervisors, 290 randomly selected graduates were contacted to solicit the name and contact information of their immediate supervisor. Upon contacting the graduates, seventy-five willingly provided the information needed to serve as the frame for the supervisors. Therefore, the population for this study consisted of 75 supervisors of graduates from a COA.

The Dillman (2004) Tailored Design Method was employed to collect data from the supervisors. A postcard was sent to all seventy-five supervisors informing them that a study was being conducted to assess the perceptions of the leadership skills most needed for graduates entering industry. Questionnaires were mailed two weeks after the postcards. The questionnaires were accompanied with a cover letter and pre-paid return envelope. Follow-up procedures consisted of a postcard sent to non-respondents ten days after the initial mailing of the complete package. A second complete package was mailed to non-respondents ten days after the follow-up postcard. After the initial mailing and follow-up procedures, 42 usable questionnaires were received from the supervisors for a 56% response rate.

A questionnaire was developed to collect the data and consisted of 67 leadership skills identified through the literature by Evers, Rush & Berdrow (1998). Supervisors responded to their perception of the importance of the skills to employability success of the graduates and how competent they perceived the graduate to be at performing the skills. The 67 skills were measured on a 4-point response scale ranging from: 0 – no importance (or competence), 1 – minor importance (or competence), 2 – moderate importance (competence), and 3 – major importance (or competence). The importance and competence skills were further analyzed using the Borich (1980) needs assessment model. The nature of the model is to determine if and where discrepancies exist. Borich (1980) noted the importance of calculating a discrepancy score, weighted discrepancy score, and a mean weighted discrepancy score in an effort to emphasize areas in need of curriculum enhancement and modification.

A panel of experts consisting of COA faculty established face and content validity for this study. To account for reliability, a pilot study was performed on COA graduates not randomly selected to the study. An overall Cronbach's alpha of .94 was established as a result of the pilot study.

Results and Discussion

Objective one sought to assess supervisors' perceptions of the importance of the leadership skills needed by graduates in industry. Working well with fellow employees (M = 2.93) was the leadership skill perceived to be the most important by supervisors (Table 1). In addition to "working well with fellow employees," six other employability skill items were found to possess

a mean importance of 2.85 or higher. The remaining skills were “functioning well in stressful situations” (*M* = 2.90), “ability to work independently” (*M* = 2.90), “solving problems” (*M* = 2.88), “maintaining a positive attitude” (*M* = 2.88), “setting priorities” (*M* = 2.85), and “allocating time efficiently” (*M* = 2.85).

Table 1
Supervisors’ Perceptions of the Importance of the Leadership Skills (n = 42)

Rank	Leadership Skill	*M*	*SD*
1.	Working well with fellow employees	2.93	.26
2.	Functioning well in stressful situations	2.90	.30
3.	Ability to work independently	2.90	.30
4.	Solving problems	2.88	.34
5.	Maintaining a positive attitude	2.88	.40
6.	Setting priorities	2.85	.36
7.	Allocating time efficiently	2.85	.36
8.	Meeting deadlines	2.83	.38
9.	Identifying problems	2.80	.40
10.	Recognizing the effects of decisions made	2.80	.40
11.	Responding positively to constructive criticism	2.80	.41
12.	Adapting to situations of change	2.78	.57
13.	Functioning at an optimal level of performance	2.76	.44
14.	Listening attentively	2.76	.44
15.	Prioritizing problems	2.73	.45
16.	Managing/overseeing several tasks at once	2.73	.50
17.	Gaining new knowledge from everyday experiences	2.73	.51
18.	Conveying information one-to-one	2.71	.46
19.	Relating well with supervisors	2.71	.51
20.	Responding to others’ comments during a conversation	2.68	.47
21.	Identifying essential components of the problem	2.68	.52
22.	Sorting out the relevant data to solve the problem	2.66	.48
23.	Keeping up-to-date on developments in the field	2.66	.53
24.	Maintaining a high energy level	2.66	.53
25.	Decisions on the basis of thorough analysis of the situation	2.63	.54
26.	Establishing the critical events to be completed	2.63	.54
27.	Recognizing alternative routes in meeting objectives	2.61	.54
28.	Communicating ideas verbally to groups	2.59	.63
29.	Understanding the needs of others	2.58	.50
30.	Identifying potential negative outcomes of a risky venture	2.54	.60
31.	Knowing ethical implications of decisions	2.54	.60
32.	Using proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation	2.54	.75
33.	Making decisions in a short time period	2.51	.60
34.	Assessing long-term effects of decisions	2.49	.60
35.	Initiating change to enhance productivity	2.49	.71
36.	Combining relevant information from a number of sources	2.46	.75
37.	Gaining new knowledge in areas outside the immediate job	2.45	.68

