



A newsletter of the Society of Actuaries/Casualty Actuarial Society

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## Additional Skills Actuarial Candidates Should Develop

*By Meagan Hughes*

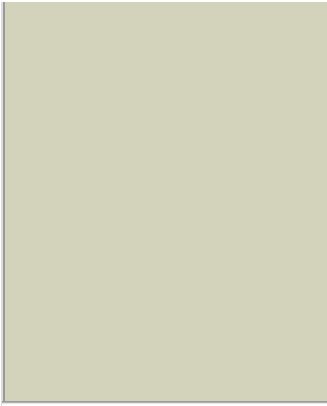
One advantage of being a fifth year senior, besides enjoying an extra year of Longhorn football, has been being able to learn from my friends that have graduated before me. Many of them have started working as actuaries and have become great resources for me regarding the profession. In hopes of better preparing myself to join the "real world," I asked them what skills they wished they had developed in college. Despite being from very different actuarial arenas, their answers tend to be very similar and rarely related to math. According to them, having writing, business, presentation, and computer skills are essential to being a successful actuary.

–Writing skills: Actuaries utilize their writing skills heavily in e-mails, memos, proposals, etc. However, many students can take basic university writing requirements as freshman, and they do not have to write anything more than proofs for the next four years. Since writing seems to fall under the "use or lose it" category, many of my friends have suggested taking electives with writing components. In particular, they suggest using basic university requirements as an opportunity to take a writing intensive class.

–Business skills: My friends have repeatedly conveyed the intense use of business skills, namely accounting, finance, and risk management, in actuarial work. Any additional business experiences either through classes or extra-curricular activities can help students as future actuaries.

–Presentation skills: Actuaries regularly make presentations to clients, managers, and their peers. Many of my friends advised me to take a speech class as an elective to better prepare myself for important presentations. Also, taking on leadership roles that require speaking to fellow students is a great opportunity to develop presentation skills in a less stressful environment.

–Computer skills: My friends also tell me about their in-depth use of Microsoft Office and programming in their jobs. Despite having some exposure prior to working full time, they were astonished by how little they actually knew, especially in Excel. Knowing a wide range of functions is essential for an actuary to build tools to manipulate data while saving time. Actuaries also rely on PowerPoint skills to create convincing presentations and deliverables for clients. Lastly, actuaries often utilize



programming skills. These skills allow actuaries to work with large amounts of information and also help new actuaries better understand and use actuarial valuation tools. Overall, all of my friends advise taking classes or workshops to better develop computer skills.

By learning from my friends' experiences and developing my writing, business, presentation, and computer skills, I have become a stronger actuarial candidate and hopefully will be a better actuary.