

Stimulating Career Development: Assessment of the Effects of Guest Speaker Learning Experiences on Students Enrolled in Criminal Justice College Courses

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Abstract: This research study examines the impact of a guest speaker intervention on college students enrolled in criminal justice courses at a mid-sized university in California. Students in the study attended guest speaker presentations ranging from probation officers, correctional officers, academics, and public defenders. Students in the study were required to complete a pre-and post-survey throughout the Fall 2022 and Spring 2023 semesters that examined the students' agreeableness, confidence, and knowledge with regard to their experiences with attending guest speaker opportunities and their knowledge about career pathways and academic concepts while pursuing a college degree. The results from this study indicate that many students find guest speaker opportunities to be both beneficial for advancing their knowledge of the criminal justice system and confidence in pursuing a career in criminal justice.

Keywords: Criminal justice, students, guest speakers, assessment.

1. INTRODUCTION

Guest speakers with professional and research backgrounds in criminal justice and criminology are viewed by both academics and practitioners as being a fundamental part of the educational and training experience for college students seeking to pursue careers in Law-Enforcement, Legal Studies, Social Justice, Corrections, Probation and Parole, Juvenile Justice, and Forensic Science. Guest speakers often provide criminal justice students with a wide range of information related to their personal experiences in the field, lessons learned, career and promotional opportunities, work culture, salary and benefits, and the best practices associated with succeeding in the profession.

Furthermore, criminal justice professionals and researchers provide real-world insights about the complexities and ethical dilemmas associated with the profession, stress, and mental health issues faced by practitioners, workplace politics, and experiences from the field. Textbooks and lectures are often limited because students may lose their attention and focus during class, be unable to connect concepts and theories with real-world examples, and they may be unclear about which career pathway they want to take after graduation due to a lack of information and guidance. Guest speakers who are current or former practitioners and researchers in the field can provide valuable real-world insight into the workings of the criminal justice system by offering detailed job

descriptions and examples taken from daily experiences, institutional data, case studies, and anecdotal evidence. Additionally, guest speakers can provide recruitment information about qualifications, interviewing for the job, backgrounds, and knowledge about the communities they serve. They can give students a firsthand look at how the system functions, the common challenges practitioners experience, and the strategies and techniques that have proven effective when holding offenders accountable, providing justice to victims, and serving the community in a public safety capacity.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Bandura's (1969) Social learning theory can be used to understand the impact of guest speakers on criminal justice students. Bandura (1969) discusses the importance of social learning theory for shaping human behavior through a transactional process of behavioral imitation, environmental factors, and personal factors influencing each other to create the conditions for learning through social processes. More specifically, Bandura (1969) discusses how attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation are fundamental concepts for cultivating behaviors, attitudes, and actions through social processes.

Guest speakers in criminal justice courses are effective at capturing the attention of students by discussing the application of skills and knowledge in a real-world context that directly impacts the community and liberty of those accused or convicted of crimes. Additionally, criminal justice students are more likely to retain this knowledge because they can connect ideas and concepts that they learned in the classroom and

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associate them with the guest speakers' lived experiences and lessons learned through their experiences in the field. Students will ultimately reproduce these experiences and knowledge acquired through guest speaker events either in the completion of their coursework or in their pursuit of experiential learning opportunities (e.g. volunteering, internships, job applications, ride-alongs, field trips, etc.). Finally, motivation is essential for the imitation of behavior, shaping attitudes, and cultivating values in students. Students in criminal justice are often motivated to serve their communities and to understand how the justice system functions. Therefore, to optimize student learning experiences and to motivate student knowledge acquisition, instructors should invite guest speakers from across the spectrum of criminal justice (e.g. police, prosecutors, judges, public defenders, jurors, victims, witnesses, correctional officers, formerly incarcerated, non-profit workers, policymakers, etc.) that can provide multiple varying perspectives about their lived experiences, attitudes towards the justice system, and beliefs about the roles and ethical responsibilities of criminal justice professionals in the community. Bandura's (1969) social learning theory provides an effective framework for examining and assessing student attitudes towards guest speaker learning experiences because it is rooted in understanding the cognitive learning process that facilitates imitation and shaping of behaviors.

Arguably the pedagogical basis for inviting guest speakers into the classroom is for instructors to create a learning environment that encourages student development using a multifaceted approach that ultimately results in pro-social attitudes, knowledge acquisition, career exploration, and networking. The challenge is being able to measure the impact of guest speaker experiences on student development while controlling for external variables, such as on-campus experiences, guest speakers in other classes, and disruptions to the course schedule (e.g. COVID-19 lockdowns, social distancing policies, cyberattacks causing the shutdown of learning management systems, hazardous to health air-quality due to wildfires, etc.). The extant literature demonstrates that quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methodologies can be used to measure student experiences using a guest speaker intervention. Costello (2012) found that guest speakers enhance student participation and that guest speakers reinforce credibility on topics and concepts introduced in the classroom. Furthermore, Costello (2012) discusses how a theory of engagement includes student participation in the construction of knowledge

during guest speaker experiences in the classroom through the process of "relate, create, donate" (p.483). Costello (2012) examined guest speaker experiences in an online community using a case study and phenomenography methodology to examine the learners' experience of guest speakers on student learning in online courses. Costello (2012) engaged in a multi-step iterative process from collecting data and interviewing participants to identify qualitative differences among participants in their guest speaker experiences.

Criminal justice practitioners and researchers offer a wide range of diverse perspectives related to real-world issues, such as addiction and mental illness, homelessness, domestic violence, mass violence, police violence, institutional racism, social justice rights, civil unrest, immigration policy, and mass incarceration. Guest speakers can expand students' understanding of these complex social issues by providing their firsthand personal experiences, State and National training, and educational standards, and provide students with insight into the professional ethos, constitutional rights of the community, and legal obligations of criminal justice practitioners and researchers. Guest speakers from different backgrounds, organizations, and areas of expertise can provide unique insights that challenge students' assumptions about the operation of the criminal justice system (George *et al.*, 2015). Additionally, guest speakers may stimulate critical thinking about the intersectionality of social justice issues related to gender, race, and class identities within the criminal justice system workplace and as a member of the broader community.

By inviting criminal justice practitioners and researchers as guest speakers to the classroom, students are provided with a unique networking opportunity that may be able to connect students with professionals in the field for obtaining volunteer experiences, ride-along with local agencies, field trips, internships, and career and professional advancement (Payne, Sumter, & Sun, 2003; Crandall, Buckwalter, & Witkowski, 2021). Furthermore, guest speakers who are alumni of the college or university may be more inclined to hire students from their alma mater because they are familiar with the faculty instructors and the curriculum, training, and educational standards being provided to students.

2.1. High-Impact Practices

Guest speakers who are passionate about their work can inspire and motivate criminal justice college

students by sharing the rewarding aspects of their career choice. Students who hear and learn from guest speakers about successful experiences, groundbreaking research, or innovative career pathways can be encouraged to step outside their comfort zone and develop the self-confidence needed for experimenting with volunteering, engaging in service-learning experiences, participating in jail or prison tours, internships, or applying for jobs before and after graduation.

Guest speakers can enhance the college curriculum through the implementation of High Impact Practices (HIPs) and Experiential Learning Opportunities (ELOs) for criminal justice students in many ways, such as, guest speakers bringing tools and methods from their profession into the classroom, showcasing training examples (e.g. K9 drug dog, de-escalation techniques, restorative justice circles), role-playing, field interviewing, and training exercises for students to practice, and demonstrating to students the practical importance of data collection and research analysis (Burke & Bush, 2013; George *et al.*, 2015; Davis, 2015; Kuh & Kinzie, 2018; Crandall *et al.*, 2021). Guest speakers can provide illustrative examples that connect key concepts and theories from the textbook with real-world issues, engages students in discussions and debates, and brings a sense of relevance and immediacy to the material covered throughout the semester in their courses (Rockell, 2009). By exposing students to guest speakers, professors and instructors can ensure that student- and course-learning outcomes are being met for the courses they are teaching. Students will likely reflect on these guest speaker experiences in their end-of-the-semester course evaluations because these experiences are unique and grounded in real-world applications.

Chintakrindi *et al.* (2022) describe how student success indicators are fundamental for measuring student engagement and participation in the college environment. Using a mixed-methods study design, the researchers found that students who are receiving ELOs and HIPs both inside and outside the classroom while having a close relationship with faculty are more likely to rate their college experience favorably compared to students who had a passive learning experience and distant relationship with faculty during their time at college. Belisle *et al.* (2020) found that experiential learning is an optimal method for increasing student engagement and learning outcomes for students participating in criminal justice courses. In their study, they examine college students' responses

using three experiential learning modalities, such as a jail tour, a formerly incarcerated guest speaker, or a documentary. The researchers found that experiential learning activities impacted students' responses on papers and assignments. The impact of the experiential learning activities led to changes in attitudes and understanding of the prison system and the life of inmates.

Pica and Fripp (2020) found that college students' comprehension and engagement related to studying theoretical concepts and knowledge about the criminal justice system were enhanced by participating in juvenile mentorship programs. Students were assigned to act as a mentor for juvenile offenders. The researchers provided the mentor with pre- and post-test measures to assess their knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions of the juvenile justice population. The mentor and mentee met once a week and this experiential learning activity was found to have a significantly positive impact on the mentors' perception and attitudes towards juvenile offenders. However, a significant limitation of this study is its small sample size ($N = 13$), which makes it difficult to generalize the results.

Calaway *et al.* (2016) found that the pedagogical methods used inside and outside the classroom in criminal justice courses are fundamental for shaping the mindset and attitudes of future practitioners. The researchers were interested in observing and measuring the impact that visiting a prison had on students' views on incarceration and punitive sentencing policies. The participants, undergraduate criminal justice students, completed a survey measuring and assessing their attitudes towards prisons, inmates, and alternative sanctions before and after visiting a correctional facility. Results from the post-survey demonstrate that the field trip altered the students' understanding and perceptions of punishment, prisons, inmates, and rehabilitation programming. This finding aligns with the contact hypothesis and highlights the value of providing hands-on experiential learning opportunities to college-level students because it stimulates reflection and higher-order critical thinking.

According to Ricciardelli and Clow (2012), although there has been extensive research examining the causes of wrongful convictions, there has been relatively little research regarding how individuals who have been wrongfully convicted are perceived by

society. Their study seeks to fill this gap by investigating the impact of an exoneree's speech on student attitudes and perceptions towards individuals who have been wrongfully convicted. The researchers surveyed two groups of students before and after a guest lecture using a quasi-experimental design. The intervention group listened to a guest lecture from a wrongfully convicted exoneree, while the control group listened to an unrelated topic on Aboriginal issues. The researchers provided both the intervention and control group with a survey to assess attitudes and knowledge about the social issues related to risk for wrongful convictions. The results demonstrate that participants who attended the exoneree's lecture had more positive changes in their attitudes towards wrongly convicted individuals than those who attended the other lecture. Ricciardelli and Clow's (2012) study aligns with Goffman's theory of stigma and how to reduce stigma and stereotypes by establishing relationships between individuals with different life trajectories.

3. RESEARCH QUESTION

Although the extant literature indicates that there likely exists a generally positive consensus among criminal justice faculty about the added value and benefits of exposing students to guest speakers in the classroom, there is limited empirical data for understanding student perceptions and attitudes towards guest speaker experiences and its impact on student career pathways (Burke & Bush, 2013; George *et al.*, 2015; Davis, 2015; Crandall *et al.*, 2021). In the current study, I attempt to fill this gap in the research by asking the research question: will introducing guest speakers into the classroom improve student perceptions of career opportunities and their confidence to develop professional skills at the university for the criminal justice profession?

