

Rising to the Challenge:

Views on High School Graduates' Preparedness for College and Careers



*Key findings from survey of college instructors and employers who
teach and hire recent high school graduates
Conducted April 2015*

Methodology

National online surveys were conducted among the following three populations.

■ **College instructors**, April 23 to May 1, 2015

- 767 college instructors who teach first-year college students, including:
 - 388 who teach at a four-year college or university
 - 379 who teach at a two-year college or technical institution

■ **Employers**, May 11 to 15, 2015

- 407 employers involved in hiring and other personnel decisions, including:
 - 201 who work at firms that employ 26 to 100 employees
 - 206 who employ more than 100 employees

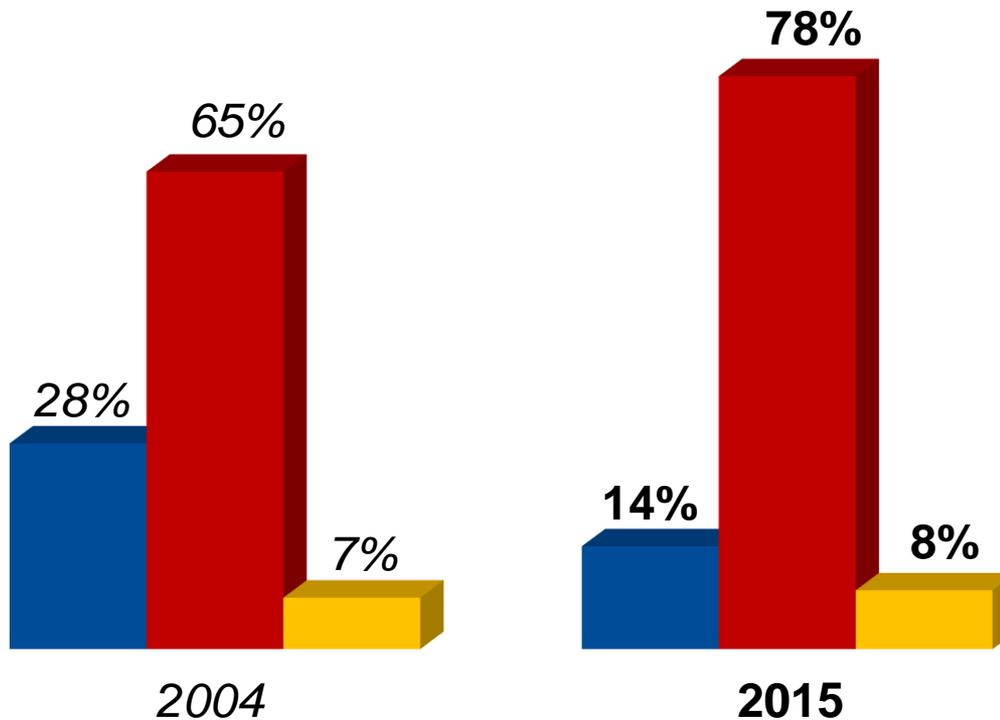
■ **Recent public high school graduates**, October 31 to November 17, 2014

- 1,347 recent public high school graduates from classes 2011 through 2014, including:
 - 741 students who are currently enrolled in two-year and four-year colleges
 - 606 graduates who are not currently enrolled in two-year or four-year colleges, including 215 who attended college but quit before finishing

Few instructors think US public high schools are adequately preparing students for the expectations they will face in college.

Do you feel that as a whole, public high schools are adequately preparing graduates to meet the expectations they will face in college classes, or not?

- Public high schools are adequately preparing students
- Public high schools are not doing a good enough job preparing students
- Not sure



Lackluster assessment of US public high schools spans the field.

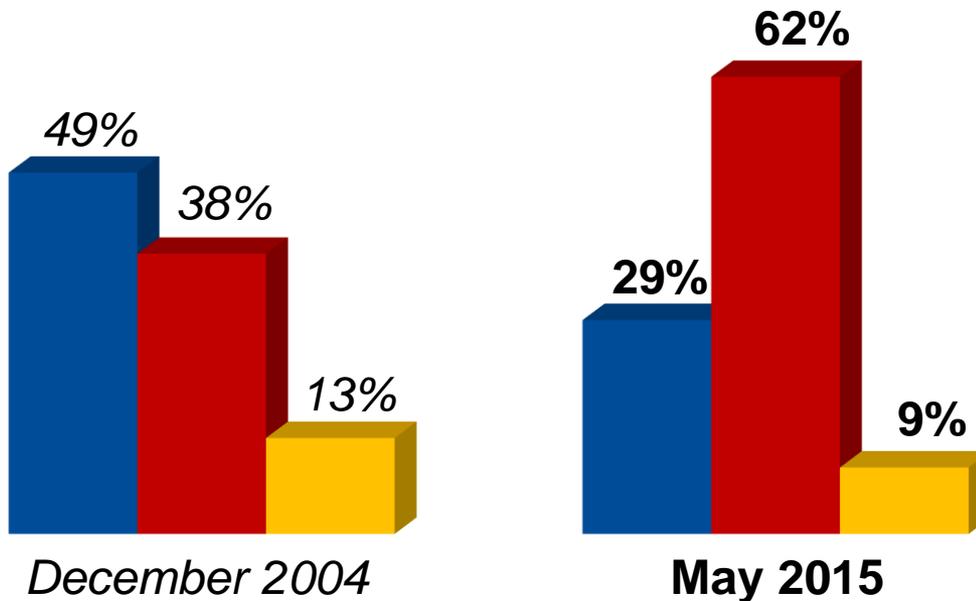
Do you feel that as a whole, public high schools are adequately preparing graduates to meet the expectations they will face in college classes, or not?

