



Landing That Job: A Study of Communication Graduates, Contacts, and Careers



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Abstract

The time period following college graduation marks a significant transition in an individual's life and often involves searching for full-time employment. Beyond simply finding a job at all, an important aspect of someone's job search involves finding a career that they love. By reviewing literature in the field and conducting interviews with recent college graduates, this project defines what is considered to be a "great job" and examines the factors that lead to success in securing one. The factors explored fall into four areas: academic performance, extracurricular activities, networking, and internships or part-time employment. Participants were selected using a purposive sampling method (all were graduates of Florida State University's School of Communication) and were asked a series of questions regarding their satisfaction with their current job, involvements in their undergraduate career, and what they thought helped them stick out to employers the most. Our findings consistently showed that internship experience provided the most relevant experience for their respective career paths and was also viewed as the most important area (of those studied) for landing a job.

Themes

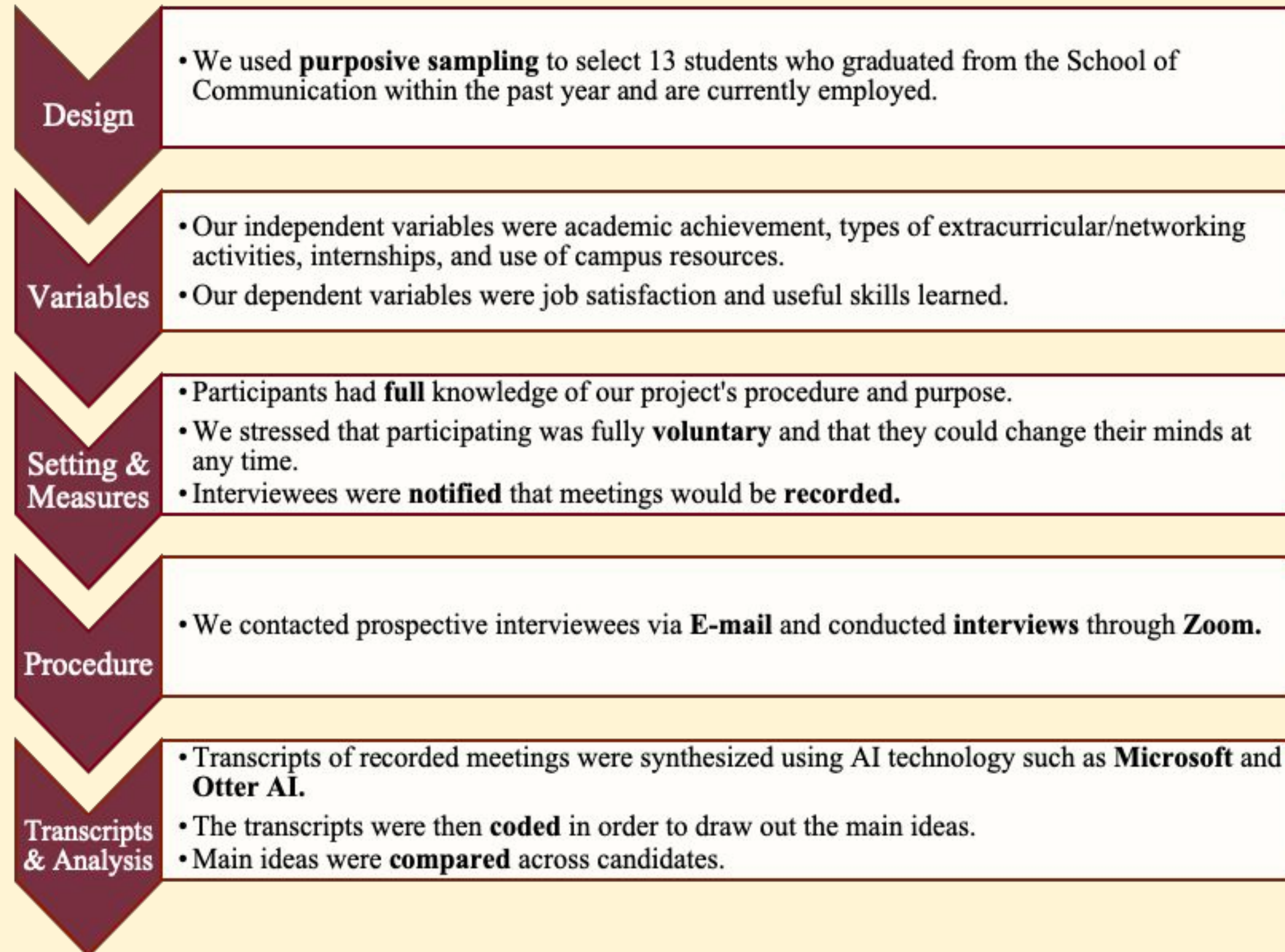


Figure 1: Shows common themes among interviewees.

Literature Review

- Employers value the soft skills such as communication, critical thinking, and analytical reasoning that can be gained from activities outside of the classroom (Haygood, Vincent, & Bush, 2019).
- Alumni with undergraduate internship experience have significant early career advantages, such as less time to obtain a first position, more monetary compensation, and greater job satisfaction (Gault, Redington, & Schlager, 2000).
