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Research Report: What Financial Services Employers Are Looking For

Indianapolis-based Networks Financial Institute (NFI), an initiative of Indiana State University, has published research that addresses the skills, experiences and curricula employers in the banking, insurance and securities industry are seeking in new college hires. The research indicates that, while employers deem it important for new hires to have a solid education based on traditional curriculum, there is an intense and emerging interest in "soft skills," particularly in the area of business ethics and financial services specific coursework.

The research study interviewed 181 hiring managers and human resources recruitment officers representing small, mid-sized and large institutions in the banking, securities and insurance sectors across the nation. Objectives focused on understanding the importance of and preferences for new college grad work experience, curriculum and skills within the financial services sectors. The research also sought to assess the college courses hiring officers deemed most valuable in new college grads.

Financial services companies participating in the research hired on average 10 new college grads in the past year. Overall these companies placed more emphasis on soft skills when hiring new college grads, with curriculum a close second, and experience being less important. These findings were true regardless of company size or sector. The soft skill deemed most important by a large margin was ethics (honesty and integrity) followed by communications, teamwork, discipline, enthusiasm, maturity and problem-solving. The least important soft skills were project management, presentation and planning skills.

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