

“I’d Like My Life Back”:

BP, Aristotle, and

Negative Messages with Integrity

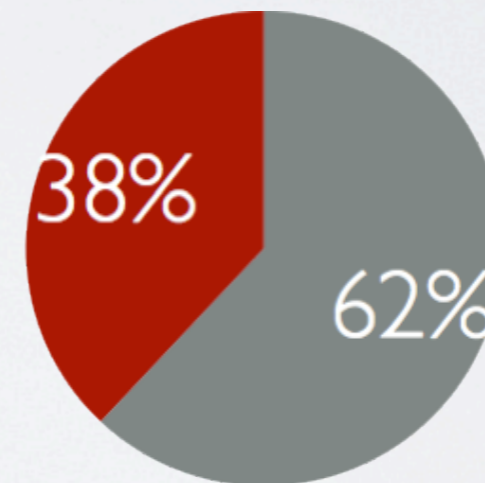
Ryan Sloan

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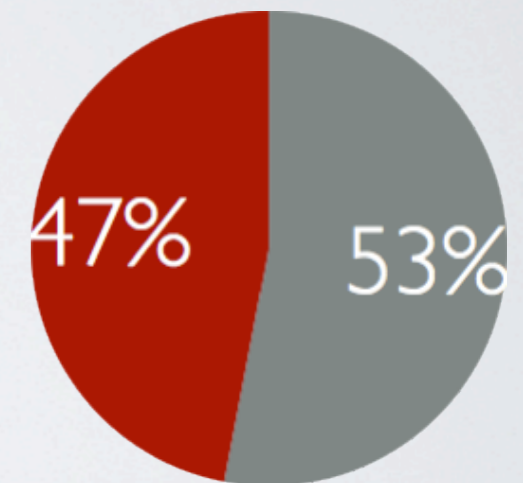
University of San Francisco

# Arum & Roska findings:

Less Studying:  
% of seniors who say they spend  
fewer than 11 hours a week  
preparing for class