- GPA may measure work ethic in addition to pure knowledge, which can strongly be correlated with success (Tai, 2022).
- While GPA is used as a screening mechanism from employers, there is only a correlation between GPA and job success for the first two years following college (Freeman & Schopen, 1992).
- Internships, professional development, and high GPA led to relevant experience throughout the interview process. However, applying blindly was not recommended, emphasizing the importance of networking in the full-time job search (Cahn, 2019).

Methods



Results

- Average job satisfaction among those interviewed was **3.96/5**.
- RQ1: GPA was not found to be very helpful in obtaining a job.
 - 12/13 respondents found GPA had little to no effect on their job search (i.e. if listed on résumé) unless 'too low.'
- RQ2: Extracurriculars are valuable and aid in gaining experience, and enhancing skills such as teamwork and time management.
 - Extracurriculars were a stepping stone to internships, helped build résumés, and were helpful to reference during the interview process.
- RQ3: Networking leads to relationship-building and connections, thus creating unique opportunities for students to gain insightful knowledge about their desired career workforce.
 - Participants also expressed that networking can lead to landing internships and jobs upon graduation.
- RQ4: Internships help students gain real-world experience that is more relevant to career work than anything that could be learned in the classroom.
 - Participants believed that internships allowed them to stand out among job candidates due to the skills built within them and their emphasis on continuous learning.