Table 1 (Continued).
Supervisors' Perceptions of the Importance of the Leadership Skills (n = 42)

Rank	Leadership Skill		
38.	Contributing to group problem solving	2.41	.63
39.	Resolving conflicts	2.41	.84
40.	Identifying sources of conflict among people	2.37	.77
41.	Keeping up-to-date with external realities of a company's success	2.37	.77
42.	Establishing good rapport with subordinates	2.34	1.02
43.	Monitoring progress toward objectives in risky ventures	2.33	.77
44.	Revising plans to include new information	2.29	.75
45.	Taking reasonable job-related tasks	2.28	.65
46.	Monitoring progress against the plan	2.28	.72
47.	Reconceptualizing your role to changing corporate realities	2.25	.81
48.	Providing novel solutions to problems	2.24	.70
49.	Empathizing with others	2.20	.79
50.	Applying information to new or broader contexts	2.15	.82
51.	Integrating information into more general contexts	2.15	.88
52.	Giving direction and guidance to others	2.07	.96
53.	Making effective business presentations	2.05	.97
54.	Integrating strategic considerations in the plans made	2.02	.69
55.	Coordinating the work of peers	2.00	.95
56.	Writing reports	2.00	1.04
57.	Supervising the work of others	2.00	1.16
58.	Providing innovative paths for the company for future development	1.97	.99
59.	Identifying political implications of the decisions to be made	1.95	.87
60.	Making impromptu presentations	1.93	.85
61.	Assigning/delegating responsibility	1.93	.88
62.	Conceptualizing a future for the company	1.90	1.01
63.	Writing internal business communication	1.85	.99
64.	Coordinating the work of subordinates	1.82	1.10
65.	Delegating work to peers	1.80	1.04
66.	Delegating work to subordinates	1.79	1.13
67.	Writing external business communication	1.68	1.08

Note. Scale: 0 = No Importance, 1 = Important, 2 = Moderate Importance, 3 = Major Importance

Four employability skill items had means lower than 1.85. These items consisted of "coordinating the work of subordinates" (*M* = 1.82), "delegating work to peers" (*M* = 1.80), "delegating work to subordinates" (*M* = 1.79), and "writing external business communication" (*M* = 1.68).

Objective two sought to assess supervisors' perceptions of the competence level of their graduate employees at performing the leadership skills. "Maintaining a positive attitude" (*M* = 2.73), "relating well with supervisors" (*M* = 2.68), "ability to work independently" (*M* = 2.63), "working well with fellow employees" (*M* = 2.61), and "meeting deadlines" (*M* = 2.54) rounded out the top five leadership skills supervisors perceived their employees to be most competent at performing (Table 2).

Seven employability skill items possessed mean scores less than 1.95. These skills consisted of "integrating strategic considerations in the plans made" (*M* = 1.93), "making impromptu presentations" (*M* = 1.93), "coordinating the work of peers" (*M* = 1.92), "assigning/delegating responsibility" (*M* = 1.84), "conceptualizing a future for the company" (*M* = 1.84), "delegating work to subordinates" (*M* = 1.81), and "identifying political implications of the decision to be made" (*M* = 1.75).