	Prepare graduates	Not doing enough
All college instructors	14%	78%
Two-year colleges	11%	82%
Four-year colleges	15%	76%
Four-year private colleges	20%	70%
Four-year public colleges	13%	78%
Selective admissions policy	24%	67%
Less/not selective admissions policy	10%	82%
Teach social sciences/humanities	14%	80%
Teach math, science, engineering, computers	13%	75%
Teach other subject	16%	76%
Tenured/tenure track	14%	79%
Non-tenure track	13%	76%
Adjunct/other	15%	76%
10 years/less in higher education	15%	74%
11 to 20 years in higher education	13%	80%
Over 20 years in higher education	13%	79%

A majority of employers also think public high schools are not doing enough to prepare students for the expectations of the work world.

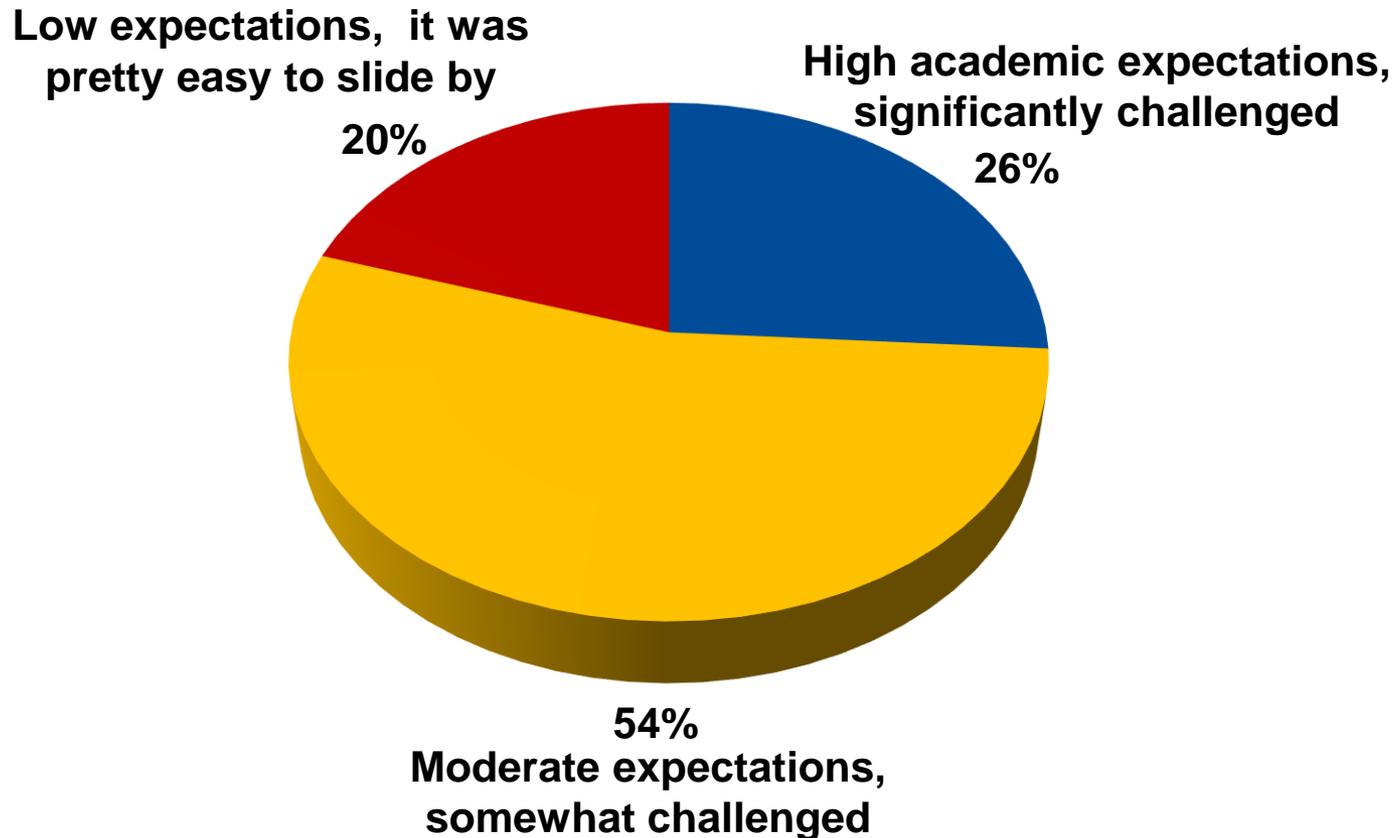
Based on your experiences with public HS graduates who do not have further education or formal training, do you feel that as a whole, public high schools are adequately preparing graduates to meet the expectations they will face at work?