I hypothesize that the guest speaker intervention will positively shape students' attitudes and perceptions about the criminal justice system and its professional- and research-career opportunities. Furthermore, I hypothesize that exposure to guest speakers will increase the student's knowledge, confidence, and reflection on the possible career paths and the skills that are needed to support their professional goals with a university degree. Finally, I hypothesize that the guest speaker intervention complements the pedagogical goals of High Impact Practices (HIPs) and Experiential Learning Opportunities (ELOs) in higher education.

4. METHODS

The guest speaker intervention will be providing students with opportunities to learn from professionals and academic researchers who actively work in the criminal justice degree field associated with the courses that the students are enrolled in. Students will be exposed to guest speaker presentations through the following modalities: In-Person Guest Speakers, Live Zoom Guest Speakers, Recorded Videos, Youtube Interviews, News Interviews, and Documentaries. The goal of this assessment research is to understand whether guest speakers' impact:

- 1). Student perceptions of career opportunities, job descriptions, salary/benefits, and the ability for promotion/advancement within careers and
- 2). Student confidence in the development and mastery of these professional skills during their time at the university.

I will be collecting survey data from students using both multiple-choice and open-ended questions to measure the effectiveness of guest speakers on career knowledge. I will be using the Qualtrics survey development application to administer the pre- and post-survey instrument to college students enrolled in criminal justice courses. I will be using Guest Speaker artifacts that do not require paying a stipend. I will attempt to provide a broad range of guest speakers with different educational, racial, and ethnic status backgrounds to promote diversity, inclusion, and social justice in the classroom.

Guest Speakers are intended to serve as HIPs and ELOs that helps students gain insight and understanding about the skills and knowledge that are required to succeed in future career plans (Burke & Bush, 2013; George *et al.*, 2015; Davis, 2015; Kuh & Kinzie, 2018). I will not set a minimum for a type of guest speaker per modality due to COVID restrictions. I will attempt to use three guest speaker artifacts minimum throughout the semester per class. The pre-survey will be administered in the second week of courses for the Fall 2022 and Spring 2023 semesters. The post-survey will be administered one week after the guest speaker intervention has been completed.

4.1. Data

For this study, I conducted a cross-sectional survey design by collecting data from a sample of undergraduate college students ($N = 193$) enrolled in

criminal justice courses in the Fall 2022 and Spring 2023 semesters at a mid-sized university in California. Survey data was collected pre- and post- the guest speaker intervention. For this study, the guest speaker intervention included an in-person presentation from Probation Officers from Stanislaus County speaking with multiple courses in Fall 2022. In Spring 2023, the guest speaker intervention included an in-person presentation from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) Correctional officers, an in-person presentation from two members of the San Francisco Public Defenders Office speaking with multiple courses, and a virtual Zoom lecture by an academic scholar from the University of San Francisco discussing Asian Americans and U.S. Immigration Policy with multiple courses.

4.2. Sample

I used a non-random convenience sampling strategy with a multistage cluster sampling approach. Students were provided with a link to a Qualtrics survey in the Canvas Learning Management System and were provided with bonus credit for completing the survey pre- and post-the guest speaker intervention in Fall 2022 and Spring 2023 semesters. Pre- and post-intervention surveys were not matched by respondents.

4.3. Measures

For the assessment variable "Where have you received professional guidance at your California State University before enrolling in this course?" students have the option to select from several variables, such as Career Development Center, Other professors, sponsored internships, sponsored labs, sponsored conferences, job fairs, career-oriented course, other – open text response, and I have not received professional guidance at my CSU.

For the assessment variables for "Please rate your level of knowledge on the following components of a career in your major/field. - Career opportunities in this field" I will be measuring: (1) Career opportunities in this field, (2) Job description requirements in this field, (3) Salary/benefits in this field, and (4) Ability for promotion/advancement within this field. These four skills will be measured using a Likert scale with a knowledge range (not knowledgeable about, somewhat knowledgeable about, knowledgeable about, very knowledgeable about)

For the assessment variables for "How confident are you with the following skills?" I will be measuring:

(1) Critical Thinking Skills, (2) Communication and Articulation of Ideas Skills, (3) Time Management, and (4) Organization Skills. These four skills will be measured using a Likert scale with a confidence range (completely confident, fairly confident, somewhat confident, slightly confident, not at all confident).

I will be measuring the assessment variable for "Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: I am confident in my development and mastery of the professional skills listed above during my time at the university." For this measure, I will be using a Likert scale with an agreement range (strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree, strongly agree).

I will be measuring the assessment variable for "Please identify your level of agreement with the following statement: The guest speaker presentations or videos helped me have a better understanding of the career options available with the degree that I am currently pursuing." For this measure, I will be using a Likert scale with an agreement range (strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree, strongly agree).

I will be measuring the assessment variable for "Please identify your level of agreement with the following statement. The instructor provided me with a range of guest speakers to give me a better idea of career options available after graduation in my degree program." For this measure, I will be using a Likert scale with an agreement range (strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree, strongly agree).

For the open-ended textual responses, I will ask the following questions to respondents:

- a. "Does attending career presentations, career workshops, or viewing guest speakers help you have a better idea of what type of career you would like to pursue post-graduation? Why did you choose this profession?"
- b. "What lessons or ideas did you learn from the guest speaker presentations?"
- c. "Which guest speaker experiences were satisfying and/or dissatisfying and why?"
- d. "How useful do you think this course will be for your career?"

4.4. Plan of Analysis

I will be presenting univariate descriptive statistics of demographic variables related to academic level, course number and name for completing the survey, college major, first-generation student status, commuting status, age, gender, race, Hispanic status, and employment status.

I will be presenting and providing narratives for the exploratory descriptive statistics for comparing the assessment variables of interest using pre-survey data and comparing it to post-survey data for both the Fall 2022 and Spring 2023 semesters. Furthermore, using methods from Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) I will be coding and examining the themes for the open-ended textual responses using data available from the post-survey of Fall 2022 and pre- and post-survey of Spring 2023.

4.5. Missing Data

I observe only a small percentage of missing data in the demographic data and Likert scale responses. I attribute this missing data to the concept of missing completely at random (MCAR) and I think that this is unrelated to the design and implementation of the survey, assessment, and Guest Speaker intervention. Furthermore, I observed missing data related to the open-ended textual responses and similarly, I think this is unrelated to the design and implementation of the survey, assessment, and Guest Speaker intervention. Porter and Ecklund (2012) provide an extensive discussion on “active nonresponders” which are described as research participants that complete a portion of the study but refuse to or are unable to complete the rest of the survey for individual-level reasons. Porter and Ecklund (2012) specifically state that “traditional statistics do not always help us understand the reasons behind missing data and low survey-response rates (p. 450 – 451).”

5. RESULTS

5.1. Descriptive Statistics

In Table 1, I observe that the survey respondents ($N = 193$) in the study are an average age of 21.64 years with a standard deviation of 3.8 years. The descriptive statistics for the respondents' demographic status are related to the following categories of *gender*, *race*, *Hispanic status*, and *first-generation college student status*. In terms of *gender*, I observe that 63% of the group identifies as female, 36% as male, and 1% did

not specify their gender. With *race*, I observe that 66% identify as mixed or unspecified, while 27% identify as white or Caucasian, 3% as Asian, 2% as Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, 2% as Black or African American, and 1% as American Indian/Native American or Alaska Native. With *Hispanic status*, I observe that 76% of the group identifies as Hispanic, while 23% do not, and 1% prefer not to say. Finally, in terms of *first-generation college student status*, I observe that 72% of the group identifies as first-generation college student status, 26% do not, and 2% prefer not to say.

In Table 2, I summarize the descriptive statistics for the respondents' academic characteristics. I observe that 92% ($n = 177$) of the respondents have obtained a degree in Criminal Justice, while the remaining 8% ($n = 16$) have a degree in another field or did not specify their major. The sample percentages for *Academic Level* are as follows: 16% ($n = 31$) of the respondents identified as Freshman, 5% ($n = 10$) as Sophomores, 27% ($n = 53$) as Juniors, 48% ($n = 92$) as Seniors, and 3% ($n = 5$) as Other. Additionally, 1% ($n = 2$) of the respondents preferred not to disclose their academic level.

The pre-survey for the Fall 2022 semester contains 42% of the sample ($n = 82$) of respondents, while the post-survey contains 22% of the sample ($n = 42$). The pre-survey for the Spring 2023 semester contains 21% of the sample ($n = 41$), while the post-survey contains 15% of the sample ($n = 28$). Based on the data I observe that there was a decline in survey participation from the Fall 2022 to the Spring 2023 semester.

For the indicator *Survey Taken in Criminal Justice Course*, I observe the percentage that represents the proportion of students in the sample group who have taken the survey in each class in which the guest speaker intervention was administered. CJ 2255: Methods of Criminal Justice Inquiry has the highest percentage at 26% ($n = 51$), followed by CJ 3120: Causes of Crime at 19% ($n = 37$), CJ 4440: Cyber Crime Theory at 19% ($n = 36$), and CJ 4450: Crime, Mental Illness, and Corrections, at 19% ($n = 37$). Finally, CJ 4600: Terrorism and Homeland Security has the lowest percentage at 15% ($n = 29$), while respondents who indicated unspecified Criminal Justice course contains only 2% ($n = 3$) of the total sample group.

I observe for the indicator *Commuting to Campus Distance* that 54% ($n = 104$) of respondents commute

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Student Respondents

| Exploratory Variables | N | % |
|--|-------|-----|
| <i>Total observations</i> | 193 | 100 |
| <i>Age Range</i> | | |
| 17 | 1 | 1 |
| 18 | 17 | 9 |
| 19 | 18 | 9 |
| 20 | 26 | 13 |
| 21 | 51 | 26 |
| 22 | 26 | 13 |
| 23 | 10 | 5 |
| 24 | 10 | 5 |
| 25 | 8 | 4 |
| 26 | 5 | 3 |
| 27 | 2 | 1 |
| 28 | 1 | 1 |
| 29 | 1 | 1 |
| 43 | 2 | 1 |
| 49 | 1 | 1 |
| Unspecified | 14 | 7 |
| <i>Age Average</i> | 21.64 | |
| <i>Age Standard Deviation</i> | 3.8 | |
| <i>Gender</i> | | |
| Male | 121 | 63 |
| Female | 70 | 36 |
| Unspecified | 2 | 1 |
| <i>Race</i> | | |
| American Indian/Native American or Alaska Native | 1 | 1 |
| Asian | 5 | 3 |
| Black or African American | 3 | 2 |
| Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander | 3 | 2 |
| Mixed or Unspecified | 128 | 63 |
| White or Caucasian | 53 | 27 |
| <i>Hispanic Status</i> | | |
| Yes | 146 | 76 |
| No | 144 | 23 |
| Prefer not to say | 3 | 1 |
| <i>First Generation College Student Status</i> | | |
| Yes | 139 | 72 |
| No | 51 | 26 |
| Prefer not to say | 3 | 2 |

