



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

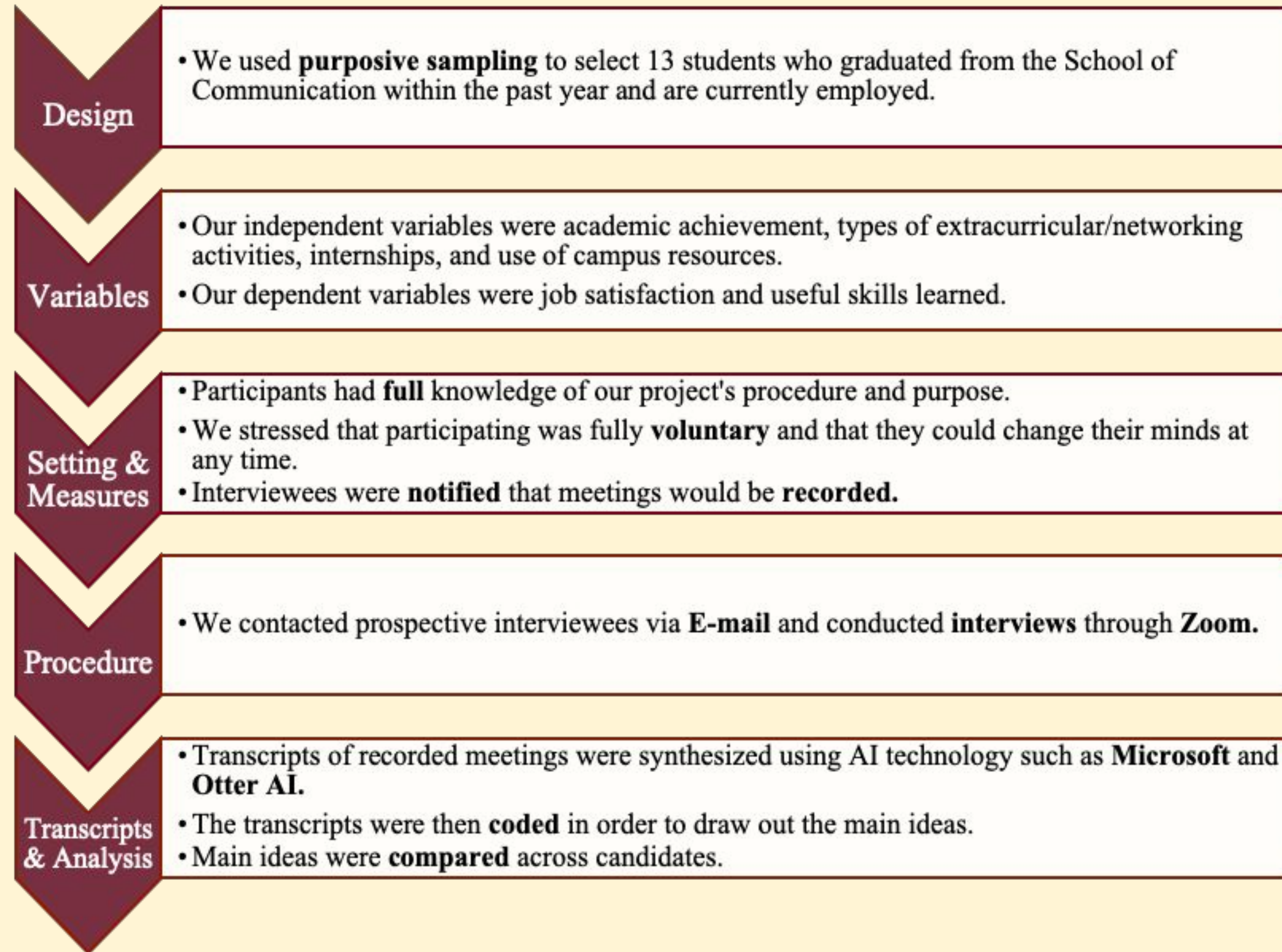


Figure 1: Shows common themes among interviewees.