Table 2
Supervisors' Perceptions of the Competence of their Employee at Performing the Leadership Skills (n = 42)

Rank	Leadership Skill	*M*	*SD*
1.	Maintaining a positive attitude	2.73	.59
2.	Relating well with supervisors	2.68	.61
3.	Ability to work independently	2.63	.58
4.	Working well with fellow employees	2.61	.74
5.	Meeting deadlines	2.54	.55
6.	Conveying information one-to-one	2.54	.67
7.	Maintaining a high energy level	2.51	.60
8.	Responding to others' comments during a conversation	2.51	.60
9.	Listening attentively	2.46	.67
10.	Functioning at an optimal level of performance	2.46	.71
11.	Making decisions in a short time period	2.44	.60
12.	Responding positively to constructive criticism	2.43	.75
13.	Allocating time efficiently	2.41	.67
14.	Adapting to situations of change	2.41	.84
15.	Identifying problems	2.40	.59
16.	Gaining new knowledge from everyday experiences	2.40	.67
17.	Keeping up-to-date on developments in the field	2.39	.67
18.	Recognizing the effects of decisions made	2.39	.77
19.	Establishing the critical events to be completed	2.38	.71
20.	Functioning well in stressful situations	2.38	.74
21.	Knowing ethical implications of decision	2.37	.73
22.	Managing/overseeing several tasks at once	2.37	.77
23.	Using proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation	2.37	.80
24.	Combining relevant information from a number of sources	2.34	.73
25.	Gaining new knowledge in areas outside the immediate job	2.33	.76
26.	Setting priorities	2.32	.69
27.	Identifying essential components of the problem	2.30	.61
28.	Sorting out the relevant data to solve the problem	2.29	.68

Table 2 (Continued).
Supervisors' Perceptions of the Competence of their Employee at Performing the Leadership Skills (n = 42)

Rank	Leadership Skill		
29.	Empathizing with others	2.28	.78
30.	Establishing good rapport with subordinates	2.27	1.02
31.	Prioritizing problems	2.25	.59
32.	Communicating ideas verbally to groups	2.24	.80
33.	Solving problems	2.23	.62
34.	Monitoring progress against the plan	2.21	.62
35.	Understanding the needs of others	2.20	.82
36.	Making thorough decisions by thorough analysis of the situation	2.17	.70
37.	Contributing to group problem solving	2.15	.70
38.	Keeping up-to-date with external realities of a company's success	2.15	.73
39.	Initiating change to enhance productivity	2.13	.79
40.	Providing novel solutions to problems	2.12	.68
41.	Assessing long-term effects of decisions	2.12	.71
42.	Identifying sources of conflict among people	2.12	.75
43.	Applying information to new or broader contexts	2.12	.78
44.	Integrating information into more general contexts	2.12	.78
45.	Writing reports	2.10	.75
46.	Taking reasonable job-related risks	2.08	.66
47.	Revising plans to include new information	2.08	.69
48.	Recognizing alternative routes in meeting objectives	2.07	.72
49.	Resolving conflicts	2.05	.82
50.	Reconceptualizing your role in response to changing corporate realities	2.05	.83
51.	Coordinating the work of peers	2.03	.64
52.	Monitoring progress toward objectives in risky ventures	2.03	.75
53.	Writing external business communication	2.03	.79
54.	Making effective business presentations	2.03	.80
55.	Identifying potential negative outcomes of a risky venture	2.00	.63
56.	Writing internal business communication	2.00	.80
57.	Supervising the work of others	2.00	.91
58.	Giving direction and guidance to others	1.98	.85
59.	Delegating work to peers	1.97	.83
60.	Providing innovative paths for the company to future development	1.97	.83
61.	Integrating strategic considerations in the plans made	1.93	.62
62.	Making impromptu presentations	1.93	.83
63.	Coordinating the work of peers	1.92	.87
64.	Assigning/delegating responsibility	1.84	.75
65.	Conceptualizing a future for the company	1.84	.93
66.	Delegating work to subordinates	1.81	.89
67.	Identifying political implications of the decision to be made	1.75	.84

Note. Scale: 0 = No Competence, 1 = Competent, 2 = Moderate Competence, 3 = Major Competence

Objective three sought to prioritize the leadership skills, according to supervisors, in need of curriculum enhancement using the Borich needs assessment model. A discrepancy score was calculated by taking the summated mean importance rating minus the summated mean competence rating of each leadership skill construct. A weighted discrepancy score was then calculated by multiplying the discrepancy score by the mean importance rating of each independent leadership skill construct. Lastly, a mean weighted discrepancy score was calculated by taking the sum of the weighted discrepancy score for each construct and dividing by the number of observations (n = 42). To prioritize the skills for curriculum enhancement, four categories were defined as a result of the mean weighted discrepancy scores (Table 3).