- Public high schools are adequately preparing students
- Public high schools are not doing a good enough job preparing students
- Not sure



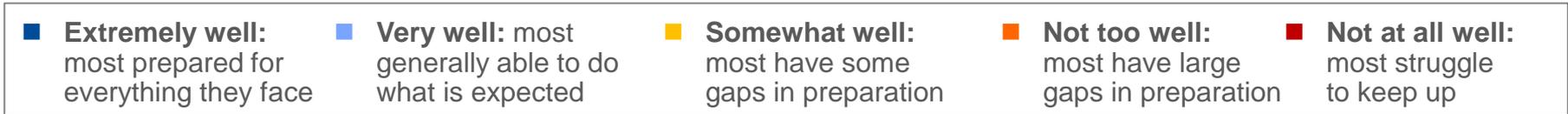
Only roughly one in four recent high school grads report that their high school set high academic expectations.

Which best describes your experience in high school?

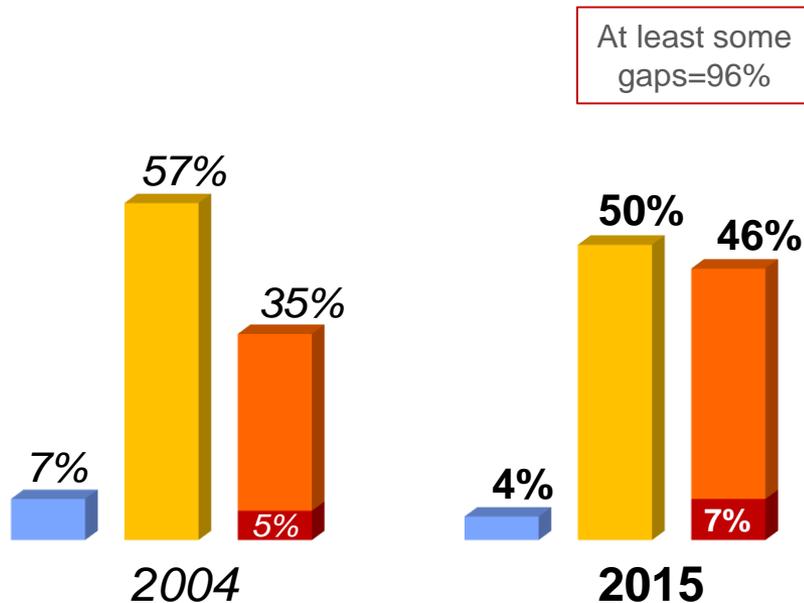


A significant majority of college instructors report that their students arrive at college with at least some gaps in their preparation.

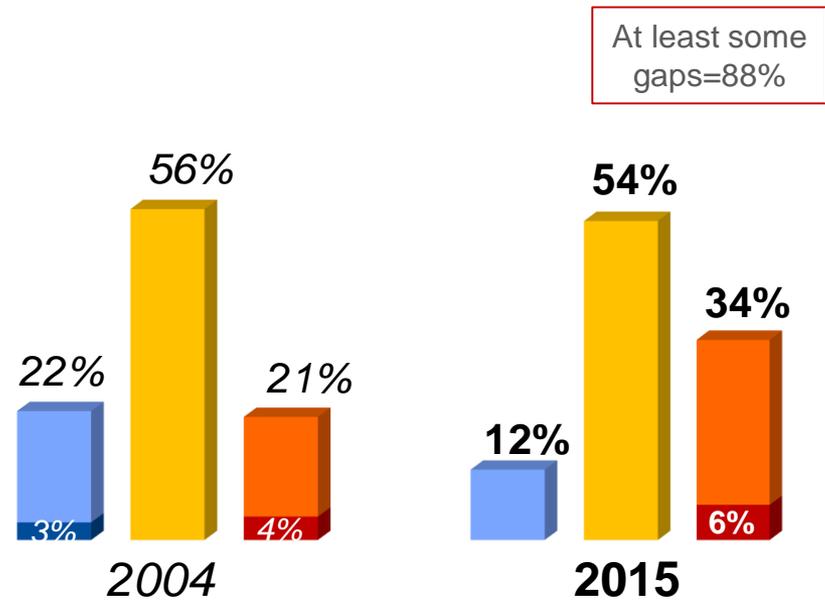
How would you characterize the level of academic preparation your students bring to college?