Table 2: Educational and Employment Characteristics of the Student Respondents

| Exploratory Variables | n | % |
|--|-----|-----|
| <i>Total Observations</i> | 193 | 100 |
| <i>Survey Semester Year</i> | | |
| Pre- Survey Fall 2022 | 82 | 42 |
| Post- Survey Fall 2022 | 42 | 22 |
| Pre- Survey Spring 2023 | 41 | 21 |
| Post- Survey Spring 2023 | 28 | 15 |
| <i>Survey Taken in Criminal Justice Course</i> | | |
| CJ 2255-Methods of Criminal Justice Inquiry | 51 | 26 |
| CJ 3120-Cause of Crime | 37 | 19 |
| CJ 4440-Cyber Crime Theory | 36 | 19 |
| CJ 4450-Crime Mental-Illness, and Corrections | 37 | 19 |
| CJ 4600-Terrorism and Homeland Security | 29 | 15 |
| Criminal Justice Course Unspecified | 3 | 2 |
| <i>Respondent's Major</i> | | |
| Criminal Justice Degree | 177 | 92 |
| Other degree or Unspecified | 16 | 8 |
| <i>Academic Level</i> | | |
| Freshman | 31 | 16 |
| Sophomore | 10 | 5 |
| Junior | 53 | 27 |
| Senior | 92 | 48 |
| Other | 5 | 3 |
| Prefer not to say | 2 | 1 |
| <i>Commuting to Campus Status</i> | | |
| 1 Commute to campus (30+ Campus) | 104 | 44 |
| I live near campus | 64 | 33 |
| I live near on campus | 25 | 13 |
| <i>Employment Status</i> | | |
| Working full-time | 49 | 25 |
| Working part-time | 78 | 41 |
| Not working | 60 | 31 |
| Prefer not to say | 6 | 3 |

to campus for 30 minutes or more, while 33% ($n = 64$) live near campus and 13% ($n = 25$) live on campus. In terms of *Employment Status*, I observe that 25% ($n = 49$) reported working full-time, 41% ($n = 78$) reported working part-time, 31% ($n = 60$) were not working, and 3% ($n = 6$) preferred not to say.

5.2. Exploratory Analysis of Assessment Variables

For question 23, in Table 3 and Figure 1 (see Appendix A), the data represents the sources of professional guidance as indicated by the student respondents before enrolling in the course in which the guest speaker intervention was conducted. This is a comparison of pre-survey and post-survey responses

collected in Fall 2022 and Spring 2023, where the sample size (N) for pre-survey was 120 and for post-survey was 70. The responses were related to professional guidance received by students. In the pre-survey, 44.17% of the respondents reported that they had not received any professional guidance at their university. Other professors were the second most indicated source of guidance with 27.5% of respondents. Career Development Center and Other or unspecified sources accounted for 10% and 8.33% respectively. Job fairs and CSU-sponsored labs were the least frequently cited sources at 4.17% and 0.83%, respectively. In the post-survey, the percentage of respondents who reported receiving guidance from the Career Development Center increased to 14.29%,

Table 3: Number of Guest Speakers Viewed by Students and Sources of Professional Guidance before Enrolling in the Course in which the Guest Speaker Intervention Occurred

| Q13-Where you received professional guidance at your CSU prior to enrolling in this course? | | | | |
|--|---|----------|---|----------|
| | Pre-survey Responses Fall 2022 and spring 2023 (N=120) | | Post-survey Responses Fall 2022 and spring 2023 (N=70) | |
| | n | % | n | % |
| Career Development Center | 12 | 10.00% | 10 | 14.29% |
| Career oriented course | 6 | 5.00% | 0 | 0.00% |
| CSU sponsored labs | 1 | 0.83% | 0 | 0.00% |
| I have not received professional guidance at my CSU | 53 | 44.17% | 24 | 34.29% |
| Jobs fairs | 5 | 4.17% | 1 | 1.43% |
| Other or unspecified | 10 | 8.33% | 7 | 10.00% |
| Other Professors | 33 | 27.50% | 28 | 40.00% |
| Q23- how many guest speakers spoke to your class this semester about career options with your degree program? This may have been in person or over zoom | | | | |
| | Pre-survey Responses Fall 2022 and spring 2023 (N=122) | | Post-survey Responses Fall 2022 and spring 2023 (N=70) | |
| Number guest speakers viewed | n | % | n | % |
| 0 | 29 | 72.50% | 6 | 8.57% |
| 1 | 7 | 17.50% | 27 | 38.57% |
| 2 | 3 | 7.50% | 27 | 38.57% |
| 3 | 1 | 2.50% | 7 | 10.00% |
| 4 | 0 | 0.00% | 3 | 4.29% |

while the percentage reporting guidance from other sources decreased or remained the same. The proportion of students who reported not having received professional guidance decreased to 34.29%, and other professors became the most frequently indicated source of guidance, accounting for 40% of the respondents. A substantial proportion of students reported not having received any professional guidance before enrolling in the course in which the guest speaker intervention was conducted.

For question 23, in Table 3 and Figure 2 (see Appendix A), the data represents pre-survey and post-survey responses from Fall 2022 and Spring 2023, with a sample size of 122 and 70 respectively. The data demonstrates that there was a substantial increase in the number of students who had viewed guest speakers related to career options in their degree programs. In the pre-survey, 72.5% of students indicate they have had zero guest speaker experiences, while in the post-survey only 8.57% of students indicate they have had zero guest speaker experiences. Furthermore, I observe in the post-survey that 91.43% of students have had between one to four guest speaker experiences. This substantial increase in the

number of guest speaker experiences viewed by students between the pre-and post- survey aligns with the proposed intervention.

For questions 14-1 in Table 4 and Figure 3 (see Appendix A), knowledge about career opportunities in this field. For the pre-survey responses, 14.05% of respondents rated themselves as "Very knowledgeable about" the topic, 47.11% as "Knowledgeable about," 37.19% as "Somewhat knowledgeable about," and 1.65% as "Not knowledgeable about." For post-survey responses, there was an increase in the percentage of respondents who rated themselves as "Very knowledgeable about" the topic (25.71%) compared to the pre-survey response (14.05%). The percentage of respondents who rated themselves as "Knowledgeable about" remained fairly stable at 44.29%, while the percentage of respondents who rated themselves as "Somewhat knowledgeable about" decreased slightly to 25.71%. Finally, the percentage of respondents who rated themselves as "Not knowledgeable about" increased to 4.29%. Overall, the post-survey results suggest that more respondents felt very knowledgeable about the topic compared to the pre-survey results, while fewer respondents felt somewhat knowledgeable

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Student Responses to Rating Levels of Knowledge Questions

| Q14_1-Please rate your level of knowledge on the following components of a career in your major/field.- Career opportunities in this field | | | | |
|--|---|----------|---|----------|
| | Pre-survey Responses Fall 2022 and spring 2023 (N=121) | | Post-survey Responses Fall 2022 and spring 2023 (N=70) | |
| | n | % | n | % |
| Very knowledgeable about | 17 | 14.05% | 18 | 25.71% |
| knowledgeable about | 57 | 47.11% | 31 | 44.29% |
| Somewhat knowledgeable about | 45 | 37.19% | 18 | 25.71% |
| Not knowledgeable about | 2 | 1.65% | 3 | 4.29% |
| Q14_2- Please rate your level of knowledge on the following components of a career in your major/field.- Job description requirements in this field | | | | |
| | Pre-survey Responses Fall 2022 and spring 2023 (N=121) | | Post-survey Responses Fall 2022 and spring 2023 (N=70) | |
| | n | % | n | % |
| Very knowledgeable about | 21 | 17.36% | 18 | 25.71% |
| knowledgeable about | 48 | 39.67% | 29 | 41.43% |
| Somewhat knowledgeable about | 47 | 38.84% | 21 | 30.00% |
| Not knowledgeable about | 5 | 4.13% | 2 | 2.86% |
| Q14_3-Please rate your level of knowledge on the following components of a career in your major/field.- Salary/benefits in this field | | | | |
| | Pre-survey Responses Fall 2022 and spring 2023 (N=121) | | Post-survey Responses Fall 2022 and spring 2023 (N=69) | |
| | n | % | n | % |
| Very knowledgeable about | 16 | 13.22% | 14 | 20.29% |
| knowledgeable about | 36 | 29.75% | 19 | 27.54% |
| Somewhat knowledgeable about | 54 | 44.63% | 25 | 36.23% |
| Not knowledgeable about | 15 | 12.40% | 11 | 15.94% |
| Q14_4-Please rate your level of knowledge on the following components of a career in your major/field.- Ability for promotion/advancement within this field | | | | |
| | Pre-survey Responses Fall 2022 and spring 2023 (N=120) | | Post-survey Responses Fall 2022 and spring 2023 (N=70) | |
| | n | % | n | % |
| Very knowledgeable about | 15 | 12.50% | 13 | 18.57% |
| knowledgeable about | 42 | 35.00% | 24 | 34.29% |
| Somewhat knowledgeable about | 42 | 35.00% | 22 | 31.43% |
| Not knowledgeable about | 21 | 17.50% | 11 | 15.71% |

about the topic. Additionally, there were slight changes in the percentage of respondents who felt knowledgeable and not knowledgeable about the topic between the pre-survey and post-survey.

For questions 14-2 in Table 4 and Figure 4 (see Appendix A), knowledge about job description requirements in this field. In the pre-survey, 17.36% of respondents reported being very knowledgeable about the topic, 39.67% reported being knowledgeable,

38.84% reported being somewhat knowledgeable, and only 4.13% reported not being knowledgeable at all. In the post-survey, there was an increase in the percentage of respondents who reported being very knowledgeable about the topic, with 25.71% reporting this level of knowledge. The percentage of respondents who reported being knowledgeable remained relatively stable at 41.43%. The percentage of respondents who reported being somewhat knowledgeable decreased slightly to 30.00%, and the percentage of respondents

who reported not being knowledgeable at all decreased to 2.86%.

For questions 14-3 in Table 4 and Figure 5 (see Appendix A), knowledge about salary/benefits in this field. In the pre-survey, 13.22% of respondents reported being very knowledgeable about the topic, 29.75% reported being knowledgeable, 44.63% reported being somewhat knowledgeable, and 12.40% reported not being knowledgeable at all. In the post-survey, there was an increase in the percentage of respondents who reported being very knowledgeable about the topic, with 20.29% reporting this level of

knowledge. The percentage of respondents who reported being knowledgeable decreased slightly to 27.54%. The percentage of respondents who reported being somewhat knowledgeable remained relatively stable at 36.23%, and the percentage of respondents who reported not being knowledgeable at all increased to 15.94%.

