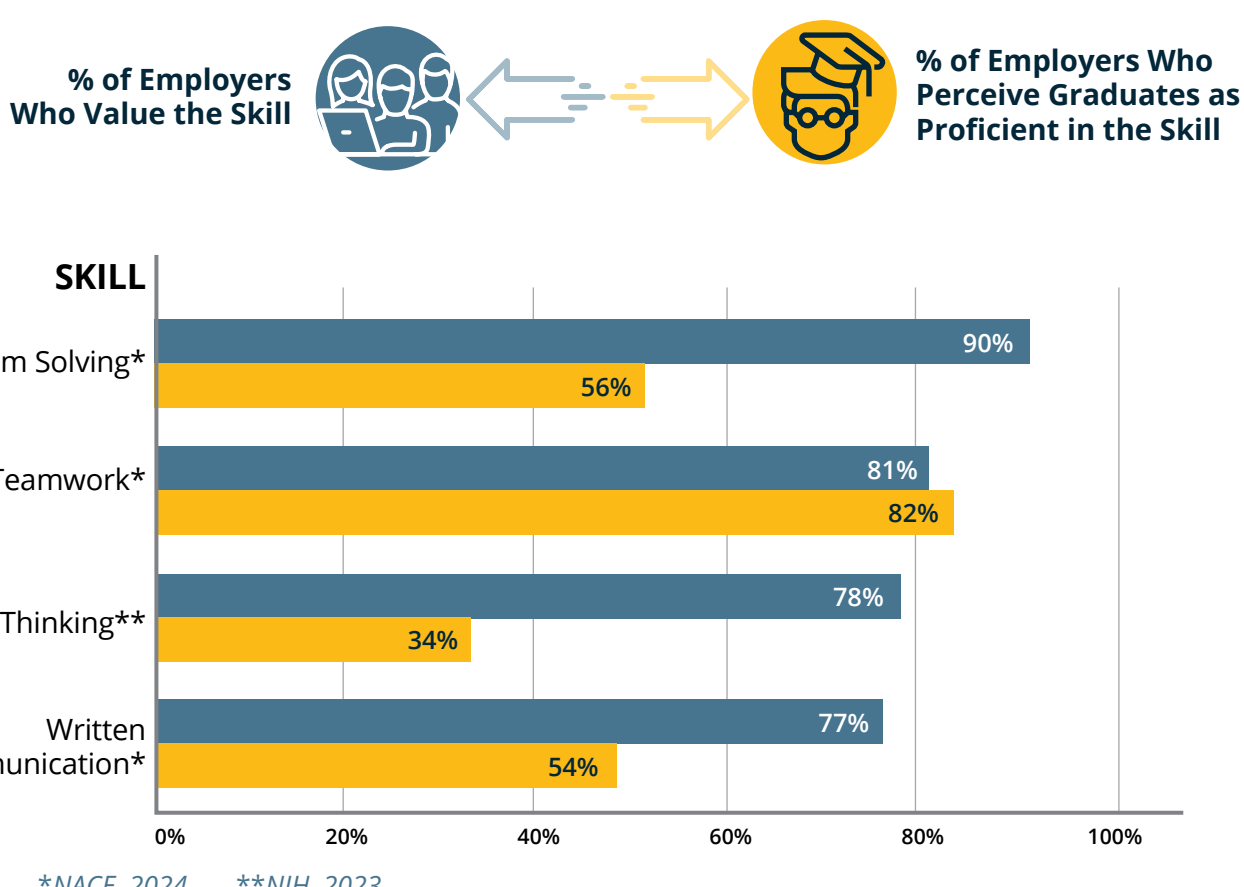


# The Higher-Order Skills Gap: Are Grads Really Ready?

## Reimagining Career Readiness in Higher Education

### Employer Expectations: The Skills Gap is Real



**The disconnect is clear: students aren't graduating with the skills employers need and expect.**

**Skills-based hiring** jumped from 56% in 2022 to 73% in 2023 (*Society for Human Resource Management, 2023*).

### Higher-Order Skills Are Relevant in Every Industry

Every industry values higher-order skills. In fact, 70% of employers now **prioritize real-world skills** over degrees (*AAC&U, 2023*).

#### BUSINESS:

Strategic problem solving, effective communication, and decision making



#### HEALTHCARE:

Critical thinking, ethical decision making, and patient communication

#### ENGINEERING:

Analytical thinking, innovative problem solving, and technical communication



#### HUMANITIES:

Critical analysis, creative problem solving, and cross-cultural communication



#### MILITARY:

Tactical problem solving, clear communication, and leadership under pressure



#### SKILLED TRADES

(e.g., Electricians, Plumbers): Troubleshooting, critical thinking, and customer communication

**To meet workforce demands, higher education institutions must intentionally teach students these essential skills.**

**45%** of college students show **no significant gains** in critical thinking, complex reasoning, or writing skills after two years (*Arum & Roksa, Academically Adrift, 2011*).

### Higher Order Skills Instruction in Action

#### Texas A&M University's Mays Business School

In 2020, business school leadership recognized their graduates needed more than rote knowledge and technical skills to be successful. So, they partnered with CAE to develop critical thinking skills instruction that was rolled out throughout the school.



#### Now, Texas A&M's Mays Business School Graduates Have the Skills Hiring Managers Seek

Students who received explicit instruction in critical thinking and problem solving performed significantly better and saw **20% higher scores** on CAE's assessment of higher-order skills.

Higher scores indicate **stronger career readiness** and **post-grad success**.

These graduates are **better equipped** to meet workplace demands.

Graduates, like those from Mays Business School, that can **demonstrate proficiency** with higher-order skills to future employers are in demand.

### Make Sure Your Graduates Have the Skills Employers Want

CAE's higher-order skills solution helps colleges and universities equip students with the skills employers are actively seeking through:

- **Engaging critical thinking instructional resources** that strengthen higher-order skills across subject areas
- **Performance-based assessments** that measure critical thinking, problem solving, and written communication—providing data you and your students can act on
- **Professional development** that equips educators to teach these skills with confidence

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