Instructors at two-year colleges

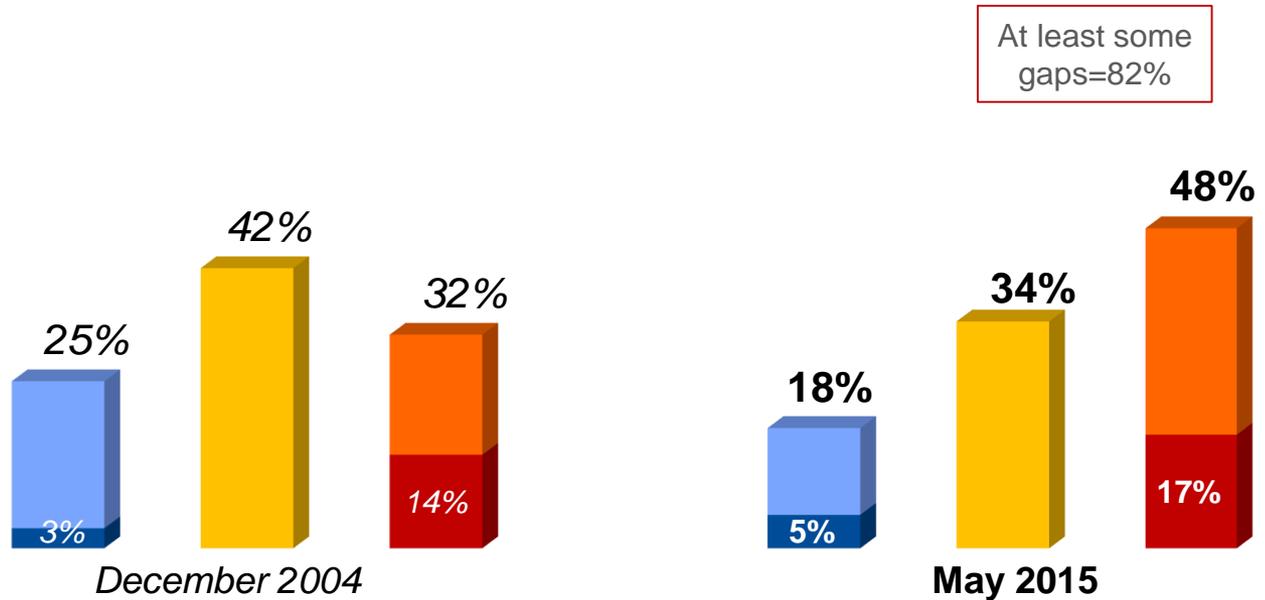


Instructors at four-year colleges



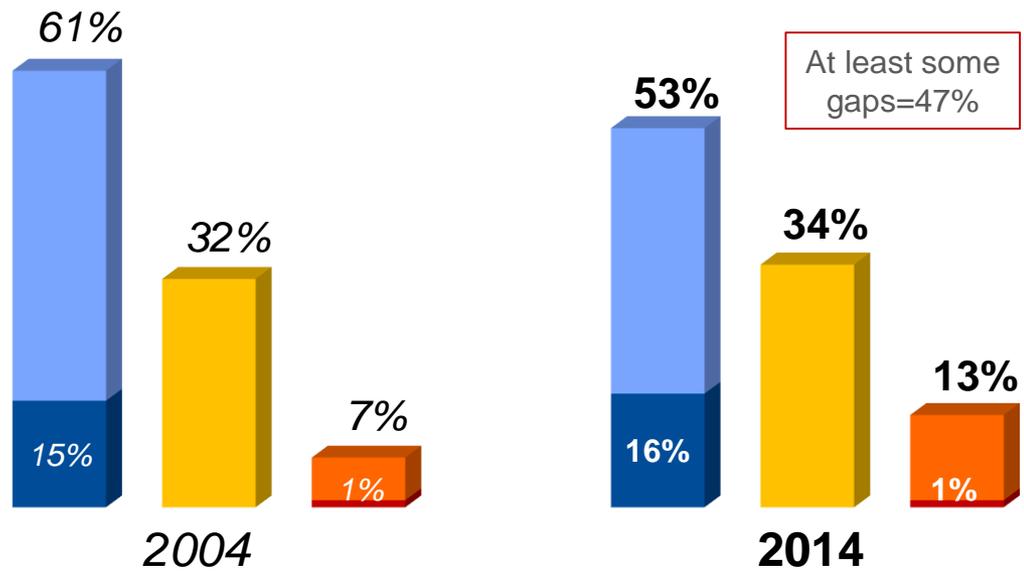
Four in five employers report that recent public high school grads have at least some gaps in preparation for typical jobs and advancement in their company.

*Recent public HS graduates' preparation for **typical jobs** in your company*



Nearly half of recent high school grads who are in college report some gaps in preparation for college.

College students: How well did your high school education prepare you for college?



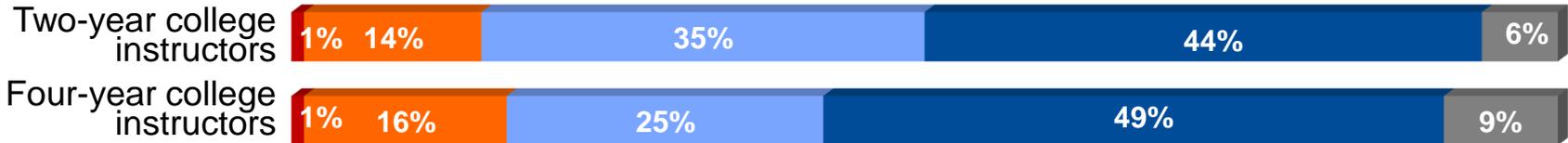
- 49% report large gaps in one or more subject areas
- 83% report at least some gaps in one or more subject areas

Public high schools are viewed by faculty as preparing most students in computers/technology, teamwork, and verbal communication.

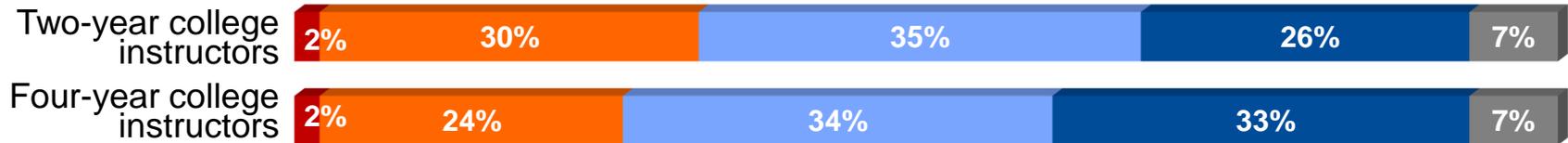
How many recent high school grads at your school were adequately prepared in this area?