For question 14-4 in Table 4 and Figure 6 (see Appendix A), knowledge about the ability for promotion/advancement requirements within this field. The pre-survey responses showed that 12.50% of the respondents were "very knowledgeable about" the

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics of Student Responses to Rating Levels of Confidence Questions

| Q15_1-How confident are you with the following skills?-Critical thinking | | | | |
|---|---|----------|---|----------|
| | Pre-survey Responses Fall 2022 and spring 2023 (N=121) | | Post-survey Responses Fall 2022 and spring 2023 (N=70) | |
| | n | % | n | % |
| Not confident at all | 3 | 2.48% | 0 | 0.00% |
| Slightly confident | 16 | 55.37% | 12 | 17.14% |
| Somewhat confident | 67 | 28.93% | 32 | 45.71% |
| Very confident | 35 | 17.50% | 26 | 37.14% |
| Q15_2-How confident are you with the following skills?-Communication and articulation of ideas | | | | |
| | Pre-survey Responses Fall 2022 and spring 2023 (N=121) | | Post-survey Responses Fall 2022 and spring 2023 (N=70) | |
| | n | % | n | % |
| Not confident at all | 1 | 0.83% | 1 | 1.43% |
| Slightly confident | 29 | 23.97% | 14 | 20.00% |
| Somewhat confident | 49 | 40.50% | 27 | 38.57% |
| Very confident | 42 | 34.71% | 28 | 40.00% |
| Q15_3-How confident are you with the following skills?-Time management | | | | |
| | Pre-survey Responses Fall 2022 and spring 2023 (N=121) | | Post-survey Responses Fall 2022 and spring 2023 (N=70) | |
| | n | % | n | % |
| Not confident at all | 2 | 1.65% | 2 | 2.86% |
| Slightly confident | 27 | 22.31% | 9 | 12.86% |
| Somewhat confident | 54 | 44.63% | 34 | 48.57% |
| Very confident | 38 | 31.40% | 25 | 35.71% |
| Q15_4-How confident are you with the following skills?-Organization | | | | |
| | Pre-survey Responses Fall 2022 and spring 2023 (N=121) | | Post-survey Responses Fall 2022 and spring 2023 (N=70) | |
| | n | % | n | % |
| Not confident at all | 0 | 0.00% | 1 | 1.43% |
| Slightly confident | 18 | 14.88% | 8 | 11.43% |
| Somewhat confident | 44 | 36.36% | 31 | 44.29% |
| Very confident | 59 | 48.76% | 30 | 42.86% |

subject, 35.00% were "knowledgeable about," 35.00% were "somewhat knowledgeable about," and 17.50% were "not knowledgeable about." On the other hand, the post-survey responses indicated that the percentage of respondents who were "very knowledgeable about" increased to 18.57%. The percentage of respondents who were "knowledgeable about" remained the same at 34.29%, while the percentage of those who were "somewhat knowledgeable about" decreased slightly to 31.43%. The percentage of respondents who were "not knowledgeable about" decreased to 15.71%. In summary, the data shows a slight improvement in the level of knowledge among respondents between the pre-survey and post-survey.

For question 15-1 in Table 5 and Figure 7 (see Appendix A), confidence about critical thinking skills, the given data presents the results of a pre-survey and post-survey conducted in Fall 2022 and Spring 2023 with a total of 121 participants for the pre-survey and 70 participants for the post-survey. In the pre-survey, 2.48% of the participants reported not being confident at all, 13.22% reported being slightly confident, 55.37% reported being somewhat confident, and 28.93% reported being very confident. On the other hand, in the post-survey, no participant reported not being confident at all, 17.14% reported being slightly confident, 45.71% reported being somewhat confident, and 37.14% reported being very confident. Therefore, the difference between pre-survey and post-survey responses is that there are no participants who reported not being confident at all in the post-survey, while the percentage of those who reported being very confident increased from 28.93% in the pre-survey to 37.14% in the post-survey.

For question 15-2 in Table 5 and Figure 8 (see Appendix A), confidence about communication and articulation of ideas skills, the data provided represents the confidence levels of respondents in Fall 2022 and Spring 2023, divided into two sets of responses: pre-survey and post-survey. The total number of respondents for the pre-survey was 121, while the post-survey had 70 respondents. In the pre-survey responses, only 0.83% of the participants reported not feeling confident at all, while 23.97% were slightly confident, 40.50% were somewhat confident, and 34.71% were very confident. On the other hand, the post-survey responses showed a slight increase in the percentage of participants who reported not feeling confident at all (1.43%), while the percentages for slightly confident (20.00%) and somewhat confident

(38.57%) remained similar to the pre-survey responses. However, there was a slight increase in the percentage of participants who reported being very confident (40.00%) compared to the pre-survey responses. Therefore, the main difference between the pre-survey and post-survey responses is the small increase in the percentage of participants who reported not feeling confident at all and those who reported being very confident.

For questions 15-3 in Table 5 and Figure 9 (see Appendix A), confidence about time management skills, the data provided represents the confidence levels of respondents in Fall 2022 and Spring 2023, divided into two sets of responses: pre-survey and post-survey. The total number of respondents for the pre-survey was 121, while the post-survey had 70 respondents. In the pre-survey responses, 1.65% of the participants reported not feeling confident at all, while 22.31% were slightly confident, 44.63% were somewhat confident, and 31.40% were very confident. On the other hand, the post-survey responses showed a slight increase in the percentage of participants who reported not feeling confident at all (2.86%). However, there was a substantial decrease in the percentage of participants who reported being slightly confident (12.86%) compared to the pre-survey responses. Meanwhile, the percentages for somewhat confident (48.57%) and very confident (35.71%) increased compared to the pre-survey responses. Therefore, the main difference between the pre-survey and post-survey responses is the substantial decrease in the percentage of participants who reported being slightly confident and the increase in the percentage of participants who reported not feeling confident at all, somewhat confident, and very confident.

For questions 15-4 in Table 5 and Figure 10 (see Appendix A), confidence about organization skills, the data provided represents the confidence levels of respondents in Fall 2022 and Spring 2023, divided into two sets of responses: pre-survey and post-survey. The total number of respondents for the pre-survey was 121, while the post-survey had 70 respondents. In the pre-survey responses, none of the participants reported not feeling confident at all, while 14.88% were slightly confident, 36.36% were somewhat confident, and 48.76% were very confident. On the other hand, the post-survey responses showed a slight increase in the percentage of participants who reported not feeling confident at all (1.43%), and a decrease in the percentage of participants who reported being slightly confident (11.43%) compared to the pre-survey

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics of Student Responses to Rating Levels of Agreement Questions

| Q16-Please indicate your level of agreement the following statement. "I am confident in my development and mastery of the professional skills listed above during my time at the university" | | | | |
|---|--|----------|---|----------|
| | Pre-survey Responses Fall 2022 and spring 2023 (N=122) | | Post-survey Responses Fall 2022 and spring 2023 (N=70) | |
| | n | % | n | % |
| Strongly agree | 32 | 26.23% | 18 | 25.71% |
| Somewhat agree | 61 | 50.00% | 37 | 52.86% |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 17 | 13.93% | 9 | 12.86% |
| Somewhat disagree | 4 | 3.28% | 2 | 2.86% |
| Strongly disagree | 8 | 6.56% | 4 | 5.71% |
| Q21-Please indicate your level of agreement the following statement."The guest speaker presentation or videos helped me have a better understanding of the career options available with the degree that I are currently pursuing" | | | | |
| | Pre-survey Responses spring 2023 (N=39) – Fall 2022 data is unavailable | | Post-survey Responses Fall 2022 and spring 2023 (N=70) | |
| | n | % | n | % |
| Strongly agree | 4 | 10.26% | 15 | 21.43% |
| Somewhat agree | 11 | 28.21% | 36 | 51.43% |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 20 | 51.28% | 16 | 22.86% |
| Somewhat disagree | 2 | 5.13% | 0 | 0.00% |
| Strongly disagree | 2 | 5.13% | 3 | 4.29% |
| Q22-Please indicate your level of agreement the following statement."The instructor provided me with a range of guest speakers to give me a better idea of career options available after graduation in my program" | | | | |
| | Pre-survey Responses spring 2023 (N=39) – Fall 2022 data is unavailable | | Post-survey Responses Fall 2022 and spring 2023 (N=69) | |
| | n | % | n | % |
| Strongly agree | 3 | 7.69% | 4 | 5.80% |
| Somewhat agree | 7 | 17.95% | 32 | 46.38% |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 23 | 58.97% | 24 | 34.78% |
| Somewhat disagree | 4 | 10.26% | 5 | 7.25% |
| Strongly disagree | 2 | 5.13% | 4 | 5.80% |

responses. Meanwhile, the percentages for somewhat confident (44.29%) and very confident (42.86%) increased compared to the pre-survey responses. Therefore, the main difference between the pre-survey and post-survey responses is the decrease in the percentage of participants who reported being slightly confident and the increase in the percentage of participants who reported not feeling confident at all, somewhat confident, and very confident.

For question 16 in Table 6 and Figure 11 (see Appendix A), agreement about the development and mastery of professional skills during my time at the university, the data provided shows the responses of a survey conducted in Fall 2022 and Spring 2023, with a total of 122 respondents for pre-survey and 70

respondents for post-survey. The pre-survey responses show that 26.23% strongly agreed and 50.00% somewhat agreed with the statement posed in the survey. 13.93% neither agreed nor disagreed, while only 3.28% somewhat disagreed and 6.56% strongly disagreed. On the other hand, the post-survey responses show that 25.71% strongly agreed and 52.86% somewhat agreed with the same statements/questions as in the pre-survey. 12.86% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, while only 2.86% somewhat disagreed and 5.71% strongly disagreed.

For question 21 in Table 6 and Figure 12 (see Appendix A), agreement about the instructor providing a range of guest speaker presentations helping to

provide a better understanding of career options, The data provided includes the responses of a pre-survey conducted in Spring 2023 with 39 respondents, and a post-survey conducted in Fall 2022 and Spring 2023 with 70 respondents. In the pre-survey, 10.26% strongly agreed, 28.21% agreed, and 51.28% neither agreed nor disagreed with the statements/questions posed in the survey. Only 5.13% disagreed and 5.13% strongly disagreed. It is unclear what the pre-survey was asking about, but the responses suggest that most respondents were non-committal or neutral. In the post-survey, 21.43% strongly agreed and 51.43% agreed with the same statements/questions as in the pre-survey. 22.86% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, while no one disagreed and only 4.29% strongly disagreed.

For question 22 in Table 6 and Figure 13 (see Appendix A), agreement about guest speaker presentations helping to provide a better understanding of career options available after graduation, the given data represents the responses of two surveys- A pre-Survey conducted in Spring 2023 and Post-Survey conducted in Fall 2022 and Spring 2023. The Pre-Survey had a total of 39 respondents, while the Post-Survey had 69 respondents. In the Pre-Survey, the majority of respondents chose 'Neither agree nor disagree' as their response (58.97%), followed by 'Agree' (17.95%) and 'Disagree' (10.26%). Only a small percentage of respondents strongly agreed (7.69%) or strongly disagreed (5.13%). In the Post-Survey, the trend seems to have shifted. While the majority of respondents still chose 'Agree' (46.38%), the percentage is substantially higher than in the Pre-Survey. The percentage of respondents who chose

'Neither agree nor disagree' decreased to 34.78%. The percentage of respondents who chose 'Disagree' also decreased to 7.25%. The percentages of respondents who strongly agreed (5.80%) and strongly disagreed (5.80%) remained similar to those in the Pre-Survey.

5.3. Qualitative Data Analysis of Open-Ended Textual Responses

Question 26 in Table 7 and Figure 14 (see Appendix A), examines coded responses for open-ended textual responses related to student attitudes towards the benefits of attending guest speaker presentations for their careers, the provided data includes results from two surveys. In the pre-survey, none of the participants reported having an unclear career and degree pathway, while 1.96% of the participants in the post-survey had such concerns. This slight increase suggests some level of uncertainty among participants or changes in program directions that were not communicated clearly to participants. Regarding guest speaker events, 3.03% of participants in the pre-survey did not find them interesting, while 7.84% of participants in the post-survey found their degree choice interesting. In both surveys, a large majority of participants supported guest speaker opportunities, with 78.79% in the pre-survey and 80.39% in the post-survey. The consistency of this result indicates that guest speakers provide value to participants.

