

OBJECTIVE

To compare the perceptions of community pharmacy practice employers and fourth professional year pharmacy students (P4) on the current community pharmacy practice job market

BACKGROUND

A full-time pharmacist position in community pharmacy practice (e.g., chain, independent, mass merchant, etc.) was once commonly thought to be guaranteed upon graduation from pharmacy school. However, the implications of these economic times in light of the growing number of pharmacy schools and a steady rise in professional pharmacy student enrollment are not fully understood.

According to the latest data from the Aggregate Demand Index (ADI) supported by the Pharmacy Manpower Project, there is a nationwide moderate demand for pharmacists in 36 states. In the state of NJ, the ADI reflects a balance between pharmacists and positions available. Given the current economic time and shrinking budgets, a full-time pharmacist position in community pharmacy practice may be difficult to obtain as compared to previous years.

METHODS

A paper-based survey, consisting of multiple-choice and Likert scale questions/answers was disseminated to P4 interview candidates and community pharmacy practice employers on November 4, 2009 at the Community Pharmacy Practice Interview Day at The Ernest Mario School of Pharmacy at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey.

Surveys assessed employers' and students' perceptions of the following areas: application/hiring processes, applicant attributes and skills, job availabilities and potential impact of emerging pharmacy schools.

For the purpose of this study, all participants were asked to provide their opinions on the current community pharmacy job market within NJ.

RESULTS

Figure 1. Demographics of Students' Past Work Experience in Community Pharmacy Practice