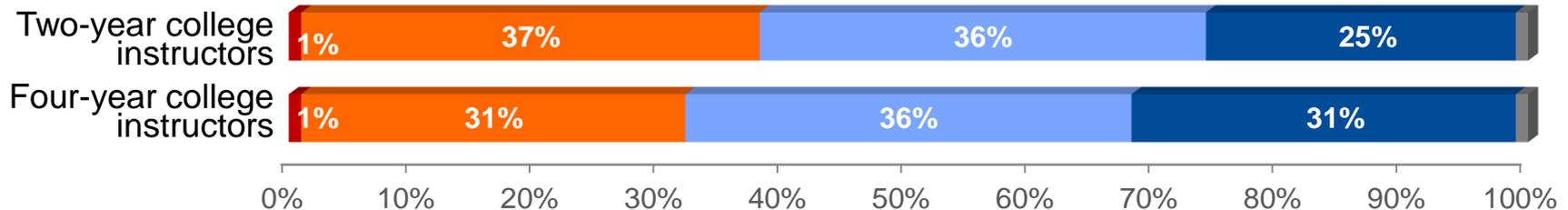
Computer and technology skills



Working as part of a team



Verbal communication



College instructors report significant preparation gaps in many other subject areas.

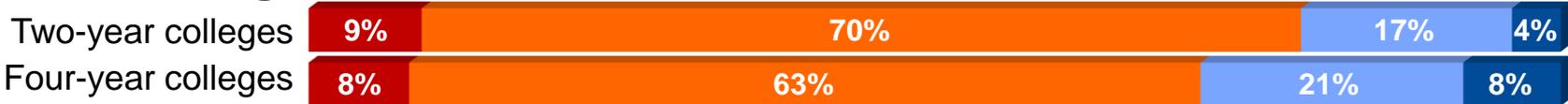
How many recent high school grads at your school were adequately prepared in this area?



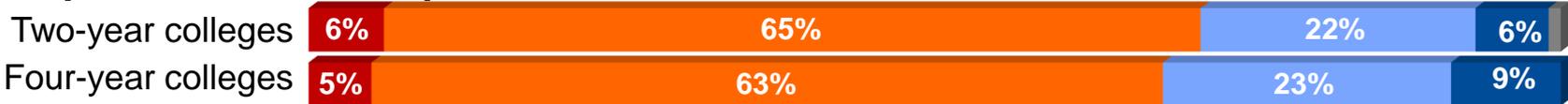
Conducting research



Critical thinking



Comprehension of complicated materials



Work and study habits



Problem solving



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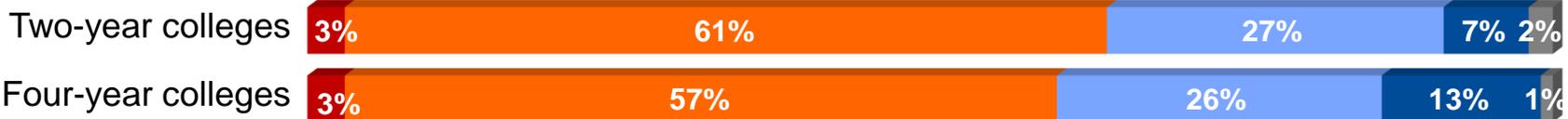
College instructors report significant preparation gaps in many other subject areas *(cont)*.

How many recent high school grads at your school were adequately prepared in this area?



Writing

(continued)



Written communication



Mathematics



Science



College instructors' dissatisfaction with the job public high schools are doing is high for most skill areas, *especially where there are perceived gaps.*

How satisfied are you with the job public high schools are doing preparing students in this area?

	Total Dissatisfied		VERY Dissatisfied	
	2015	Change since 2004	2015	Change since 2004
Critical thinking	82%	+16	43%	+14
Comprehension of complicated materials	80%	+10	37%	+12
Work and study habits	78%	+13	38%	+16
Writing	77%	+15	39%	+17
Written communication	76%	N/A	35%	N/A
Problem solving	76%	+21	34%	+17
Conducting research	74%	+15	37%	+13
Mathematics	59%	+7	28%	+8
Science	53%	+17	23%	+13
Verbal communication	53%	+13	17%	+8
Working as part of a team	39%	N/A	12%	N/A
Computer and technology skills	30%	+10	8%	+2

Critical thinking, writing, and work/study habits are the skill areas in which college instructors most wish public high schools would do a better job.

In which ONE or TWO of these areas, if any, do you most wish US public high schools were doing a better job of preparing their students/you for the expectations of college/the work world?