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

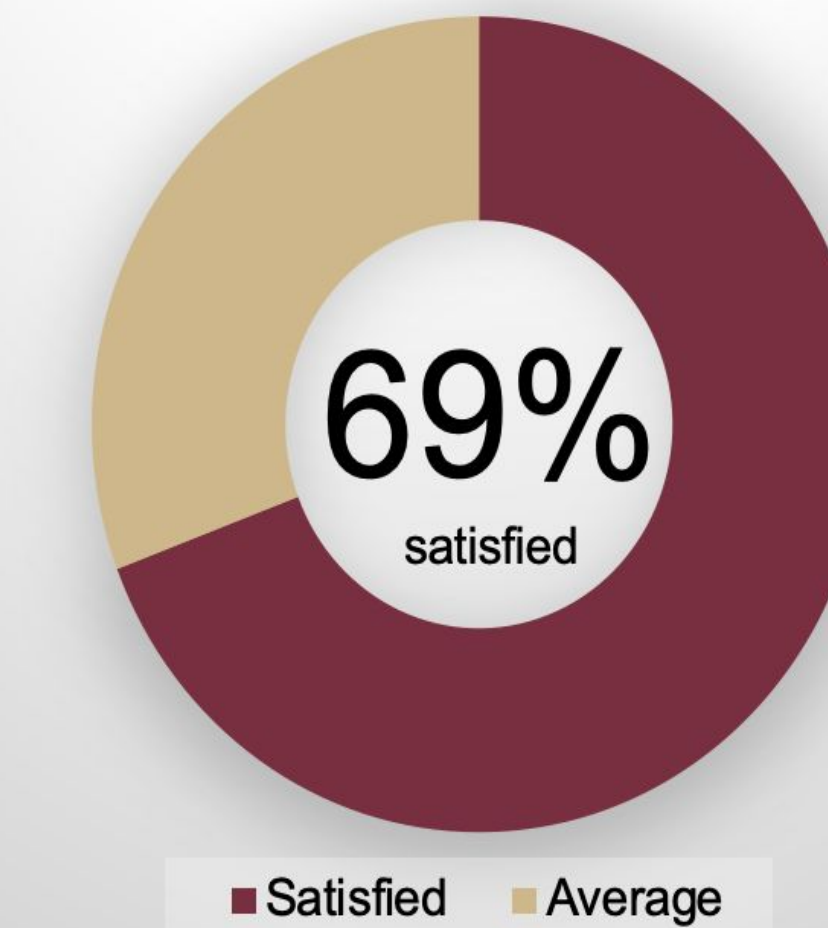


Figure 2: Shows the salary satisfaction reported by interviewees.