Table 3
Supervisors' Perceptions of the Importance of the Graduates' Leadership Skills and their Competence at Performing the Skills (n = 42)

Category	Leadership Skill	MWDS
I	Solving problems	1.78
	Setting priorities	1.49
	Functioning well in stressful situations	1.45
	Recognizing alternative routes in meeting objectives	1.37
	Identifying problems	1.33
	Identifying potential negative outcomes when considering risky venture	1.33
	Prioritizing problems	1.24
	Allocating time efficiently	1.22
	Making decisions on the basis of thorough analysis of the situation	1.19
	Recognizing the effects of decisions made	1.13
	Responding positively to constructive criticism	1.00
	Adapting to situations of change	.99
	Managing/overseeing several tasks at once	.98
	Identifying essential components of the problem	.96
	Sorting out the relevant data to solve the problem	.95
	Understanding the needs of others	.92
	Working well with fellow employees	.91
	Assessing long-term effects of decisions	.89
	Initiating change to enhance productivity	.89
	Communicating ideas verbally to groups	.86
	Gaining new knowledge from everyday experiences	.85
	Meeting deadlines	.81
	Resolving conflicts	.80
II	Functioning at an optimal level of performance	.79
	Listening attentively	.79
	Keeping up-to-date on developments in the field	.70
	Ability to work independently	.76
	Monitoring progress toward objectives in risky ventures	.67
	Relating well with supervisors	.65
	Contributing to group problem solving	.63
	Establishing the critical events to be completed	.63

Table 3 (Continued).
Supervisors' Perceptions of the Importance of the Graduates' Leadership Skills and their Competence at Performing the Skills (n = 42)

	Identifying sources of conflict among people	.56
	Revising plans to include new information	.55
	Keeping up-to-date with external realities related to company's success	.51
III	Conveying information one-to-one	.45
	Responding to others' comments during a conversation	.45
	Taking reasonable job-related risks	.43
	Reconceptualizing your role in response to changing corporate realities	.43
	Knowing ethical implications of decisions	.42
	Identifying political implications of the decision to be made	.42
	Using proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation	.42
	Maintaining a positive attitude	.41
	Maintaining a high energy level	.38
	Assigning/delegating responsibility	.37
IV	Supervising the work of others	.29
	Combining relevant information from a number of sources	.29
	Gaining new knowledge in areas outside the immediate job	.29
	Establishing good rapport with subordinates	.28
	Conceptualizing a future for the company	.27
	Providing novel solutions to problems	.27
	Integrating strategic considerations in the plans made	.24
	Coordinating the work of peers	.24
	Monitoring progress against the plan	.22
	Delegating work to subordinates	.21
	Giving direction and guidance to others	.20
	Providing innovative paths for the company for future development	.19
	Making decisions in a short time period	.18
	Making effective business presentations	.10
	Coordinating the work of subordinates	.09
	Making impromptu presentations	.05
	Applying information to new or broader contexts	.05
	Integrating information into more general contexts	.05
	Writing reports	-.05
	Delegating work to peers	-.04
	Writing internal business communication	-.10
	Empathizing with others	-.16
	Writing external business communication	-.32

[a]0 = No Importance, 1 = Minor Importance, 2 = Moderate Importance, 3 = Major Importance
[b]0 = No Competence, 1 = Minor Competence, 2 = Moderate Competence, 3 = Major Competence
[c]Mean Weighted Discrepancy Score

Category I consisted of all MWDS greater than .80 and was considered a high discrepancy. Category II consisted of all MWDS from .50 to .79 and was considered a moderate discrepancy. Category III consisted of all MWDS from .30 to .49 and was considered a low discrepancy. Category IV consisted of all skills with a MWDS below .30 and was considered a negligible discrepancy. The items with the greatest need for curriculum enhancement were identified in category I because of their high discrepancy scores. Three of the skills had a MWDS equal to or greater than 1.45. These three skills consisted of "solving problems" (MWDS = 1.78), "setting priorities" (MWDS = 1.49), and "functioning well in stressful situations" (MWDS = 1.45). In all, twenty-three leadership skills had a high discrepancy score and fell into category I.