All seniors



Business  
majors

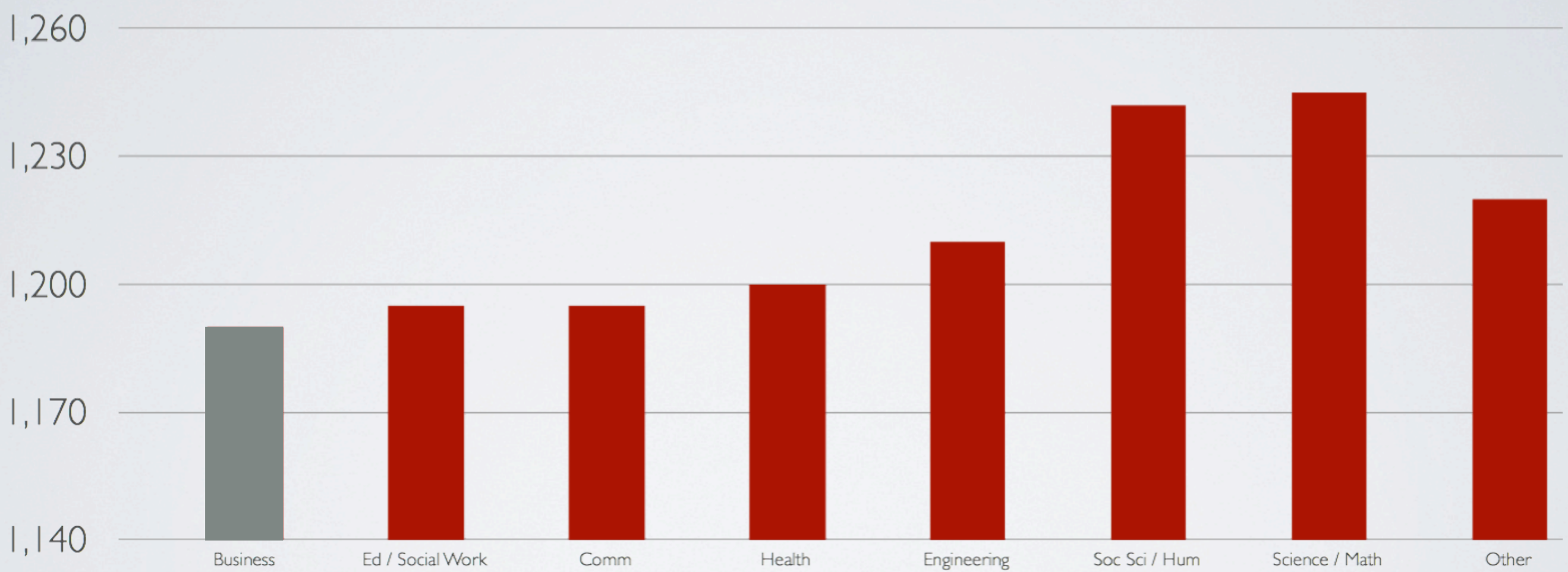
Academically  
*adrift*

Limited Learning on College Campuses

Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa



# Business students had the weakest gains in critical thinking



Business: 1123

Arum & Roska 2011  
Predicted 2009 CLA Scores by College Major  
Scale 800-1600

Studies suggest the emphasis in UG Business programs on team projects over individual writing may **significantly impede** development of written and analytical skills



Employers report a preference for non-business graduates because they can “write coherently and think creatively”

(Glenn 2011)





# MBA programs are renewing an emphasis on writing

New M.B.A. hires "tend to talk about their analytical methods to show they are good at their jobs," says Angela Rassi, a marketing manager on General Mills' recruiting team. "What we really want to talk about are the **implications of the research.**"

Former Securities and Exchange Commission chairman Arthur Levitt complains that business writing is usually incomprehensible to readers. "It **lacks color and nuance**, and it's not terribly interesting to read," he says.