Gender

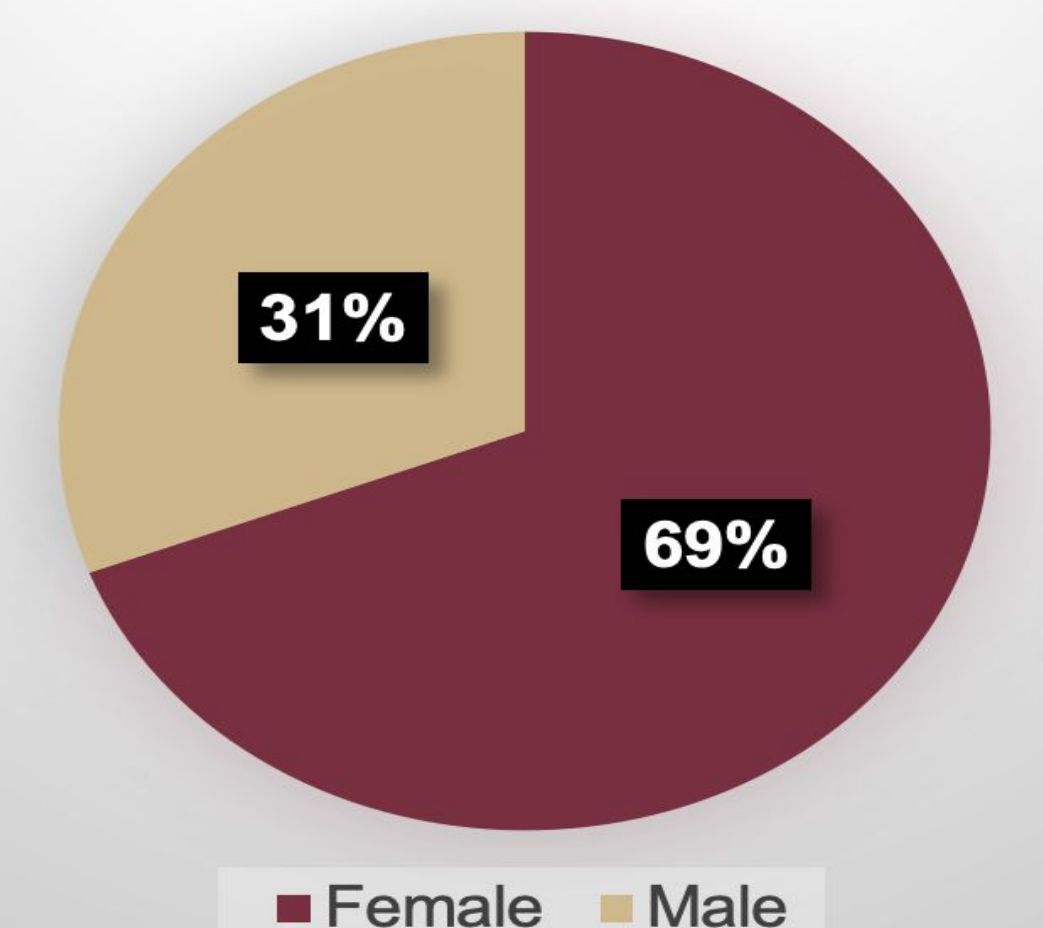


Figure 3: Shows the gender breakdown of participants.