Question 27 in Table 8 and Figure 15 (see Appendix A), examines coded responses for open-ended textual responses related to student perceptions of lessons learned from guest speaker presentations,

Table 7: Student Attitudes Toward the Benefits of Attending Guest Speaker Presentations for their Careers using Qualitative Coding of Open-Ended Textual Responses

| Q26- does not attending career presentation, career workshops, or viewing guest speakers help you have a better idea of what type of career you would like to pursue post-graduation? Why did you choose this profession? | | | | |
|---|--|--------|--|--------|
| | Pre-Survey Responses Spring 2023(N=33) fall 2023 data is unavailable | | Post-Survey Responses Fall 2022 and Spring 2023 (N=51) | |
| | n | % | n | % |
| Career and degree pathway is unclear | 0 | 0% | 1 | 1.96% |
| Does not find guest speakers interesting | 1 | 3.03% | 2 | 3.92% |
| Finds degree choice interesting | 1 | 3.03% | 4 | 7.84% |
| Has not attended guest speaker event and has no opinion | 2 | 6.06% | 1 | 1.96% |
| Job security | 1 | 3.03% | 1 | 1.96% |
| Supports Guest Speakers Opportunities | 26 | 78.79% | 41 | 80.39% |
| Want to contribute to public safety | 2 | 6.06% | 1 | 1.96% |

Table 8: Student Perceptions of Lessons Learned from Guest Speaker Presentations using Qualitative Coding of Open-Ended Textual Responses

| Q27- what lesson or ideas did you learn from the guest speaker presentation? | | | | |
|--|--|--------|--|--------|
| | Pre-Survey Responses Spring 2023(N=28) fall 2023 data is unavailable | | Post-Survey Responses Fall 2022 and Spring 2023 (N=49) | |
| | n | % | n | % |
| Did not attend receive guest speaker opportunity | 5 | 17.86% | 2 | 4.08% |
| Does not want to pursue a specific career after hearing from guest speaker | 0 | 0% | 1 | 2.04% |
| Guest speaker were not informative | 0 | 0% | 1 | 2.04% |
| Insiders perspective of the job and daily experiences | 1 | 3.57% | 3 | 6.12% |
| Job and career options | 7 | 25.00% | 12 | 24.49% |
| Lesson learn from guest speaker | 10 | 35.71% | 18 | 36.73% |
| Positive experience | 1 | 3.57% | 3 | 6.12% |
| Resources for application and hiring process | 2 | 7.14% | 8 | 16.33% |
| Stories are informative | 2 | 7.14% | 1 | 2.04% |

the provided data includes results from two surveys. The pre-survey responses were collected from 28 students, while post-survey responses were collected from 49 students in Fall 2022 and Spring 2023. In the pre-survey responses, 17.86% of students did not attend or receive the guest speaker opportunity, while 25% were interested in job and career options. 35.71% of students reported that they learned lessons from the guest speaker, and 7.14% found the stories to be informative. Only 3.57% of students reported a positive experience, and 7.14% found resources for the application and hiring process. In the post-survey responses, there was a decrease in the percentage of students who did not attend or receive the guest speaker opportunity (4.08%). Similarly, only 2.04% of students did not want to pursue a specific career after hearing from the guest speaker, compared to 0% in the pre-survey responses. 24.49% expressed interest in job and career options, while 36.73% learned lessons from the guest speaker. 16.33% found resources for the application and hiring process, while 6.12% reported a positive experience. The post-survey responses show an overall increase in engagement and positive experiences compared to the pre-survey responses.

Question 28 in Table 9 and Figure 16 (see Appendix A), examines coded responses for open-ended textual responses related to student satisfaction with guest speaker presentations, the provided data includes results from two surveys. The responses are divided into pre-survey and post-survey categories. In the pre-survey responses during Spring 2023, 23

students participated, and Fall 2022 data is not available. Among those who responded, 26.09% did not attend or receive a guest speaker opportunity, 21.74% had a positive experience viewing a guest speaker presentation outside of the course, and 34.78% had a positive experience viewing guest speakers in general. The remaining responses were split between recalling a negative or positive experience with specific types of guest speakers. In comparison, post-survey responses were collected during Fall 2022 and Spring 2023, and 44 students participated. Only 4.55% did not attend or receive a guest speaker opportunity, and 2.27% reported that the guest speakers were not informative. 38.64% of students had a positive experience viewing guest speakers in general. Furthermore, 20.45% of students had a positive experience viewing the Correctional Officer presentation, 22.73% had a positive experience viewing the Probation Officer presentation, and 6.82% had a positive experience viewing the Public Defenders presentation. None of the post-survey respondents recalled a negative or positive experience with guest speakers from the past. Overall, the post-survey responses suggest that more students had a positive experience with the guest speaker presentations compared to the pre-survey responses. Additionally, it appears that specific guest speaker presentations, such as those by Correctional Officers and Probation Officers, were particularly well-received.

Question 29 in Table 10 and Figure 17 (see Appendix A), examines coded responses for open-

Table 9: Student Satisfaction with Guest Speaker Presentations using Qualitative Coding of Open-Ended Textual Responses

| Q28- Which guest speaker experience was satisfying and/or dissatisfying and why? | | | | |
|--|--|--------|--|--------|
| | Pre-Survey Responses Spring 2023(N=23) fall 2023 data is unavailable | | Post-Survey Responses Fall 2022 and Spring 2023 (N=44) | |
| | n | % | n | % |
| Did not attend receive guest speaker opportunity | 6 | 26.09% | 2 | 4.55% |
| Guest speaker were not informative | 0 | 0% | 1 | 2.27% |
| Positive experience viewing a guest speaker presentation outside of the course | 5 | 21.74% | 2 | 4.55% |
| Positive experience viewing a guest speaker in general | 8 | 34.78% | 17 | 38.64% |
| Positive experience viewing the correctional officer presentation | 0 | 0% | 9 | 20.45% |
| Positive experience viewing the probation officer presentation | 2 | 8.70% | 10 | 22.73% |
| Positive experience viewing the public Defenders presentation | 0 | 0% | 3 | 6.82% |
| Recall negative experience with guest speaker(s) from the past | 1 | 4.355 | 0 | 0% |
| Recall positive experience with guest speaker(s) from the past | 1 | 4.35% | 0 | 0% |

Table 10: Student Perceptions of the Usefulness of the Course in which the Guest Speaker Intervention was Conducted using Qualitative Coding of Open-Ended Textual Responses

| Q29-How useful do you think this course will be your career? | | | | |
|--|--|--------|--|--------|
| | Pre-Survey Responses Spring 2023(N=31) fall 2023 data is unavailable | | Post-Survey Responses Fall 2022 and Spring 2023 (N=54) | |
| | n | % | n | % |
| Does not believe course material will be beneficial to their career | 0 | 0% | 3 | 5.56% |
| Neutral experience with taking the course and is unclear how course material will benefit their career in which the guest speaker intervention was conducted | 0 | 0% | 1 | 1.85% |
| Neutral experience with taking the course in which the Guest Speaker intervention was conducted | 0 | 0% | 3 | 5.56% |
| Positive experience taking the course in which the Guest Speaker intervention was conducted | 4 | 12.90% | 12 | 22.22% |
| Positive experience with taking the course in which the Guest Speaker intervention was conducted and believes the course will be beneficial to their career | 27 | 87.10% | 35 | 64.81% |

ended textual responses related to student perceptions of the usefulness of the course in which the guest speaker intervention was conducted, the provided data includes results from two surveys. The given data represents the responses from the pre-survey conducted in Spring 2023 (N=31) and Fall 2022 and the post-survey conducted in Spring 2023 (N=54), respectively. The pre-survey data indicates that 87.1%

of respondents had a positive experience with taking the course in which the guest speaker intervention was conducted and they believe the course will be a benefit to their careers. None of them believed that the course material would not be beneficial to their career. In the post-survey data, some changes in responses were observed. While the percentage of respondents who had a positive experience taking the course in which

the Guest Speaker intervention was conducted increased to 22.22%, the percentage of those who had a neutral experience with the course material and were unclear about its benefits is 1.85%. However, the percentage of respondents who did not believe that the course material would be beneficial to their career is 5.56%. Additionally, most respondents in both surveys who had a positive experience with taking the course in which the Guest Speaker intervention was conducted believed that the course material would be beneficial to their career. In the pre-survey, 87.10% of respondents held this belief, while in the post-survey, 64.81% of respondents held this belief.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1. Discussion

The findings from this study demonstrate the value and benefits of college students being exposed to guest speakers in the classroom environment. The results demonstrate that guest speakers have a positive impact on student intellectual and career development that can be measured using both quantitative and qualitative data. More importantly, I find that agreeableness, confidence, and knowledge towards student learning outcomes and career preparation increases in a positive direction within a semester because of guest speaker presentations and meetings with students. Ultimately, I find that students benefit the most when guest speakers can connect their presentations to career and professional guidance for students still exploring career paths and trying to understand professional standards, hiring practices, and workplace culture.

The results in Table 3, demonstrate that in the pre-survey results, a high percentage of students reported not receiving any professional guidance, with other professors being the second most indicated source of guidance. In the post-survey results, the percentage of students who reported receiving guidance from the Career Development Center increased (from 10.00% to 14.29%), while the proportion of students who had not received any professional guidance decreased (44.17% to 34.29%). Other professors became the most frequently cited source of guidance and increased between the pre- and post-survey (27.50% to 40.00%). In Table 3, the data also shows that there was a substantial increase in the number of students who had viewed guest speakers related to criminal justice career options in their degree program between the pre- and post-survey (27.50% to 91.43%). This percentage

increase aligns with the successful implementation of the proposed guest speaker intervention.

The data provided in Table 4 and Figures 3 to 6 (see Appendix A) relates to respondents' knowledge about the following indicators: *career opportunities*, *job description requirements*, *salary/benefits*, and *ability for promotion/advancement within this field*. For *career opportunities*, I observed in the post-survey that the percentage of those who reported being very knowledgeable increased from 14.05% in the pre-survey to 25.71% in the post-survey. Similarly, I observed an increase in the percentage of respondents indicating very knowledgeable between the pre- and post-survey for the other indicators as well: *job description* (17.36% to 25.71%), *requirements*, *salary/benefits* (13.22% to 20.29%), and the *ability for promotion/advancement within this field* (12.50% to 18.57%).

The data provided in Table 5 and Figures 7 to 10 (see Appendix A) relates to respondents' confidence in the indicators: *critical thinking*, *communication*, *time management*, and *organization*. For *critical thinking*, I observed that the percentage of those who reported being very confident increased from 28.93% in the pre-survey to 37.14% in the post-survey. I observe in the analysis of *time management* that the percentages for somewhat confident (48.57%) and very confident (35.71%) increased compared to the pre-survey responses. Furthermore, when I analyze respondents' confidence in the *organization* I find that the percentages for somewhat confident (44.29%) increased compared to the pre-survey responses.

The data provided in Table 6 and Figures 11 to 13 (see Appendix A) relates to respondents' agreement for the indicators: (q16) development and mastery of professional skills, (q21) guest speakers helping me with understanding career options, (q22) and the instructor provided me with a range of guest speakers for helping me understand career options. For question 16, which asked about agreement regarding the development and mastery of professional skills during university, the pre-survey had 76 respondents with 76.23% agreeing (26.23% strongly agreed, 50.00% somewhat agreed), while the post-survey had 70 respondents with 78.57% agreeing (25.71% strongly agreed, 52.86% somewhat agreed). For question 21, which asked about the instructor providing a range of guest speaker presentations helping to provide a better understanding of career options, the pre-survey had 39 respondents with 38.46% agreeing (10.26% strongly

agreed, 28.21% agreed), while the post-survey had 70 respondents with 72.86% agreeing (21.43% strongly agreed, 51.43% agreed). For question 22, which asked about guest speaker presentations helping to provide a better understanding of career options available after graduation, the pre-survey had 39 respondents with 17.95% agreeing and 58.97% neither agreeing nor disagreeing, while the post-survey had 69 respondents with 52.17% agreeing and 34.78% neither agreeing nor disagreeing. Overall, the data suggests that there was an increase in agreement among respondents regarding the usefulness of guest speaker presentations in providing a better understanding of career options, while the agreement level remained high for professional skills development throughout both surveys.