Salary Satisfaction

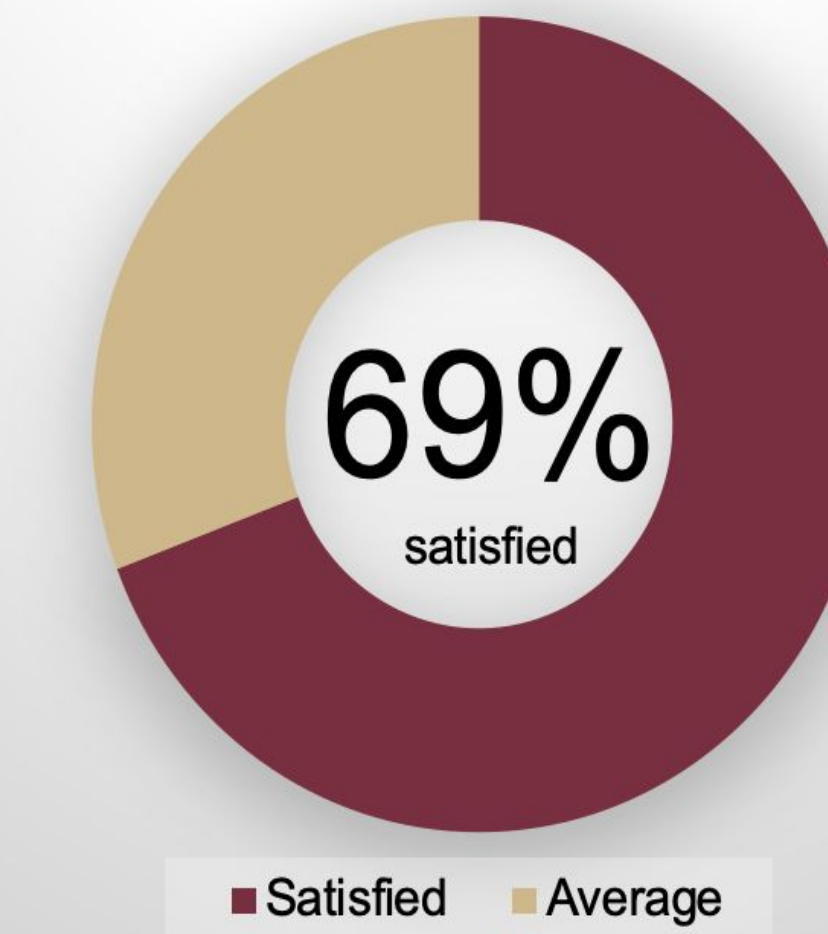


Figure 2: Shows the salary satisfaction reported by interviewees.

Gender

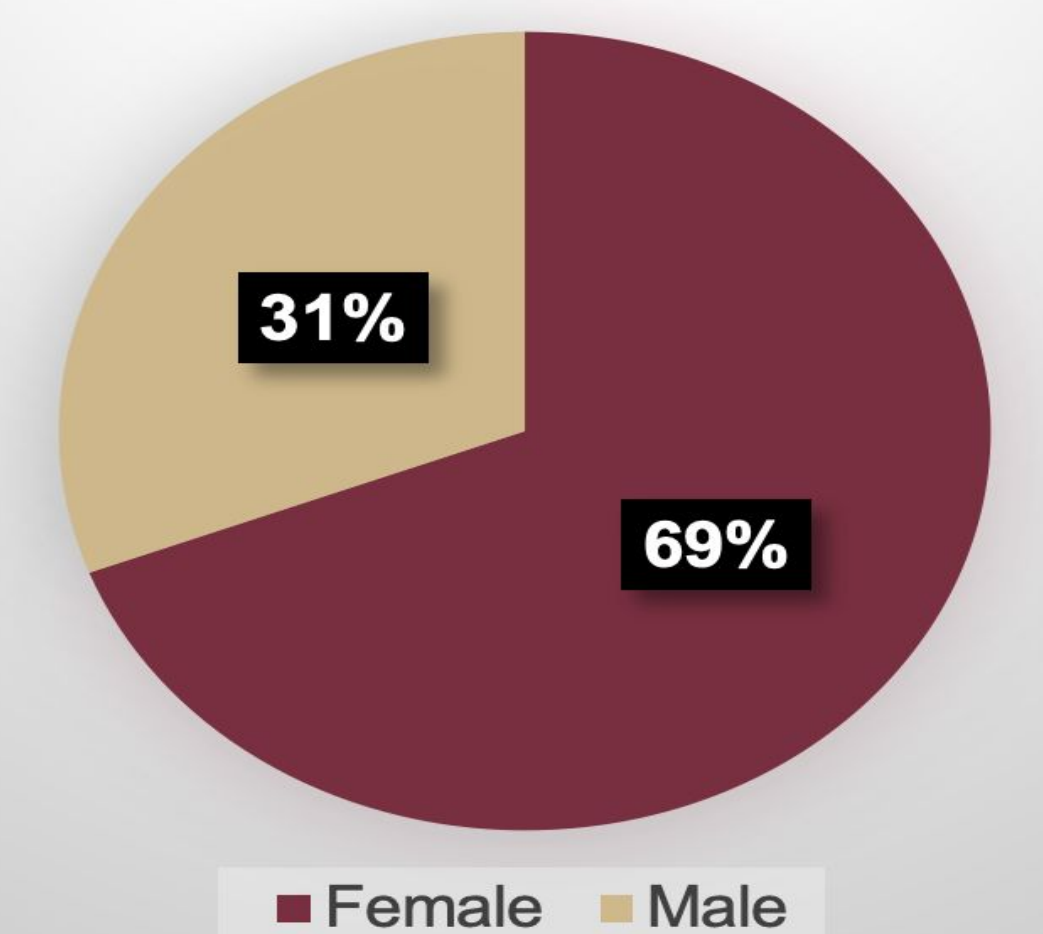


Figure 3: Shows the gender breakdown of participants.