Sum of Rankings

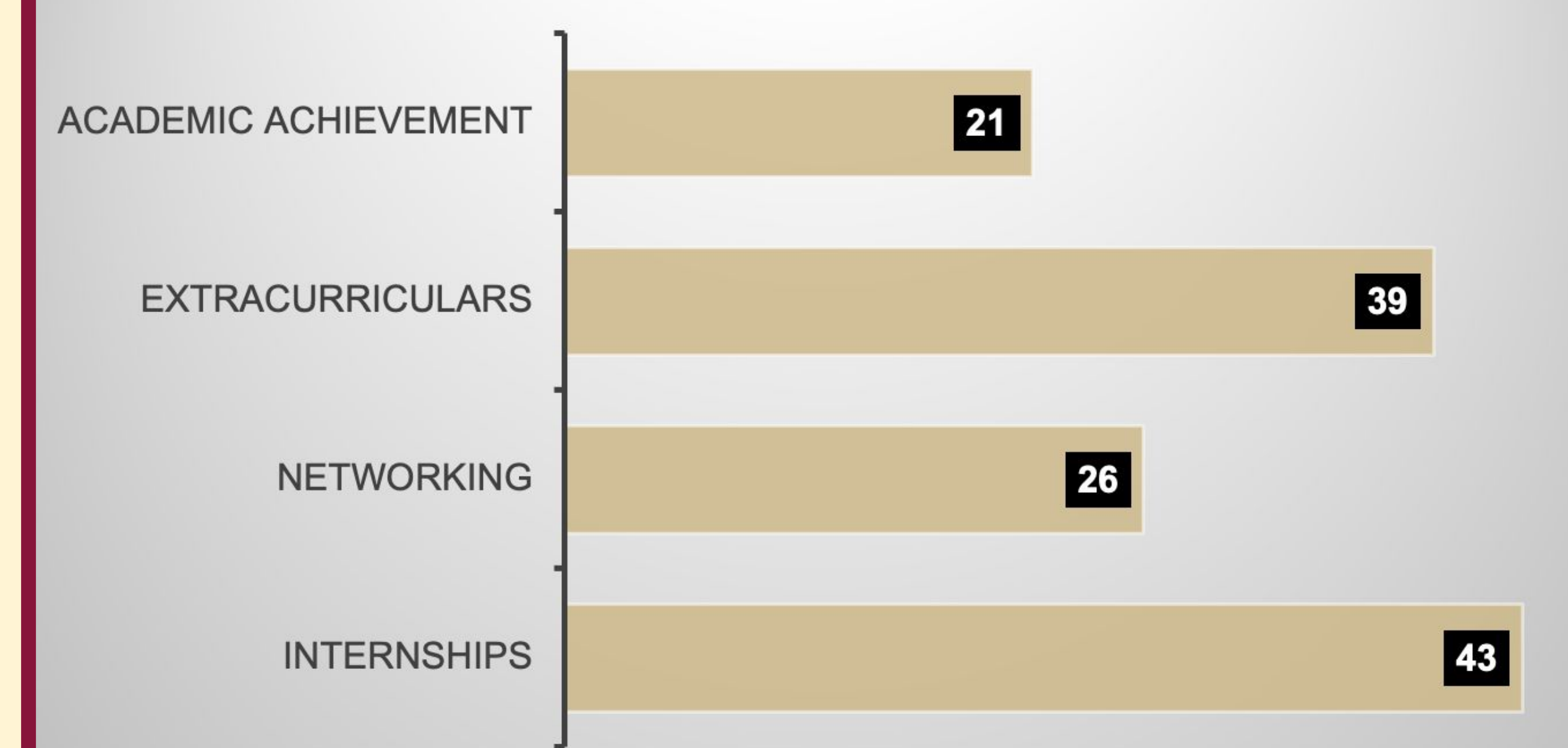


Figure 4: Shows the cumulative ranking of all factors considered.

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Background/Literature Review

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References from Literature Review

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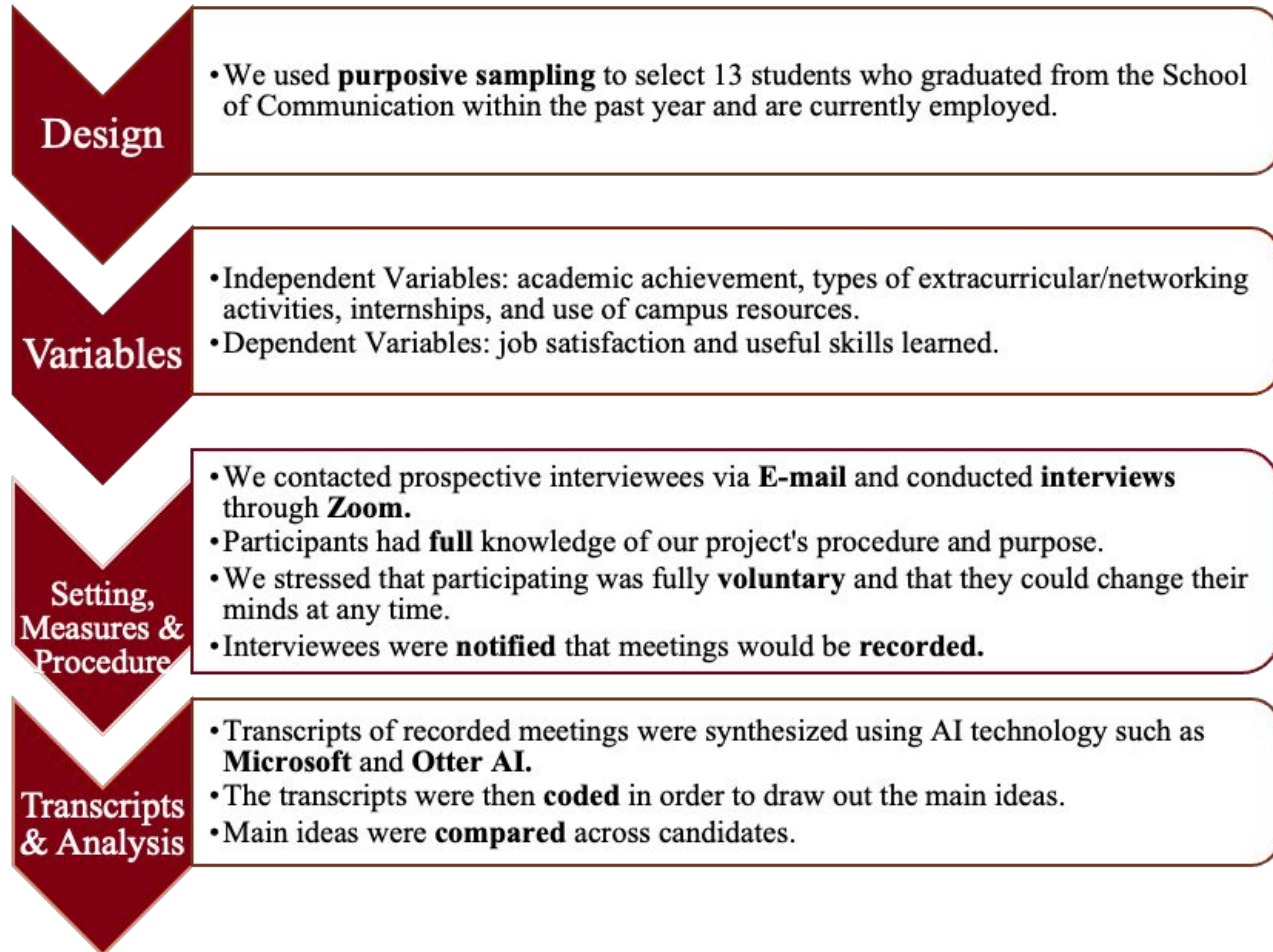
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Methods