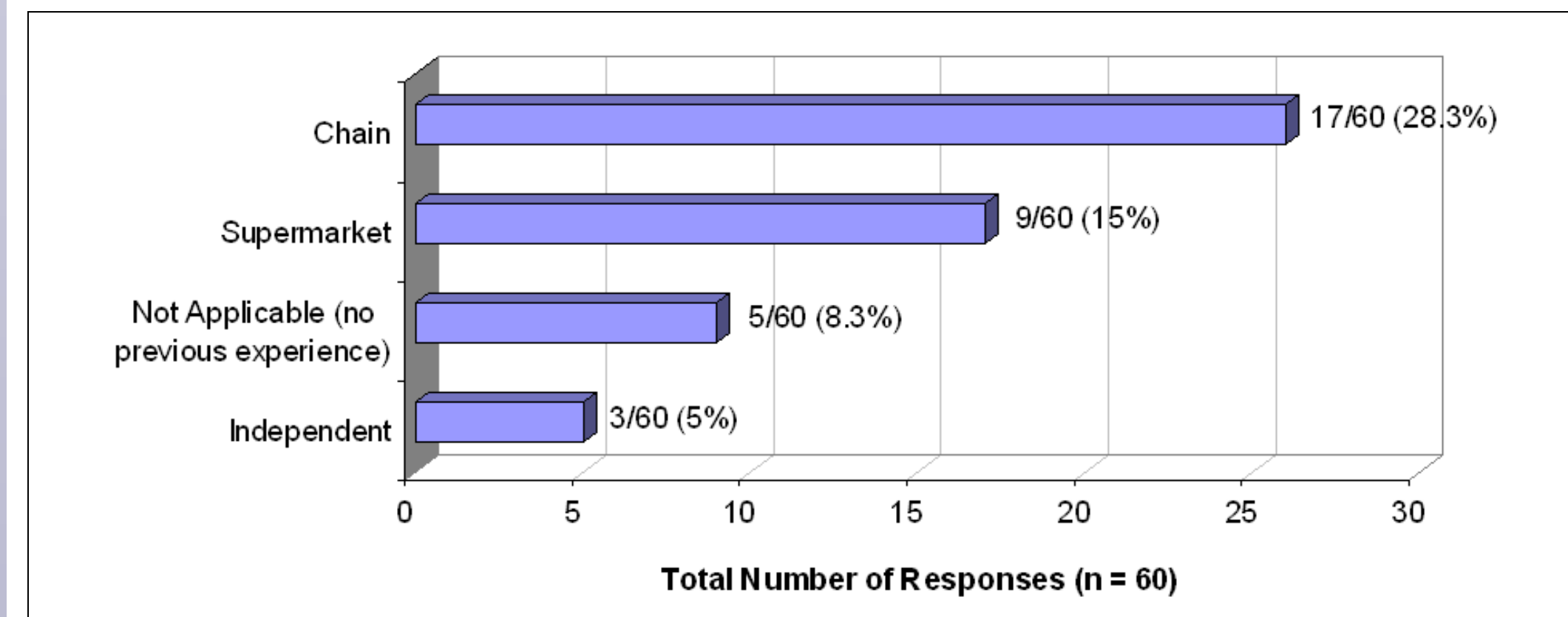


Figure 2. Perceptions of Community Pharmacy