Middleton 2011

## GMAT Scores:

Engineering: 590

Social Science: 565

Science: 564

Humanities: 544

## Business-Commerce: 524

... Finance: 555

... Accounting: 520

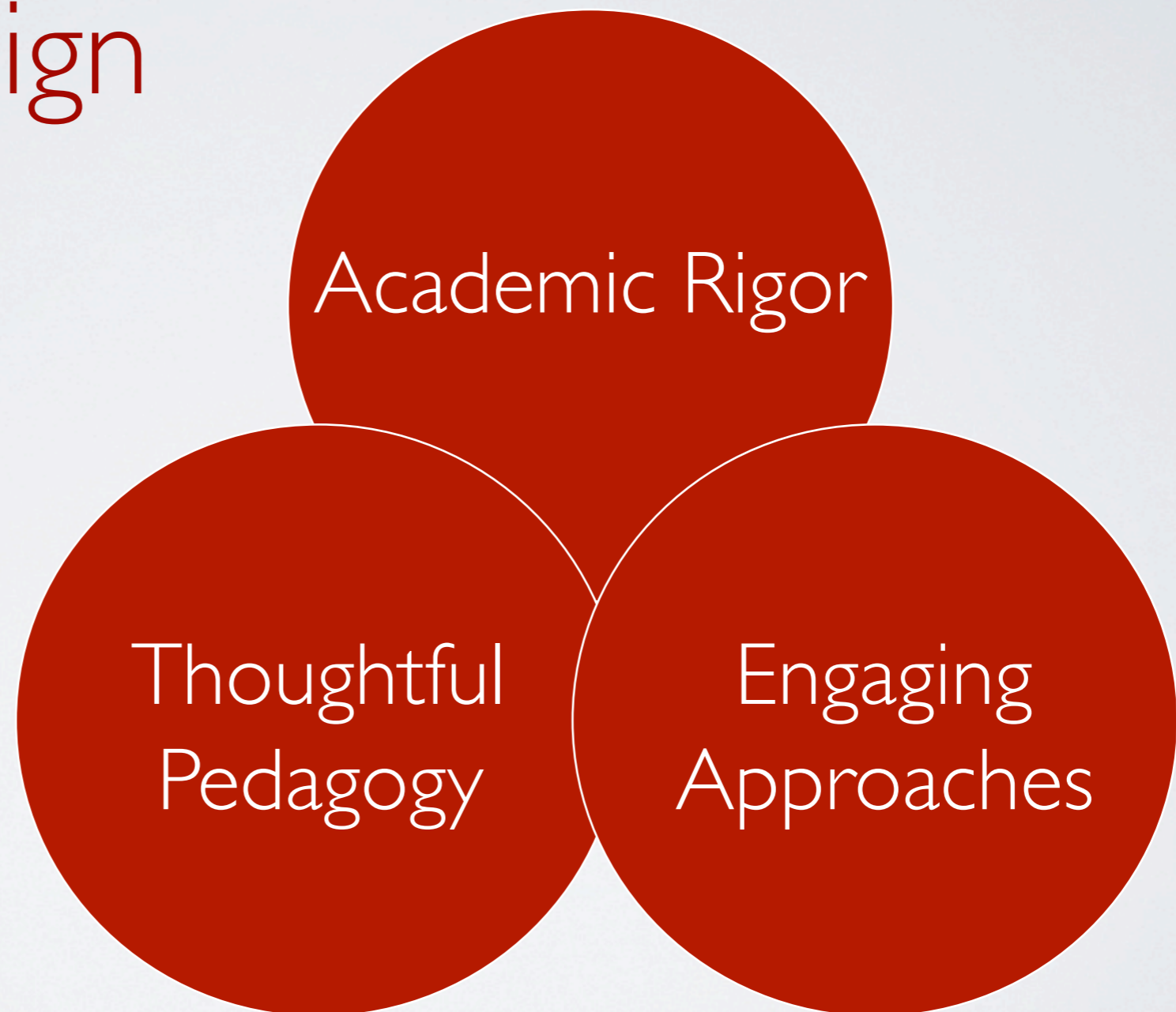
... Management: 503

... Marketing: 493



Distinct opportunity for teachers of  
business communications to shape this  
debate

# Engagement at the Level of Course Design







# CROSSING PLATFORMS

Negative Messages project framed by BP oil spill:  
email, corporate blog, Twitter & Facebook social  
networking





*“a mesmerizing ballet at sea”*

BP's corporate blog reflected its early messaging:  
**tone-deaf spin, little credibility** with stakeholders





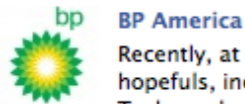
BP America

Like

Energy/Utility



Wall



BP America

Recently, at an elementary school in Indiana, BP gathered several Olympic hopefuls, including Table Tennis players Ariel Hsing and Tim Wang, and Taekwondo hopefuls Gregory English and Michelle Silva. These athletes brought some valuable lessons to the students: Never give up; whether you're short or tall, a boy or a girl, if you work hard, you can do anything to which you set your mind.



**U.S. Olympic hopefuls tell Northwest Indiana students: Never Give Up**  
[www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

BP and Whiting Refinery gathered U.S. Olympic Team hopefuls Ariel Hsing and Tim Wang (table tennis) and Gregory English and Michelle Silva (taekwondo), to te...

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BP\_America Official BP

#BP gathers #Olympic hopefuls at #Indiana elementary school to teach lessons about tenacity, hard work: [ow.ly/71cXz](http://ow.ly/71cXz)

19 minutes ago



BP\_America Official BP

(Video) Vendors at National #Shrimp Festival in #Gulf Shores, #Alabama report record sales: [ow.ly/719Im](http://ow.ly/719Im) #seafood

1 hour ago

Student practice assignment:

crafting a multi-platform Corporate Comm strategy, using an appropriate mixture of logos, ethos & pathos





bp 1

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** All Employees  
**FROM:** Akinola Marinho, President  
**DATE:** March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011  
**SUBJECT:** Company Restructuring

It is no secret that our company has struggled lately. The economic downturn and the aggressiveness of our competitors have contributed to the most significant drop in sales revenue in our forty-year history. As a result, the company has had to make some very hard decisions to both ensure our survival and to safeguard our relevance in the industry. We all will be affected by these decisions, some more than others.