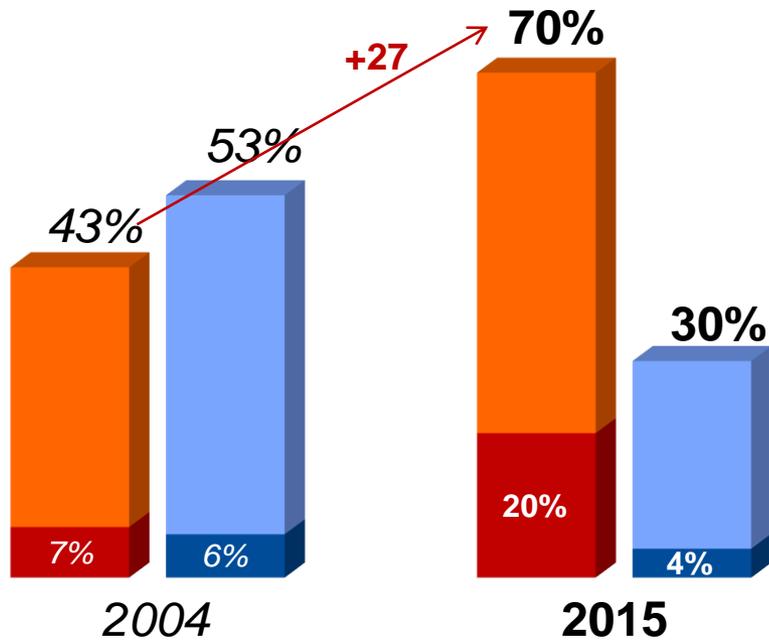
	College instructors	Employers	Recent high school grads	
			College students	Non-students
Critical thinking	46%	26%	N/A	N/A
Writing	31%	16%	17%	9%
Work and study habits	28%	29%	31%	19%
Written communication	19%	19%	N/A	N/A
Mathematics	17%	13%	24%	26%
Comprehension of complicated materials	14%	5%	10%	9%
Problem solving	14%	22%	13%	19%
Science	7%	5%	13%	11%
Verbal communication	5%	22%	27%	28%
Conducting research	5%	5%	20%	8%
Computer and technology skills	4%	13%	14%	18%
Working as part of a team	3%	12%	N/A	N/A

College instructors report a significant increase in the frequency of students' doing poorly or failing because they were not adequately prepared in high school.

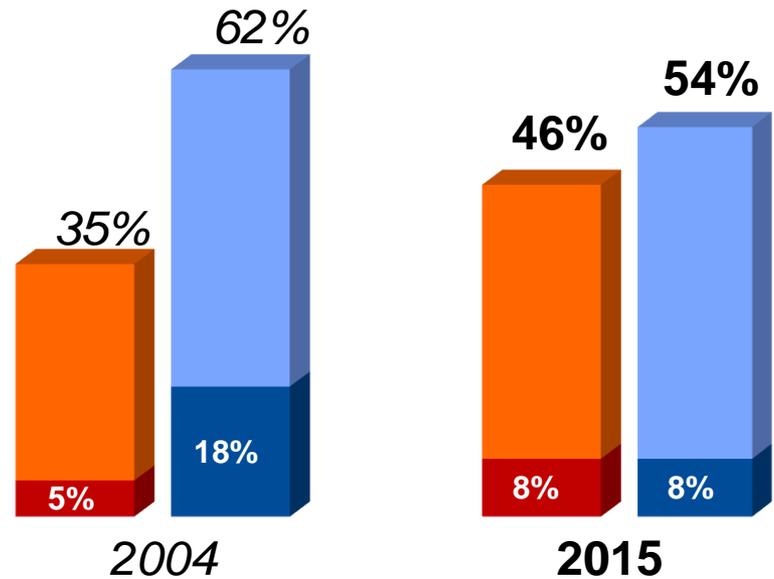
How common is it for students to do poorly or fail out of the first-year classes you have taught because their high school education did not adequately prepare them for the difficulty of the class work in college?



Instructors at two-year colleges

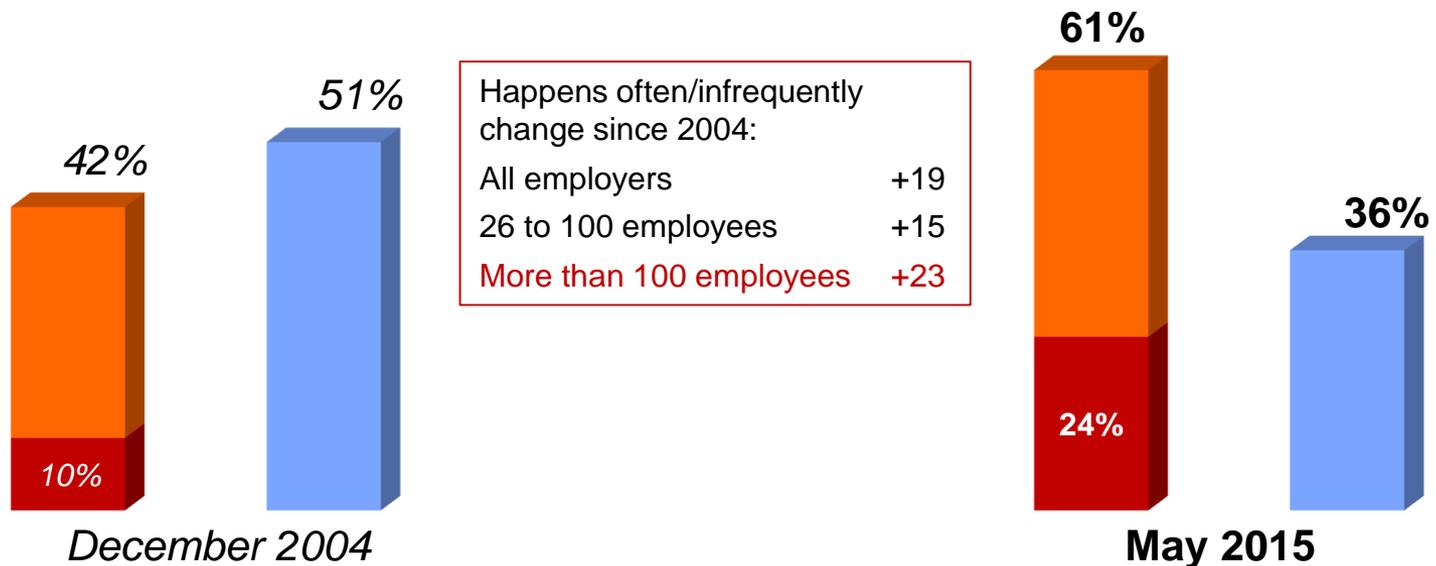


Instructors at four-year colleges



Employers report a significant increase in the need to require that recent HS graduates get additional education and training to make up for gaps.