Sum of Rankings

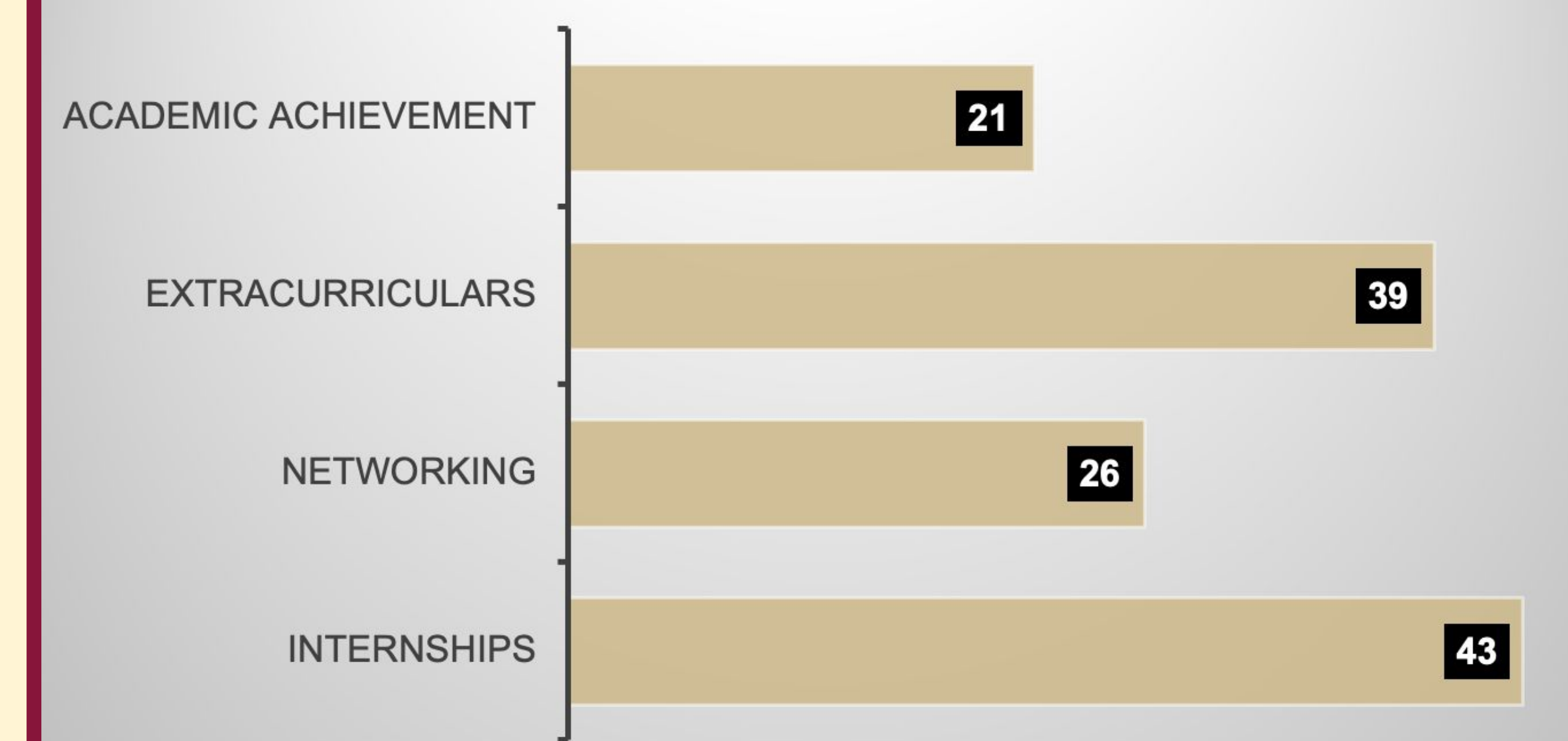


Figure 4: Shows the cumulative ranking of all factors considered.

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