Given our drop in revenue, the most important thing we have to do is cut our costs. We announced a suspension of bonuses for executives and a reduction in hours for our retail employees. The company implemented these measures hoping the results produced would stave off more drastic action. Although we did see some results from this company-wide sacrifice, we regrettably have to implement more drastic measures in order to cut costs because our debts are still higher than what we are making in revenue. These decisions were made as a last resort, given the impact they will have on the lives of some of our employees and their families.

The company has to file Chapter 11 bankruptcy. This, as you all can imagine, was by far the hardest decision management had to make in order for us to keep our doors open. We simply had no further avenues or options to explore. Effective immediately, 200 of our 500 superstores have to be liquidated. There is also the possibility of liquidating between 75 to 135 more. The revenue from these stores ~~is~~ the lowest company-wide but these stores had close to the highest rents of all our superstores. As a result, our accountants estimate we were losing close to \$2 million a day at these locations. Given the impact these closures will have on the lives of our employees, we tried to renegotiate the leases with our landlords but both parties could not arrive at mutually beneficial terms. Of the 6,000 jobs that will be affected, we will relocate as many employees as possible in other parts of the company. Those of you we cannot relocate will receive a fair severance package and I will take this time to thank you for all your contributions and service to our company. The stores were kept open as long as we could because we knew the negative impact a measure like this will have on you and your families. All options were fully

Delivering **bad news with integrity**,  
mindful of a **skeptical audience**,  
while **controlling the message** efficiently



## REFERENCES:

*Richard Arum & Josipa Roska, Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011.*

*David Glenn, "Business Educators Struggle to Put Students to Work," The Chronicle of Higher Education. 14 Apr, 2011.*

*Diana Middleton, "Students Struggle for Words: Business Schools Put More Emphasis on Writing Amid Employer Complaints," The Wall Street Journal. 3 Mar, 2011.*



For more detail:

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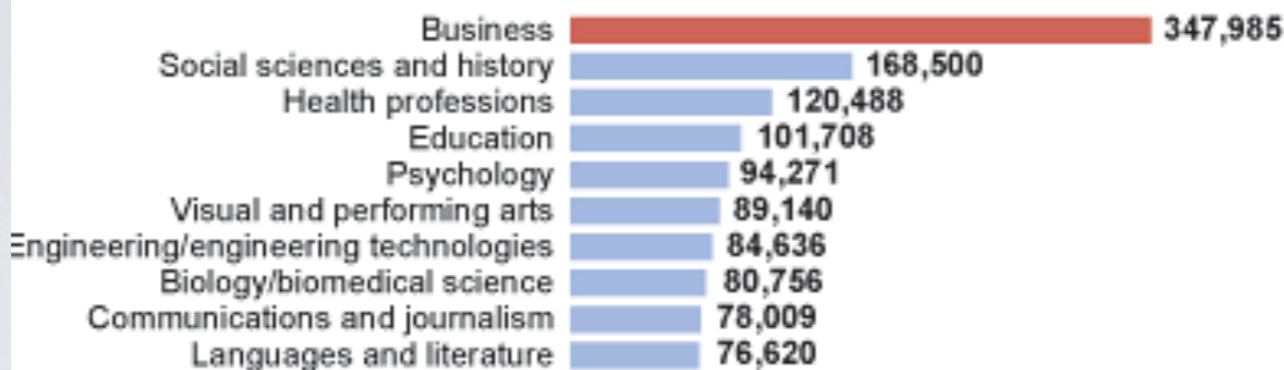


# Today's Business Majors: Options, Investment, and Futures

More undergraduates major in business—one in five of all degrees awarded in the United States—than in any other field. The students, though, fall behind other majors on assessments of writing, reading, and computational skills.