*Does your company ever request or require high school graduate employees to get additional education or training to make up for gaps in their ability to read, to write, or do mathematics? **



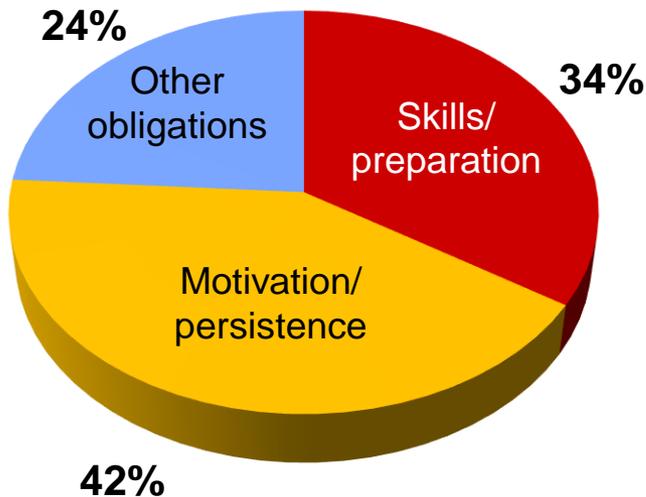
* Among employers who say that at least a small proportion of their new hires are recent high graduates.

The chief reasons incoming students struggle are lack of motivation/persistence (*two-year faculty*) and inadequate preparation (*four-year faculty*).

In your experience, which is more often the cause when a first-year student is struggling with college class work?

- Student lacks skills or was not adequately prepared for the difficulty of the work
- Student lacks motivation or persistence, or is not applying him or herself to the work
- Student has too many demands on their time, such as work, family, and other obligations in addition to college

Instructors at two-year colleges



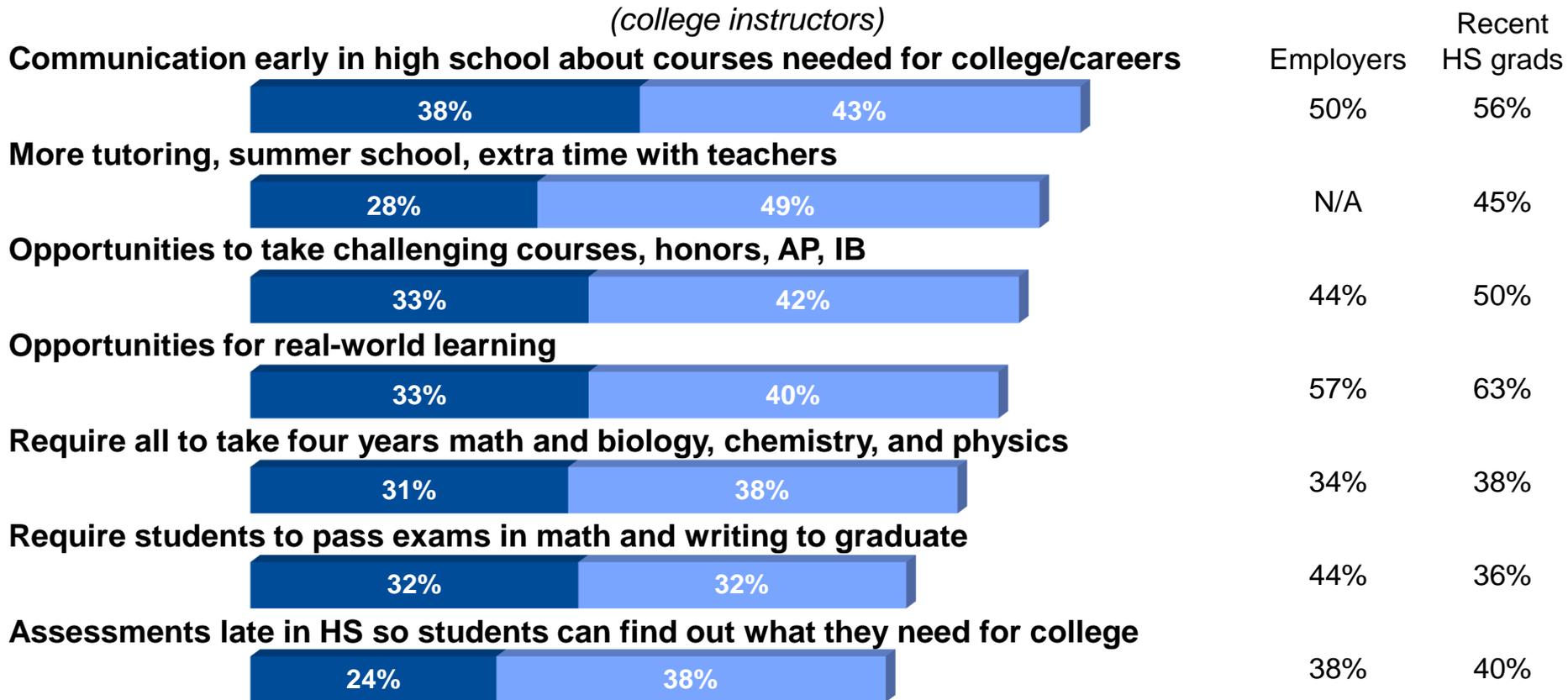
Instructors at four-year colleges



Potential Solutions Exist

Instructors, employers, and recent grads see many proposals as having potential to improve preparedness for life after high school.