The qualitative data analysis of open-ended textual responses has provided us with an opportunity to examine how guest speaker presentations impact professional development and career knowledge for students enrolled in criminal justice courses. I coded the open-ended responses to measure the students' sentiments, attitudes, and perceptions of the guest speaker presentations. For question 26, Table 7 and Figure 14 (see Appendix A) examine student attitudes toward attending guest speaker presentations for their careers, based on coded responses from two surveys. I find that in both the pre and post-surveys that a large majority of participants supported guest speaker opportunities, with 78.79% in the pre-survey and 80.39% in the post-survey. This suggests that guest speakers are valuable to participants. For question 27, Table 8, and Figure 15 (see Appendix A), in the pre-survey 35.71% of students reported that they learned lessons from the guest speaker, and 7.14% found the stories to be informative. In the post-survey responses, 24.49% expressed interest in job and career options, 36.73% learned lessons from the guest speaker, 16.33% found resources for the application and hiring process, and 6.12% reported a positive experience.

For question 28, Table 9, and Figure 16, when measuring student satisfaction with guest speakers, I observe that in the pre-survey responses during Spring 2023, 26.09% did not attend or receive a guest speaker opportunity, 21.74% had a positive experience viewing a guest speaker presentation outside of the course, and 34.78% had a positive experience viewing guest speakers in general. In comparison, post-survey responses were collected during Fall 2022 and Spring 2023, and only 4.55% did not attend or receive a guest speaker opportunity, and 38.64% of students had a

positive experience viewing guest speakers in general. Moreover, 20.45% of students had a positive experience viewing the Correctional Officer presentation, 22.73% had a positive experience viewing the Probation Officer presentation, and 6.82% had a positive experience viewing the Public Defenders presentation. None of the post-survey respondents recalled a negative or positive experience with guest speakers from the past. In conclusion, the post-survey results suggest that more students had a positive experience with guest speaker presentations compared to the pre-survey responses, and specific guest speaker presentations, such as those by Correctional Officers and Probation Officers, were particularly well-received.

Finally, in question 29, Table 10, and Figure 17 (see Appendix A), I examine student perceptions of the usefulness of the course for their careers. In the pre-survey, 87.1% of respondents had a positive experience taking the course in which the Guest Speaker intervention was conducted, and all of them believed that the course material would be beneficial to their careers. Most respondents in both the pre- and post-surveys who had a positive experience believed that the course material would be beneficial to their career, with 87.10% holding this belief in the pre-survey and 64.81% holding it in the post-survey.

The findings from this research study support the use of guest speakers in the classroom for criminal justice students because it helps the students build confidence and knowledge with pursuing careers and professional development opportunities. Furthermore, I observe that students who attend guest speaker opportunities have positive sentiments, perceptions, and attitudes towards the courses they are enrolled in. Students who attended guest speaker presentations reported high levels of confidence in developing academic skills related to critical thinking, communication, and articulation of ideas, time management, and organization.

Therefore, I believe that the guest speaker intervention had a substantially measurable and positive impact on facilitating both the professional and academic development of students enrolled in criminal justice courses. Both intervention outcomes ultimately benefit the general public by contributing to the professionalization and intellectualization of the criminal justice career. The professionalization of the criminal justice career is the process of establishing and promoting standards of education, training, and

ethics within the criminal justice field. This includes efforts to create a college-educated and highly trained law enforcement professional workforce, as well as to establish professional ethical codes and standards of conduct among all criminal justice professionals. As a result of an increasing number of incidents and court cases related to police violence, deadly use of force incidents, and the capturing of body camera- and smartphone- footage and through the widespread public exposure of incidents through social- and news-media coverage the general public continues to demand accountability and increased professionalization of the criminal justice profession. The goal of these efforts is to enhance the quality of justice delivered to the public, while also improving the overall reputation and credibility of the criminal justice system. I believe that guest speaker presentations from the various actors within the criminal justice system, along with members of the general public, victims of crime, and those who have had direct contact with the criminal justice system through incarceration, deportation, or being a victim of criminal justice violence can provide a valuable opportunity for both the academic and professional growth of college students seeking to pursue criminal justice career pathways.

6.2. Limitations

A major limitation of this study was the inability to match participants across both the pre- and post-survey for each semester. Because I did not match students across the pre- and post-survey, I limited the analysis and results by providing only exploratory descriptive statistics and I did not attempt to conduct any statistical tests due to violating the multiple assumptions of dependent samples *t*-test. Due to design- and ethical- limitations with the sampling strategy, I believe this study may lack external validity and the findings may not be generalizable to other criminal justice students in other college degree programs.

6.3. Policy Implications

Based on the findings from my research I recommend that guest speakers remain a routine part of the curriculum for Criminal Justice programs and courses in higher educational institutions. The findings demonstrate that students' knowledge, confidence, and agreement with their academic- and professional- skills development substantially increase and positively impact students' perceptions and sentiments towards their college experience. Guest speakers are a High

Impact Practice that facilitates student success and engagement by allowing for networking with professionals for career guidance, provides knowledge about internships and service-learning opportunities, and provides the real-world application of theories, concepts, research, and policies discussed in course materials and course lectures.

Furthermore, criminal justice programs should aim to have an advisory board that is composed of a diverse range of members from within the community and the criminal justice profession that can supply a pool of potential guest speakers for criminal justice courses. I believe that an advisory board panel that is diverse and well-rounded, would provide students with multiple perspectives and experiences with regard to the operations and social justice issues impacting the criminal justice system. An ideal advisory board panel may include leaders or staff from local government, law enforcement, probation, parole, corrections, court administration, prosecutors, defense attorneys, coroner's office, forensic experts, formerly incarcerated, journalists, community-based organizations, civil rights organizations, immigrant advocacy groups, and social workers.

6.4. Future Research

I recommend that future research on this topic include examining student attitudes and sentiments toward guest speakers enrolled in master's and doctoral programs in criminal justice and criminology. Also, future research should include a structured experimental design with both a treatment and control group to determine the strength of the guest speaker intervention on impacting student knowledge, confidence, and agreement towards their academic- and professional- skills development.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board at California State University, Stanislaus on 8/22/2022 (IRB Protocol Number: 2223-006).

DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest concerning the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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11. APPENDIX A



Figure 1: Sources of professional and career guidance.

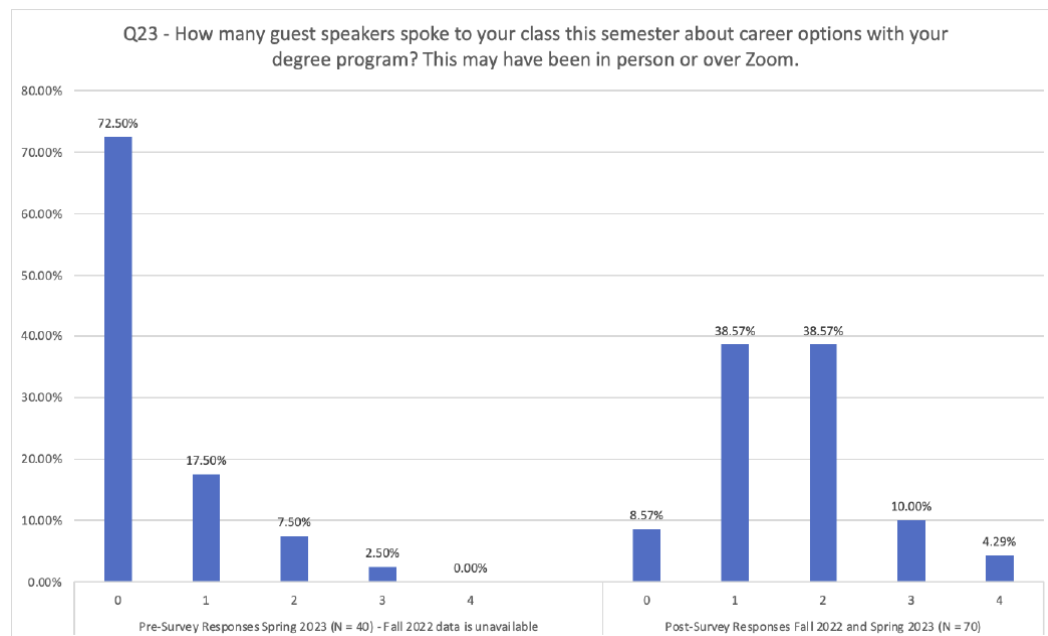


Figure 2: Respondents indicating the number of guest speakers they viewed in their course.

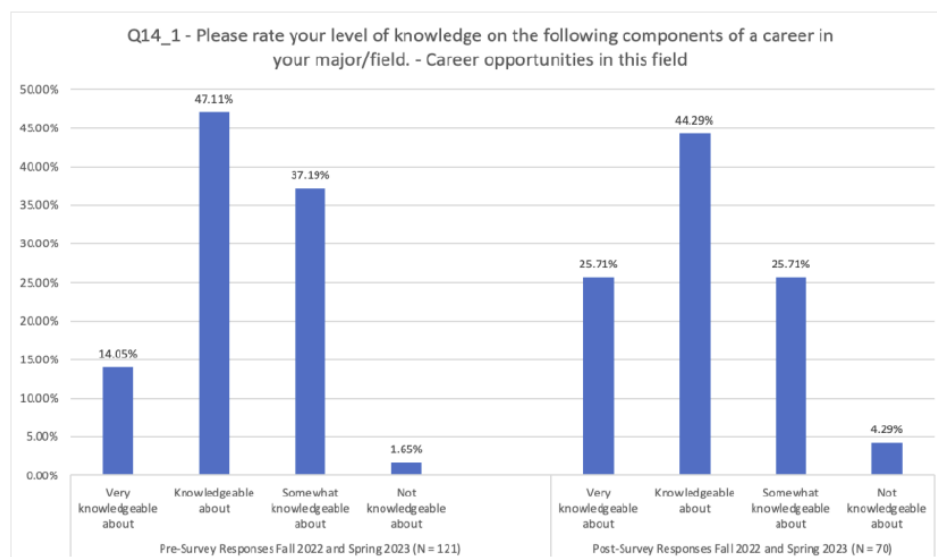


Figure 3: Rating level of knowledge about career opportunities.