## MOST POPULAR:

Top 10 bachelor's degrees awarded by field of study, 2008-9

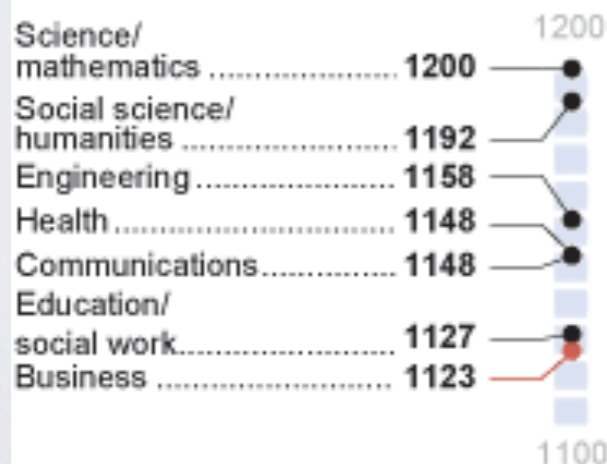


## LEAST LEARNING:

### CLA

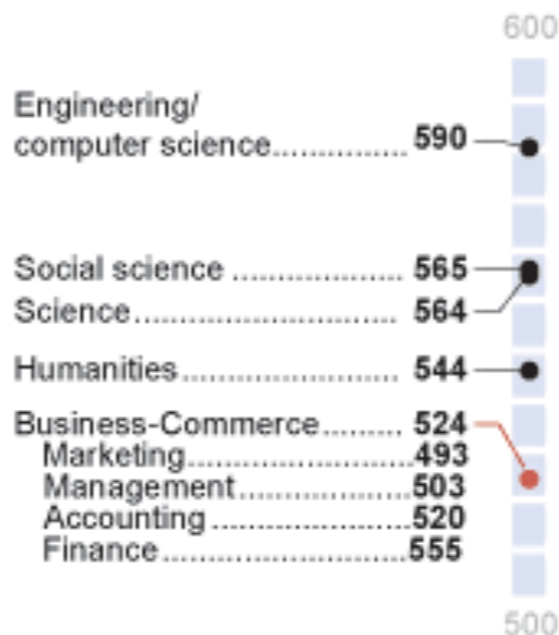
Scores by major on the Collegiate Learning Assessment's Performance Task, a test of writing and reasoning skills, after four semesters, controlling for first-semester scores.

Scale: 800 to 1600



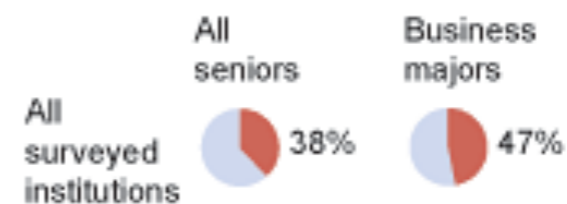
### GMAT

Mean scores on the Graduate Management Admission Test, 2009-10, by undergraduate major. Scale: 200 to 800

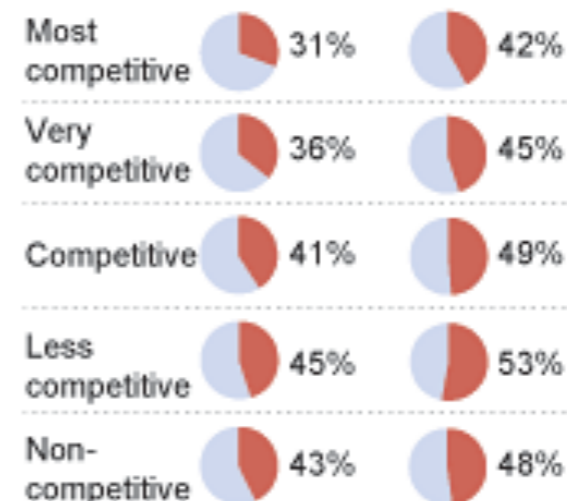


## LESS STUDYING:

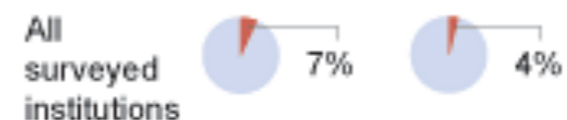
Percentage of seniors who say they spend fewer than 11 hours a week preparing for class



The pattern is consistent at colleges across all five levels of Barron's selectivity index



Percentage of seniors who say they spend more than 30 hours a week preparing for class



Sources: National Center for Education Statistics (degrees); National Survey of Student Engagement (studying); adapted from "Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses" by Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa (learning); Graduate Management Admission Council