Poster section 3 - results/conclusions:

- ❖ 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 in job search (i.e. resume) unless 'too low'
- ❖ RQ2: Extracurriculars are valuable include gaining experience, enhancing skills, developing teamwork, and learning time management
 - Extracurriculars were a stepping stone to internships, helped build resumes, and helpful during interview process
- ❖ RQ3: Networking leads to relationship-building and connections; therefore, creating unique opportunities for students to gain insightful knowledge about their desired career workforce
 - Networking can lead to internships and jobs upon graduation (LinkedIn)
- ❖ RQ4: Internships helped students gain real-world experience outside the traditional classroom setting
 - Internships allowed for you to stand out among candidates (experimentation, continuous learning, management)
- ❖ Hard skills: Microsoft Office, Adobe, and Photoshop,
- ❖ Rankings from most to least important: Internships, Extracurriculars, Networking, and Academic Achievement

Results/Discussion (written)

Our research project studied four areas (academic achievement, extracurricular activities, networking, and internships) and their impacts on landing a “great” job for 13 recent graduates. As a preliminary question and to define what a “great” job consists of, we asked participants to rate their current job satisfaction out of 5. Our mean score among those interviewed was quite high, at 3.96.

Our first area studied, academic achievement/GPA, proved to be the least helpful area in landing a job. 12 out of 13 respondents found that GPA had little to no effect on their job search (i.e. if listed on résumé) unless it was “too low.” As for extracurricular activities, most participants found that they were helpful for gaining experience, enhancing skills, developing teamwork, and learning time management. Participants considered them to be a helpful stepping stone to internships, helped them build résumés, and were helpful to reference during the interview process. On this note, internships were also noted to have helped students gain real-world experience that was more relevant to career work than anything that could have been 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.

A final area studied was networking. Our findings showed that 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.