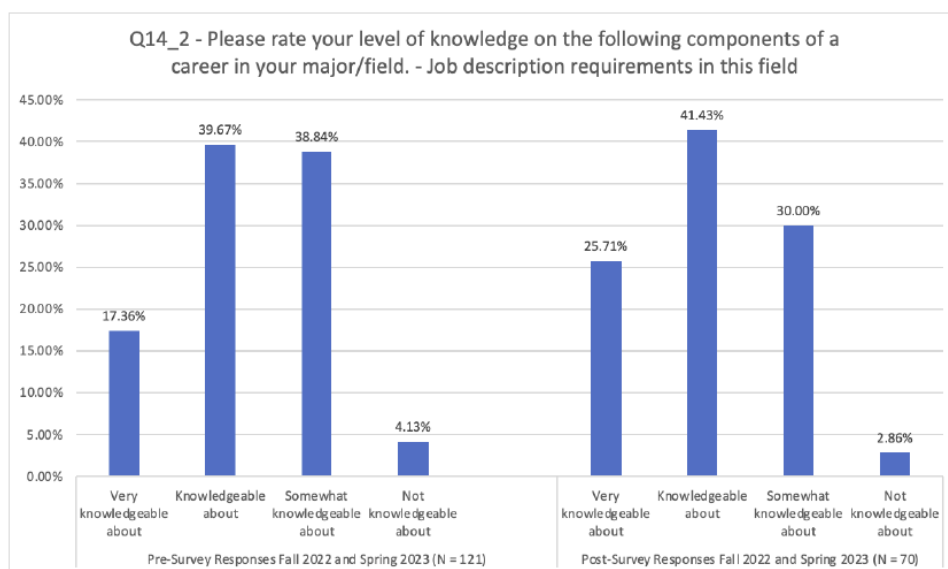


Figure 4: Rating level of knowledge about job description requirements.

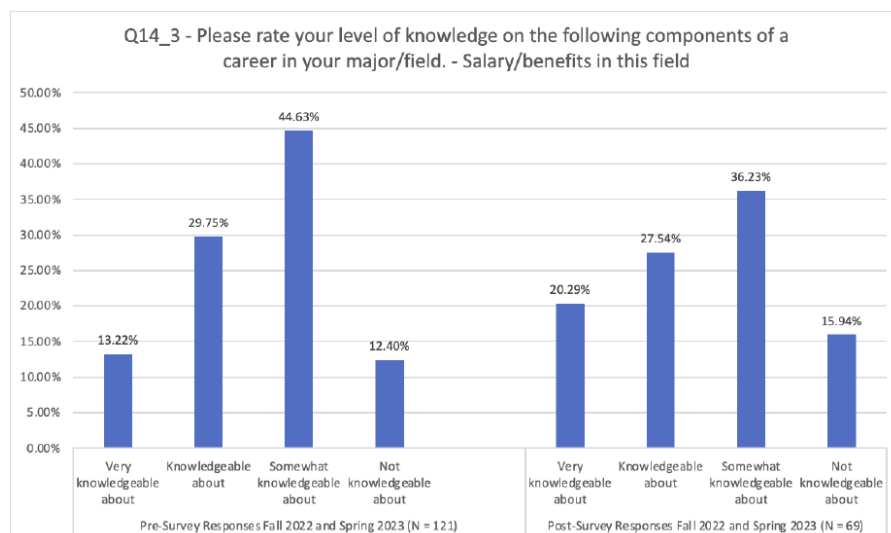


Figure 5: Rating level of knowledge about salary and benefits.

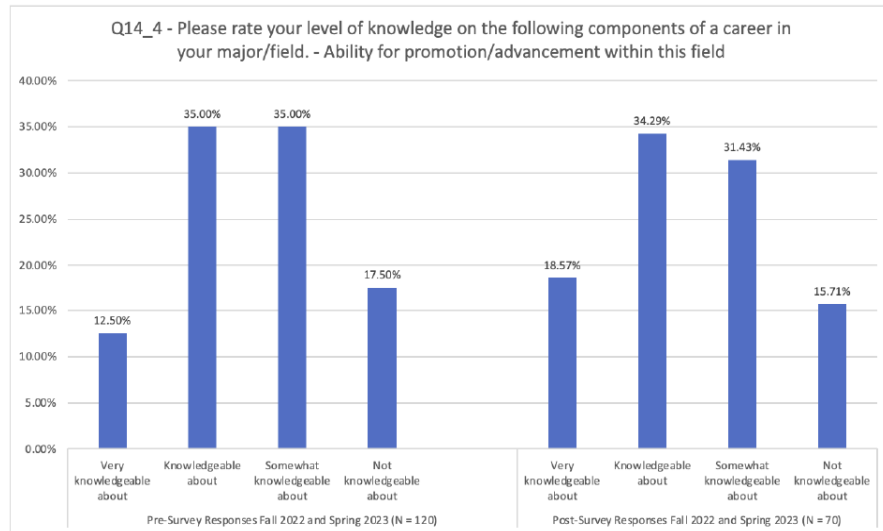


Figure 6: Rating level of knowledge about ability for promotion and advancement.

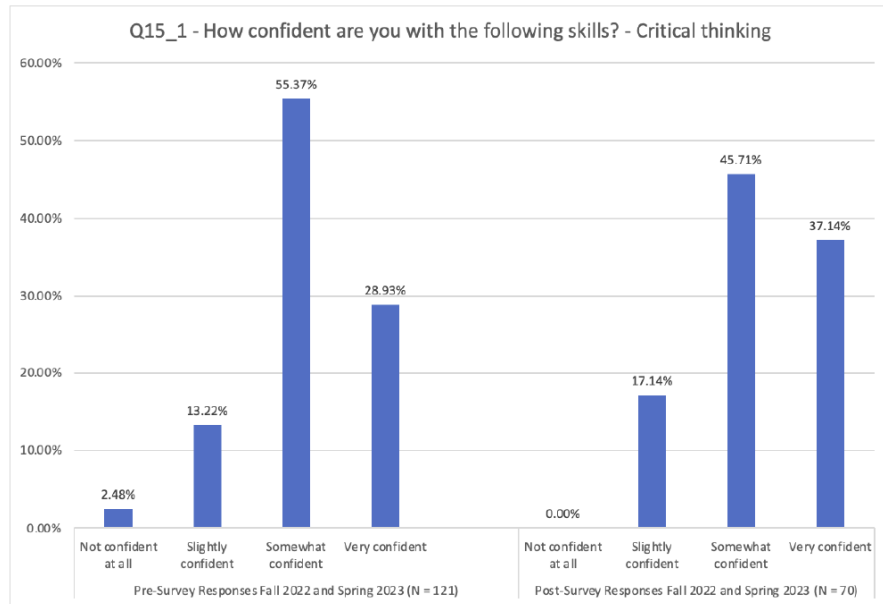


Figure 7: Rating level of confidence in critical thinking.

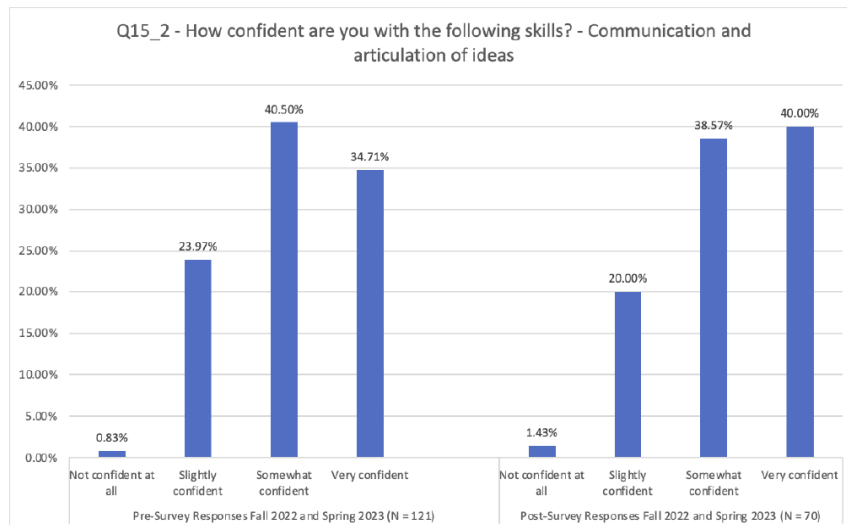


Figure 8: Rating level of confidence in communication and articulation of ideas.

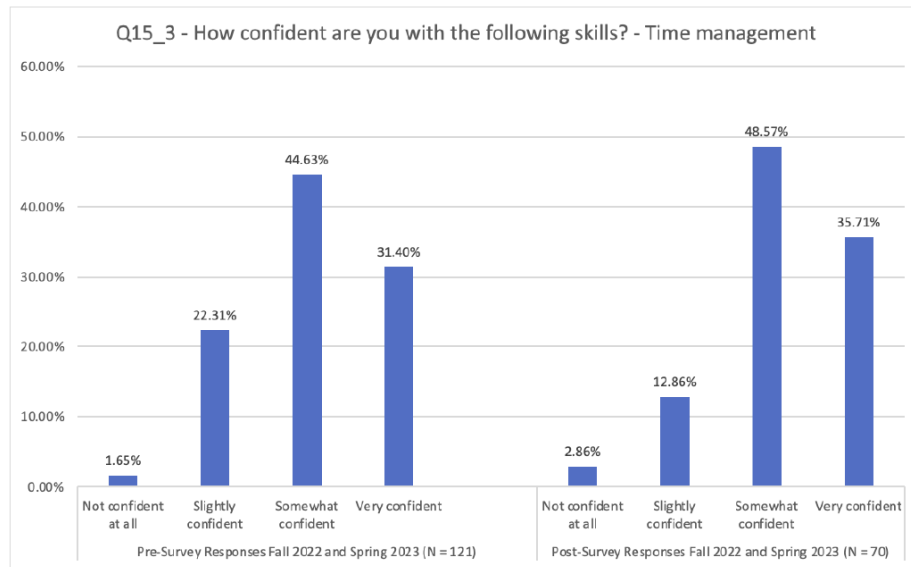


Figure 9: Rating level of confidence in time management.

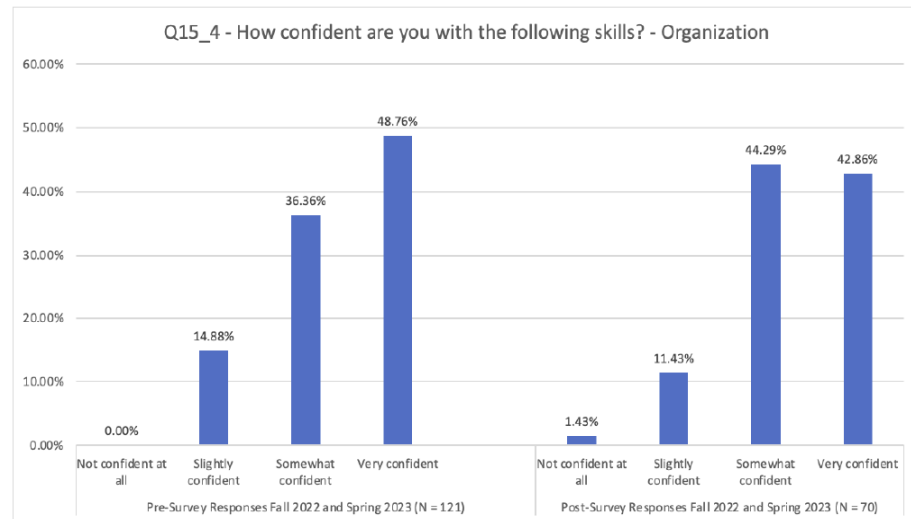


Figure 10: Rating level of confidence in organization.

