Approximately one-third of the employers polled in December 2009 by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) said they expect to increase their college hiring, compared to 28 percent and 26 percent, respectively, in the organization’s November and October 2009 polls.

And when assessing job candidates, the first thing employers said they look for is strong communication skills, according to the results of the organization’s *Job Outlook 2010*, which comprises the results of the poll conducted from mid-August 2009 to Oct. 9, 2009.

### Top 5 Candidate Skills/Qualities

1. Communication Skills
2. Analytical Skills
3. Teamwork Skills
4. Technical Skills
5. Strong Work Ethic

**Source:** *Job Outlook 2010*, National Association of Colleges and Employers.

While communication skills topped the list of skills sought in prospective employees, employers said they also look for analytical, teamwork and technical skills, as well as a strong work ethic.

“These are the skills that employers believe are important to on-the-job success,” said NACE Executive Director Marilyn Mackes, in a statement about the survey results. But employers have a fairly extensive roster of skills, qualities and attributes that they consider when making hiring decisions about new college graduates, she added.

For example, evidence that the candidate can perform the job is key. “Many employers use GPA to gauge ability and look at work experience for evidence that the candidate can do the job,” she said.

For many new college graduates, that evidence is typically acquired through internships, she added. "Regardless of the state of the job market, employers consistently report a preference for candidates who have relevant work experience,” says Mackes. “Taking part in an internship will not guarantee a new graduate a job, but it certainly boosts the candidate’s marketability.”

Given equally qualified candidates, however, prized “soft skills” can tip the scales toward one candidate over the other. So in a tight job market, the candidate who has honed those has a bit more of an advantage, she noted.