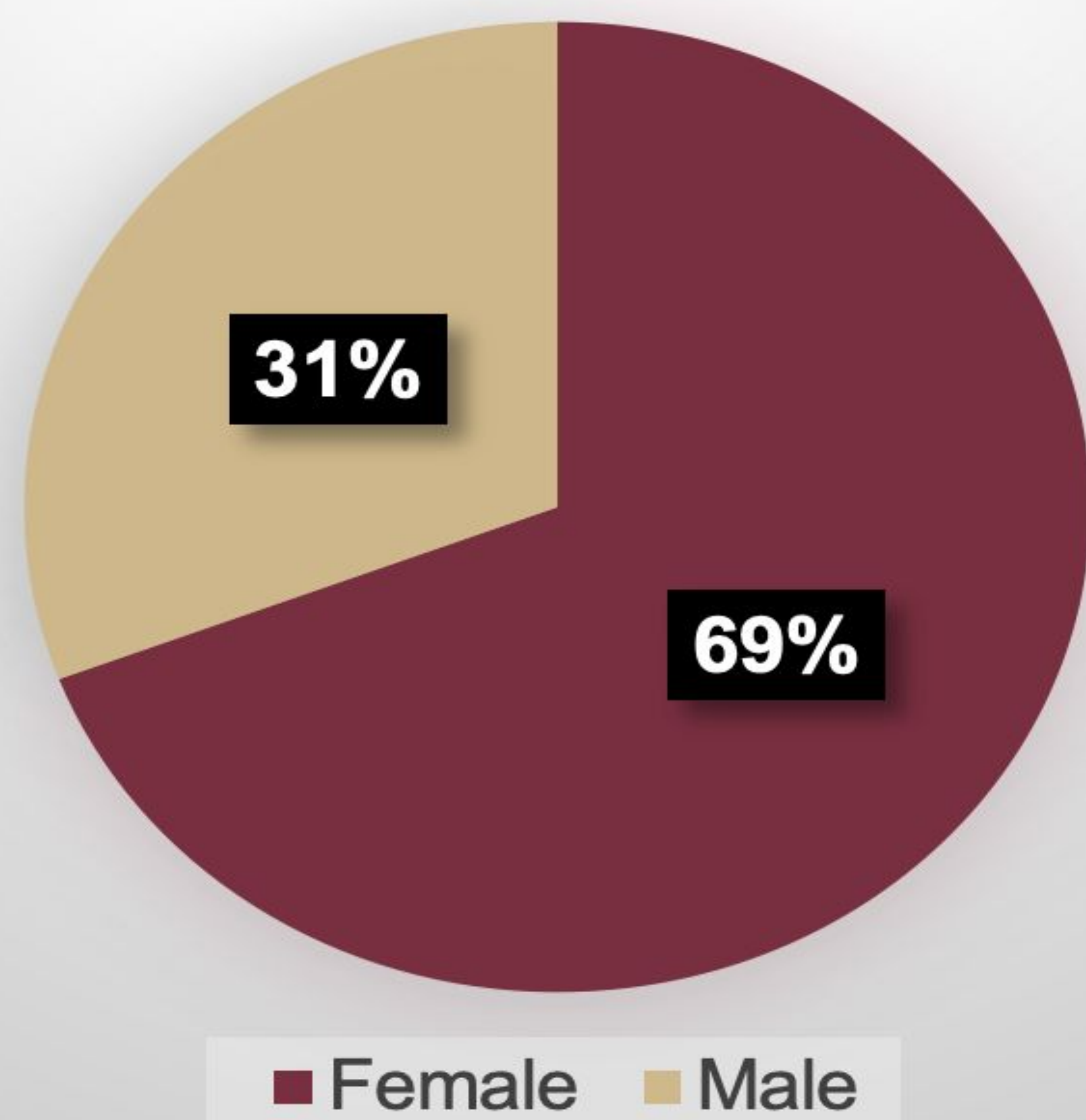
As a final overarching theme, we asked participants to rank the four areas surveyed in order of importance for their respective job searches. By calculating the cumulative values assigned to each area, the final ranking was as follows: internships, extracurricular activities, networking, and academic achievement.

We believe that the best future course of action for our research would be to appeal to undergraduate students who are unsure what to focus their time on in order to find a job directly after graduation. There were several recommendations and limitations of undergraduate involvement that were uncovered within our study that could help appease the pre-job search stress that is commonly experienced by students.