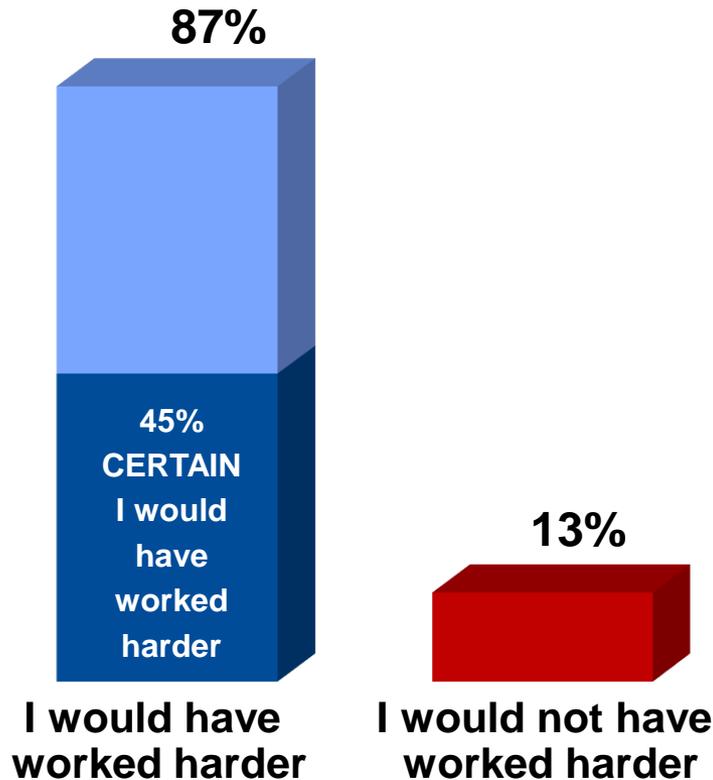
What impact would this have in better preparing students for life after high school?



Most recent high school grads say they would have worked harder if expectations had been higher.

If my high school had demanded more, set higher academic standards, and raised expectations of the course work and studying necessary to earn a diploma:

All high school graduates



I am CERTAIN I would have worked harder:

Men	43%
Women	48%
Whites	42%
African Americans	53%
Hispanics	50%
All college students	48%
In two-year college	49%
In four-year college	47%
Took remedial classes	54%
No college	39%
Some college/dropped out	45%
Extremely/very prepared	51%
Less prepared	39%

Students who experience the following in high school are much more likely report that they feel extremely or very well prepared for college/the work world.

- Experienced high academic expectations
- Attended high schools that excelled at:
 - Communicating about the classes/grades needed to graduate from high school
 - Communicating about the classes/grades needed to get into college
 - Encouraging students to take the most advanced courses
 - Giving students a clear understanding of knowledge/skills needed for the future
 - Encouraging students to explore professional/career opportunities
- Took math beyond Algebra II
- Had teachers who were effective at tying learning to real world experiences

The bottom line: Findings

- In the past 10 years, college instructors' perceptions of the job US public high schools are doing and the preparedness of recent high school graduates for college-level work have declined.
- Significant majorities of college instructors at both two-year and four-year institutions believe that US public high schools are not doing a good enough job preparing students for the expectations they will face in college and they identify gaps in preparation in a number of skill areas for significant proportions of their first-year students.
- While not quite as critical as college instructors, employers' perceptions of the job US public high schools are doing and the preparedness of recent graduates in the job market have also declined in the past decade, as have recent public high school graduates' assessment of their own preparedness.
- While the assessment of the job public high schools are doing is critical in many skill areas, critical thinking and work and study habits are the areas in which both college instructors and employers most wish public high schools would do a better job.

The bottom line: Solutions

- The research suggests that providing real academic challenge for high school students and communicating with them about what is needed for future success helps to better prepare grads for the road ahead.
- Providing consistent and regular signals to ALL high school students about what academics are needed to be ready for college and careers is key:
 - Set rigorous expectations, students will rise to the challenge
 - Have graduation requirements that ensure academic preparation for all
 - Encourage all students to take the most advanced classes
 - Ensure the rigor of classes offered; reliance on course titles can lead to watered down courses
 - Communicate with students early in high school (if not before) about the expectations and skills (including courses) needed for future success—including college admissions and career interests
 - Regularly tell students whether they are “on track”
 - Tie learning in high school to life outside the classroom by providing real-world learning opportunities
 - Provide support/help for students who need it (e.g. tutoring)
 - All means ALL. Be sure all students understand and know the benefit of academic preparation for college and careers; everyone needs to be prepared for their next steps.