Practice Job Market in NJ May 2010

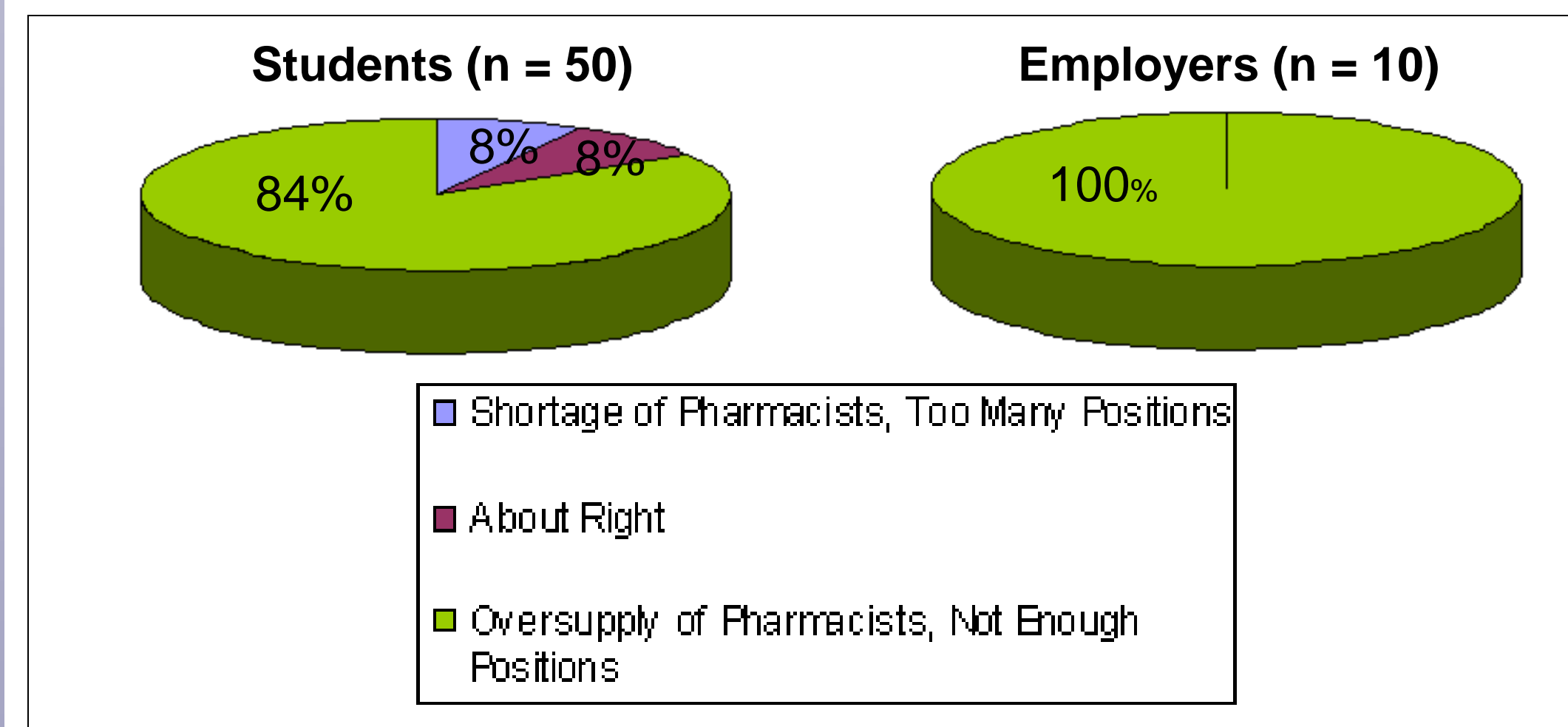