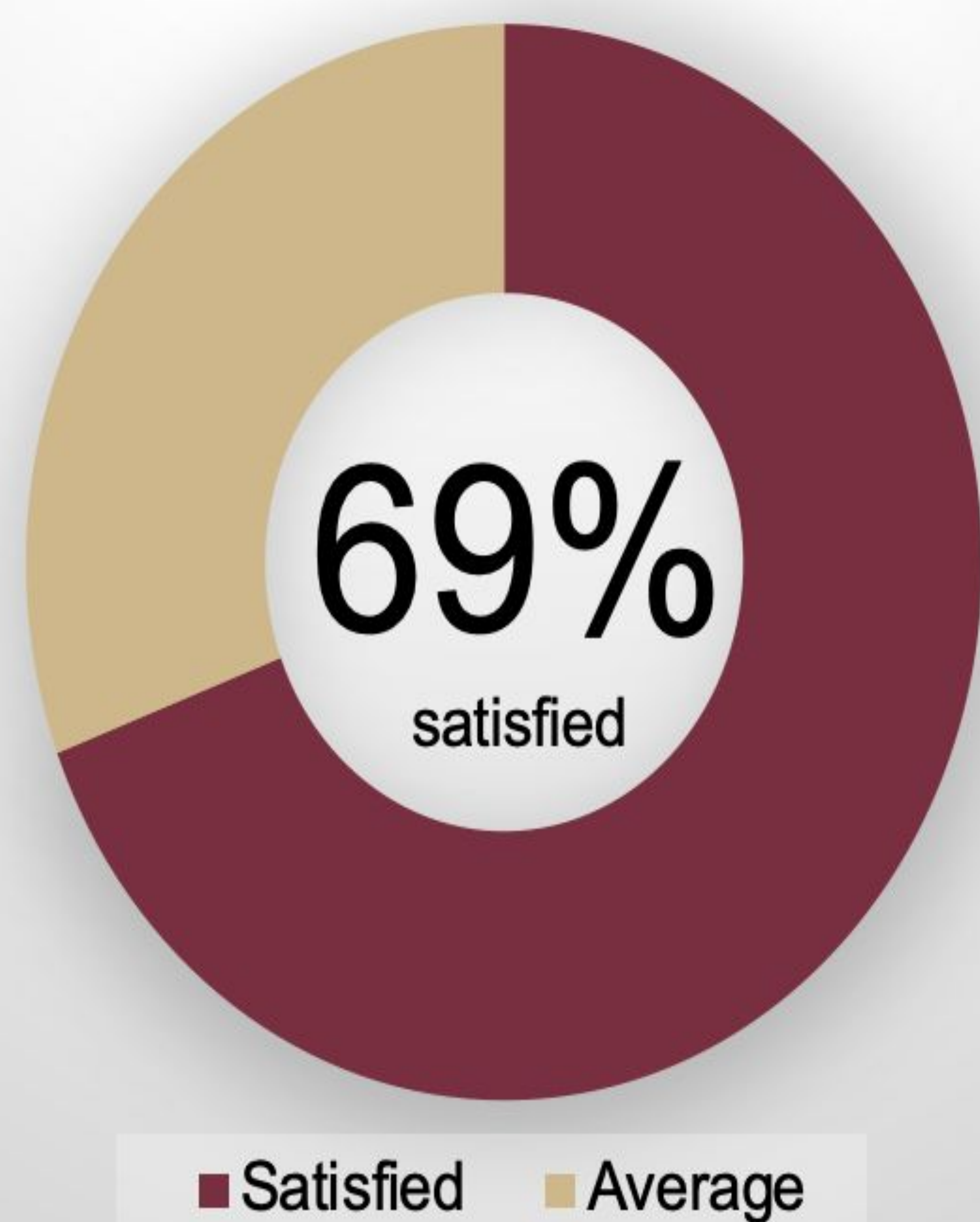
RQ1:	RQ2:	RQ3:	RQ4:	Themes
Not Helpful	Communication	Connections	Management	Communication, Networking, Passion, LinkedIn
Not Helpful	Connections	Opportunities	Learning	Social Media, Time-Management
Not Helpful	Knowledge	Communications, Teamwork	Experimentation	Social Media, Creativity, Experience
Not Helpful	Teamwork	Confidence	Confidence	Teamwork, Gaining Experience
Not Helpful	Professional Development, Experience	Connections	Expreimentation	Communication, Passion
Not Helpful	Project Management	Connections, Opportunities	Experimentation	Passion, Teamwork, Leadership
Not Helpful	Public Speaking, Teamwork	Connections, Opportunities	Management, Motivation	Project Management
Helpful	Teamwork, Experience	Teamwork	Time Management, Experience, Learning	Leadership, Experience
Not Helpful	Management, Leadership, Time Management	Connections	Experimentation, Experience, Teamwork	LinkedIn, Management, Gaining Experience
Not Helpful	Experience, Teamwork	Connections	Time Management, Technical Skills	Teamwork, Gaining Experience
Not Helpful	Experience	Connections, Time Management	Management	Time-Management, Gaining Experience
Not Helpful	Experience	Learning	Customer Service	Motivation, Determination, Opportunities
Not Helpful	Experience	Learning, Experince	Experience	Networking, Learning, Experience

Internships	Networking	Extracirriculars	Academic Achievement
4	1	3	2
4	1	2	3
4	1	3	2
3	1	4	1
4	2	3	1
3	4	2	1
3	2	4	1
4	2	3	1
3	4	1	2
4	2	3	1
2	3	4	1
3	2	4	1
2	1	3	4
43	26	39	21