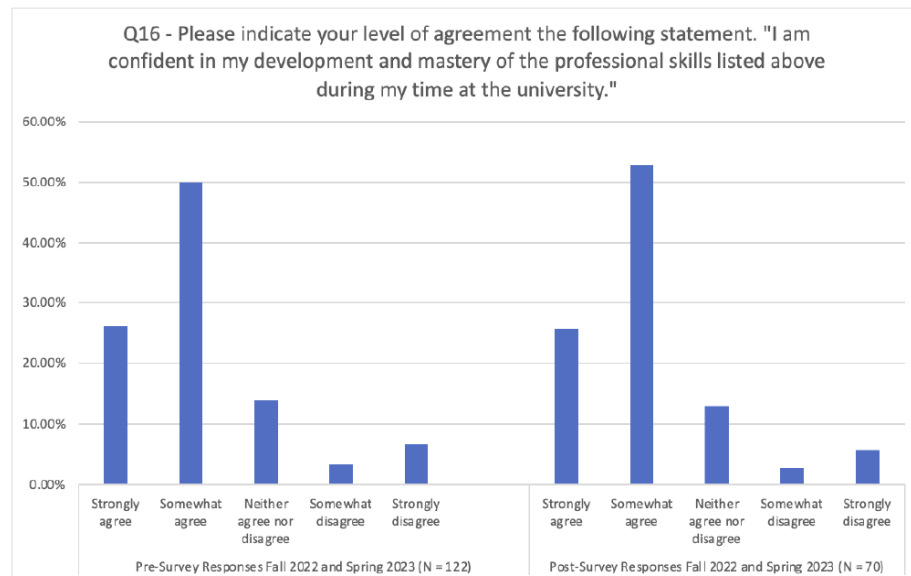


Figure 11: Rating level of confidence in mastery of professional skills development at University.

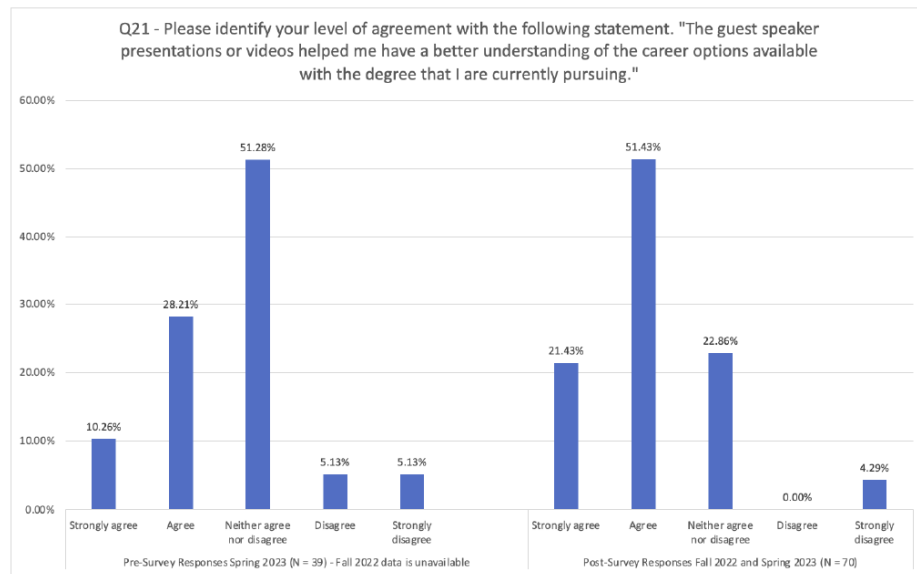


Figure 12: Rating level of agreement related to guest speaker presentations providing a better understanding of career options with having a college degree.

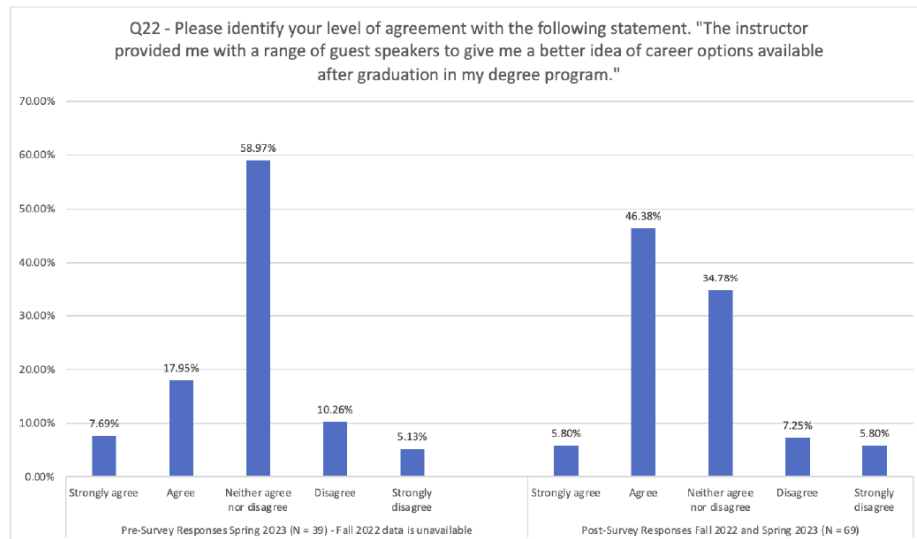


Figure 13: Rating level of agreement related to the instructor providing guest speaker opportunities.

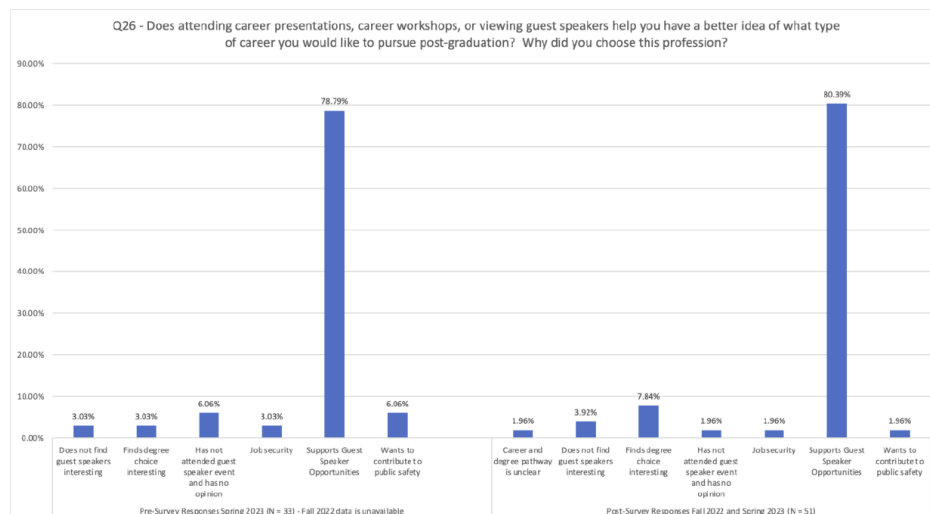


Figure 14: Coded responses for examining students' perceptions of career presentations and guest speaker events.

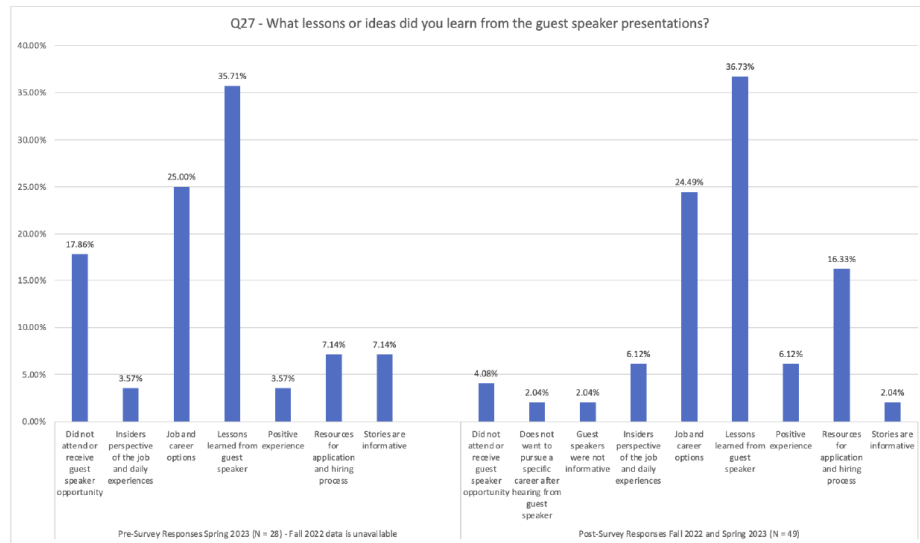


Figure 15: Coded responses for examining students' perceptions of lessons or ideas learned during guest speaker presentations.

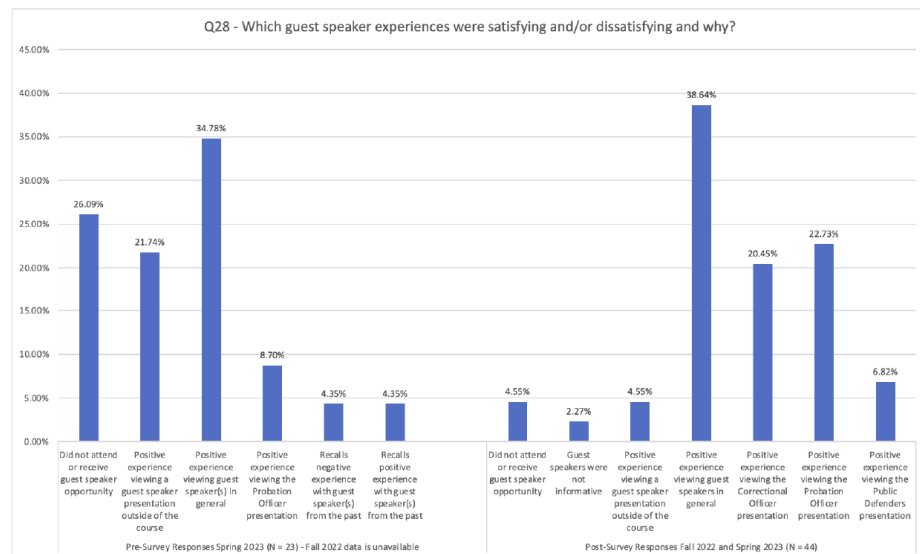


Figure 16: Coded responses for examining students' perceptions of satisfaction with guest speakers.

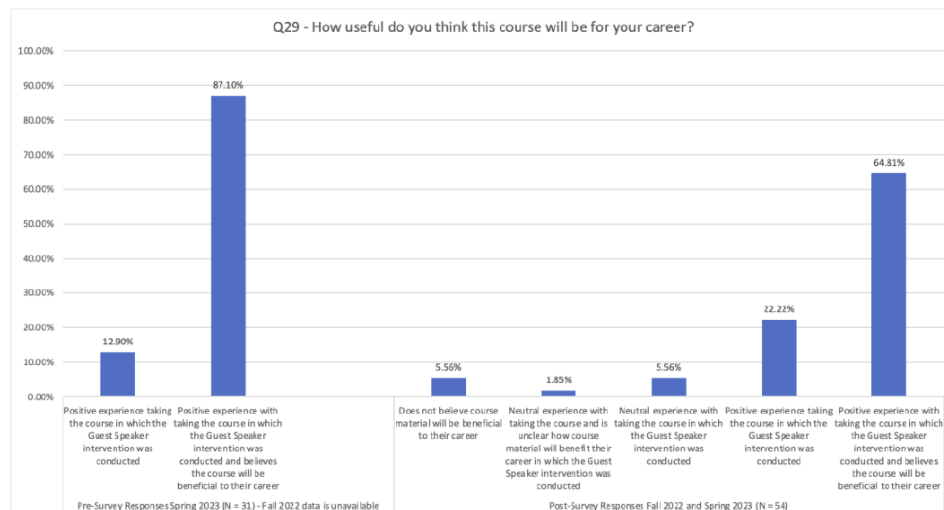


Figure 17: Coded responses for examining students' perceptions of usefulness of the course in which the Guest Speaker intervention was conducted.

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