Eleven items had a moderate discrepancy score and comprised category II, indicating a moderate need for curriculum enhancement. The top five items in category II were: "functioning at an optimal level of performance" (MWDS = .79), "listening attentively" (MWDS = .79), "keeping up-to-date on developments in the field" (MWDS = .70), "ability to work independently" (MWDS = .76), and "monitoring progress toward objectives in risky ventures" (MWDS = .67).

Ten items comprised category III, indicating a low discrepancy score and a low need for curriculum enhancement. The top five skills in category III consisted of: "conveying information one-to-one" (MWDS = .45), "responding to others' comments during a conversation" (MWDS = .45), "taking reasonable job-related risks" (MWDS = .43), "reconceptualizing your role in response to changing corporate realities" (MWDS = .43), and "knowing ethical implications of decisions" (MWDS = .42).

Twenty-three items fell into category IV and were perceived to possess negligible discrepancy scores by supervisors. Nine items in category IV had a mean weighted discrepancy score of less than .10. These nine items consisted of "coordinating the work of subordinates" (MWDS = .09), "making impromptu presentations" (MWDS = .05), "applying information to new or broader contexts" (MWDS = .05), "integrating information into more general contexts" (MWDS = .05), "writing reports" (MWDS = -.05), "delegating work to peers" (MWDS = -.04), "writing internal business communication" (MWDS = -.10), "empathizing with others" (MWDS = -.16), and "writing external business communication" (MWDS = -.32). As a result, these nine items are a low need for curriculum enhancement.

Conclusions/Implications/Recommendations

All 67 leadership skills are at least moderately important to supervisors. Of all the skills dealing with communication, "listening attentively" was perceived by supervisors to be the most important. This finding is consistent with Graham (2001) who found that employers rated listening as the most important communication skill for graduates to possess. Six of the top ten most important leadership skills deal with motivation and organization and time management. Therefore, it can be implied that supervisors desire employers who are highly motivated, organized, and can manage their time well. In addition, supervisors place less importance on the visualization and supervision skills of their entry-level employees. It could be implied that because these graduates are entry-level employees, they have not yet had the time and experience needed to develop a strong vision for their job. It could also be implied that these graduates need

to be gaining experience on the job by working independently and with fellow employees, not by delegating their work to others.

Supervisors recognized that graduates are most competent at maintaining a positive attitude while on the job, while they are least competent at identifying political implications of the decision to be made. An implication could be that entry-level graduates simply cannot think about all the ramifications of their decisions at work due to their lack of work experience. It could be that graduates are still getting a feel for the proper protocol for the chain of command that has been established at their workplace. In addition, graduates are least competent at delegating and coordinating their work and being visionary leaders. While this is an area supervisors identified graduates as being least competent in, the question becomes, "How much should be expected of entry-level graduates in these areas?" According to supervisors, the last five skills listed on the competence scale deal with coordination, organization and time management, visioning and decision making. Could it be that entry-level employees simply have not had the time or experience and do not possess the knowledge needed to effectively perform these skills?

Through the Borich needs assessment model, supervisors identified "solving problems" as the leadership skill in greatest need. This finding is consistent with Coplin (2003) who stated that employers have a desire for their employees to be problem solvers. Specifically, seven of the twenty-three items comprising category I deal with problem solving and decision making. Therefore, faculty in the COA at this institution should gear their curriculum to better meet the needs identified by supervisors. A recommendation is for faculty to begin addressing the skills in category I. Once those skills have been addressed and satisfied, professors should begin addressing those in category II and then III.

In all, 34% of the leadership skills were perceived to possess high discrepancy score and ranked in category I, indicating a high need to enhance the existing curriculum to include these skills. Sixteen percent of the items were perceived to possess a moderate discrepancy score and were ranked in category II, 15% of the items were perceived to possess a low discrepancy score and ranked in category III, while the remaining 34% of the items were perceived to be negligible in terms of need and ranked in category IV. Interestingly, supervisors identified writing skills of graduates to be negligible in terms of curriculum enhancement need. Because this institution prides itself on its nationally renowned intensive writing program, this finding is understandable and as a result, implies that the curriculum is currently meeting the writing needs of COA graduates in their entry-level employment positions.

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