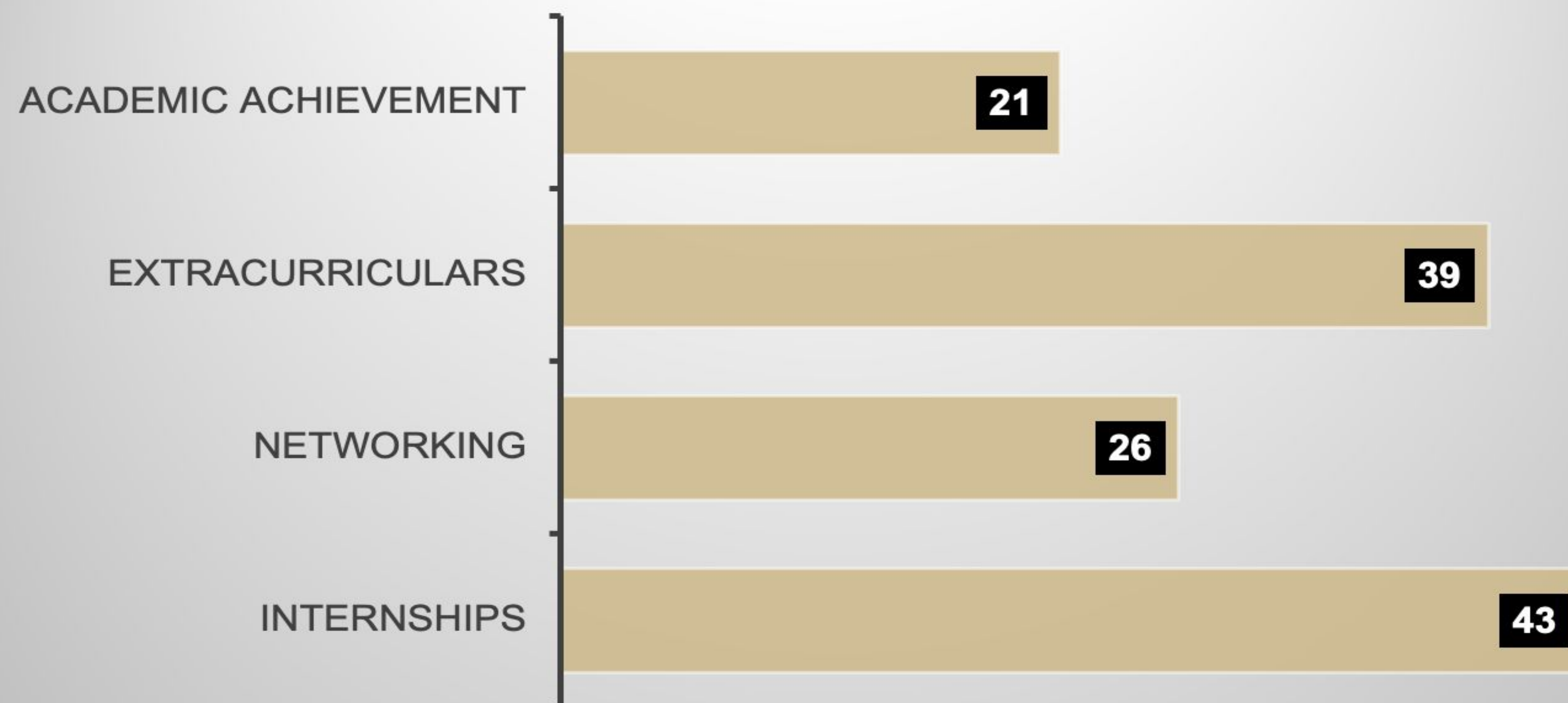
Gender



Salary Satisfaction



Sum of Rankings



Average Job Satisfaction
3.96/5

Themes



recommendations/limitations

- “Be comfortable with the uncomfortable”
- “Read every bullet on job listings”
- “When asked the tell me about yourself envision a progressing story”
- “LinkedIn is your best friend”
- “How you present yourself is most important for landing a job. A resume and portfolio is more important for getting an interview”
- “Knowing people can supersede any academic or professional challenges, but internships provide valuable experience”
- “Don’t put too much pressure on yourself if you struggle to find direction, opportunities will come and go”
- “Try out a variety of activities and opportunities”
- Don’t close any doors, Don't be afraid to try something new, Networking is key