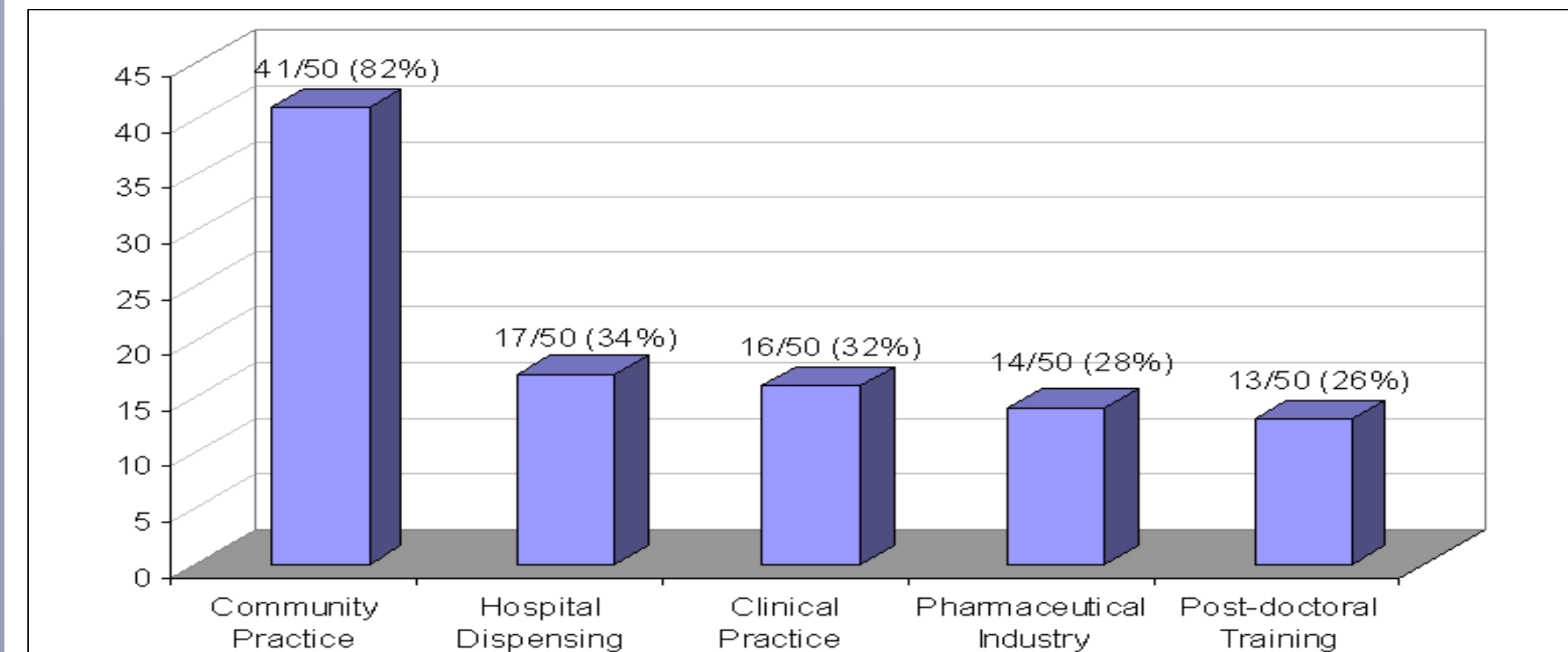
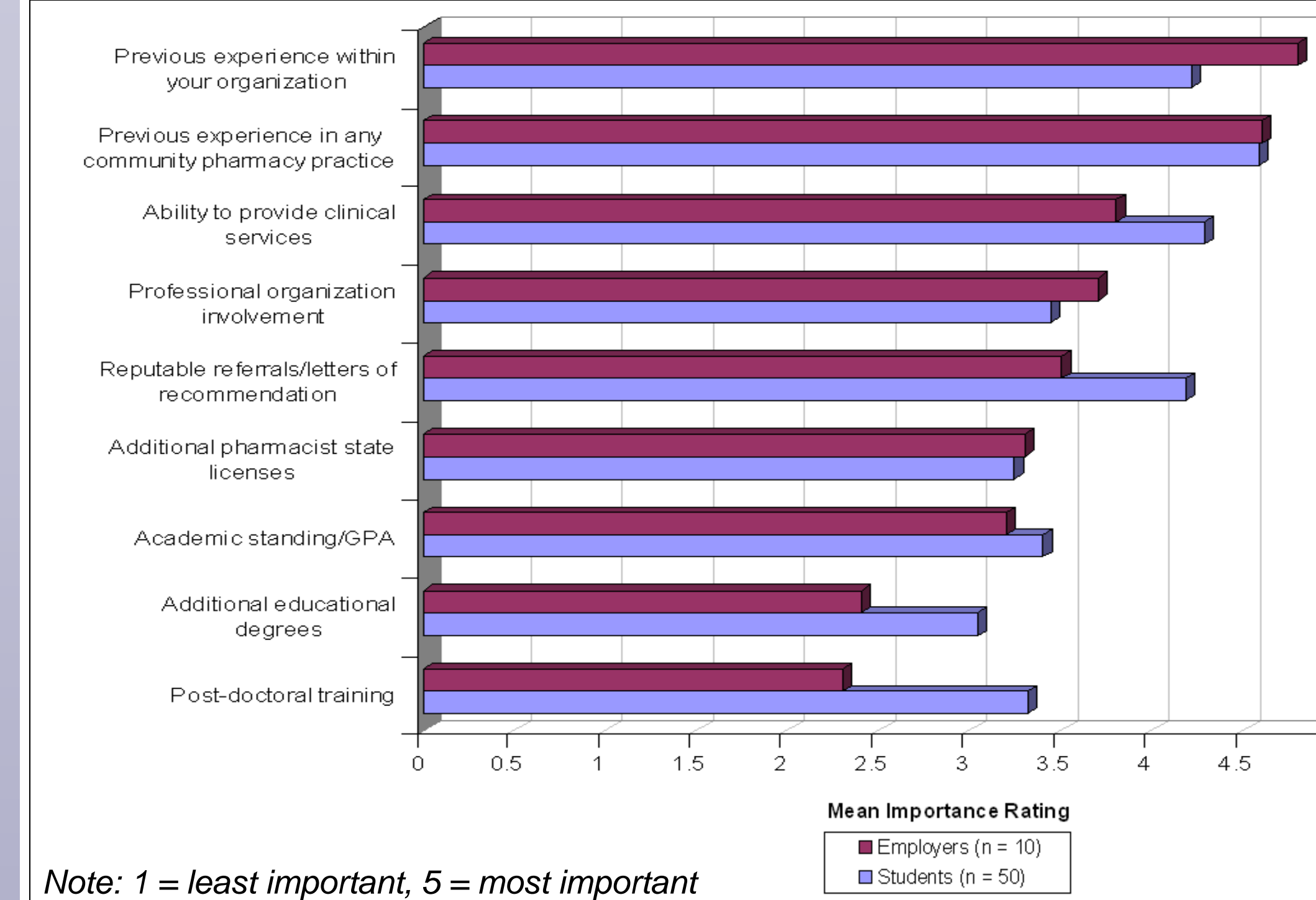


Figure 3. Most Popular Practice Settings Students are Likely to Pursue Post-Graduation



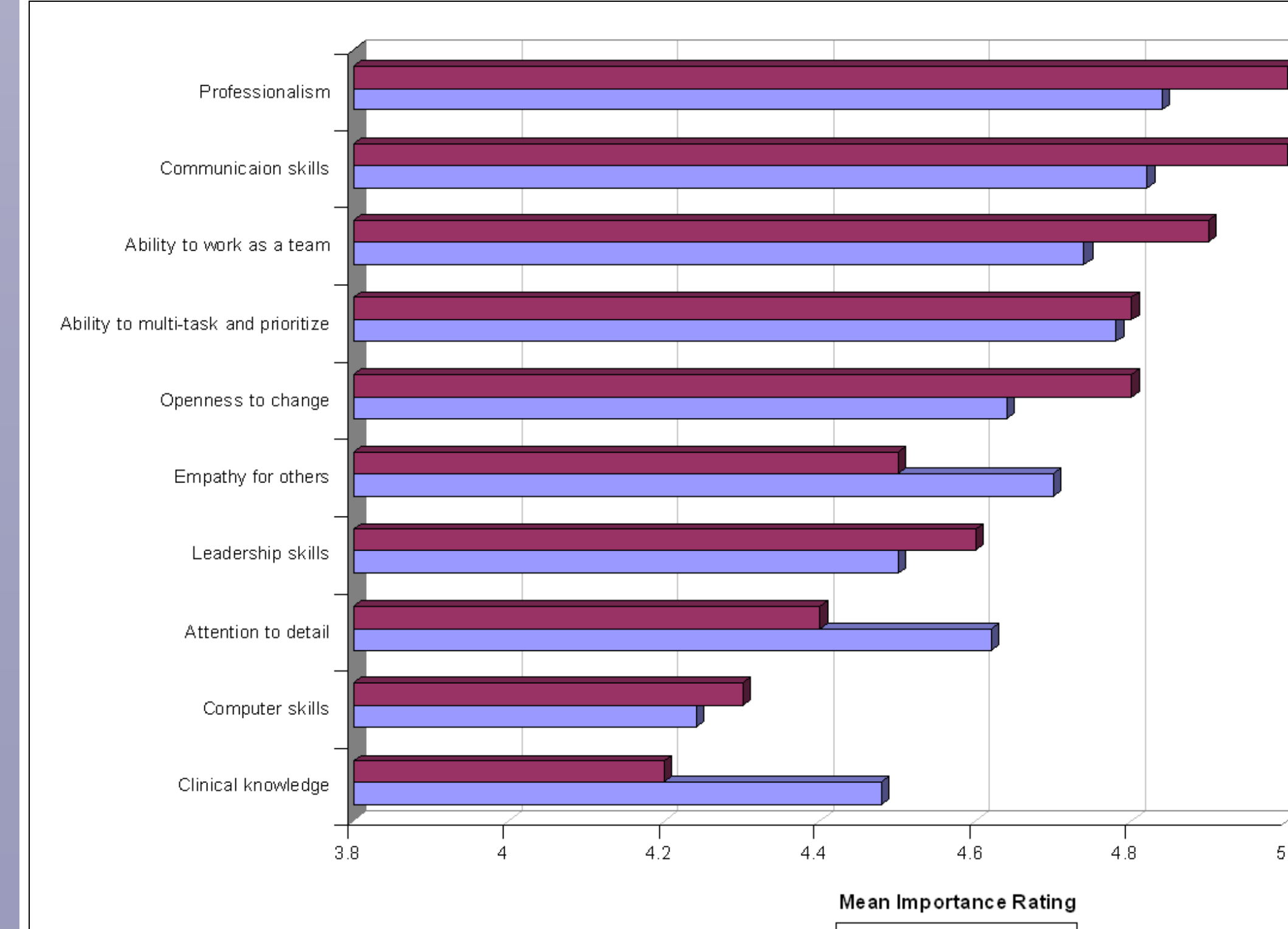
Note: Clinical practice setting included ambulatory care, anti-coagulation and in-patient.

Figure 4. Perceptions of Qualifications Considered when Hiring Full-Time Pharmacists



Note: 1 = least important, 5 = most important

Figure 5. Perceptions of Attributes Associated with a Successful Community Practice Pharmacist



Note: 1 = least important, 5 = most important

DISCUSSION

- Of the 91 students and 11 employers, 50 students and 10 employers completed the paper-based surveys.
- Having previous experience within an organization was thought to be the most effective method of obtaining a job as a full-time community practice pharmacist by both students and employers.
- Employers reported that the West and Mid-West were areas of most significant need for pharmacists. While 64% of students wanted to work either within NJ only or the Northeast region, 38% were willing to relocate (West, Mid-West, South). Most employers believed more candidates are willing to relocate outside of NJ than in past years.
- Of the ten employers, 40% stated they have a range of 1-5 full-time positions for graduating pharmacists available and 30% stated they have no open positions available in NJ.
- Majority (90%) of employers agreed/strongly agreed that there has been an increase number of graduate applications for full-time community practice pharmacist positions in NJ as compared to previous years
- A majority of students (85%) and employers (100%) agreed/strongly agreed that an increase in emerging pharmacy schools will pose a problem on the job availability in community pharmacy practice in NJ.
- Overall, employers rated 7 of the 10 attributes associated with a successful community practice pharmacist higher than students. Employers felt that empathy for others, clinical knowledge, and attention to detail were not as important as students perceived.
- Both groups ranked having previous experience in a community pharmacy practice was important regardless of the practice setting. Both groups also agreed that best time for a P4 student to apply for a full-time pharmacist position would be the fall (Sept. – Dec.) prior to graduation.

CONCLUSION

- Both employers and students had perceptions that the current job market in NJ has a moderate demand for pharmacists. In reality, the data shows NJ is balance with jobs available and the number of pharmacists.
- Factors that influence these perceptions may include increased number of graduate applications noted by employers, emerging pharmacy schools in the tri-state area and decreased budgets have been shared verbally during the day of the interviews. All of which could potentially pose a problem on future employment opportunities for graduating pharmacists.

DISCLOSURE

All authors are paid employees of the Ernest Mario School of Pharmacy at Rutgers, the State University of NJ.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All authors would like to thank the employers and students who participated in the survey. Special thanks to Dr. James Alexander, PharmD and Dr. Joseph A. Barone, PharmD, FCCP for their support and guidance.