

## Undergraduate Student Perceptions of Industry Guest Speakers in the College Classroom

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*Abstract: The use of guest speakers in college classes is a well-accepted pedagogical practice, but the academic literature has generally been based on instructors' or event organizers' anecdotal reflections about individual experiences. Research based upon student considerations of this practice has been especially sparse. The purpose of this study is to explore student perceptions of guest speakers to determine what value students find in them. A qualitative survey was administered to 114 students, who answered questions about their prior experiences with and expectations of industry guest speakers. The results showed that 86.1% of respondents who had previously been enrolled in a college class that featured an industry guest speaker liked the experience, especially if the guest currently worked in a field related to course content, spoke enthusiastically and honestly, and answered questions. In particular, participants appreciated hearing insider information about the speaker's day-to-day work life, as well as advice for their own career paths. Recommendations are provided to university educators as guidance for improving student experiences and engagement with guest speakers, especially those from the fashion industry.*

*Key words: education, pedagogy, industry speakers, student expectations, fashion, and apparel*

The use of guest speakers in college classes is a well-accepted pedagogical practice. Many educators expend significant effort in recruiting, organizing, and preparing for industry guest speakers. The academic literature is in agreement that guest speakers are important, with statements declaring that they offer “expert and insider testimonies to enrich the learning experience” (Eschbach et al., 2016, p. 142), they “can open students’ minds to varying viewpoints” (Payne et al., 2003, p. 336), and they make students “better prepared for either [graduate] school or working in a [discipline]-related environment” (Arnott, 2018, p. 158). But these proclamations, and others like them, have generally been based on the authors’ own perceptions, leaving faculty with only intuition on which to rely. Instructors may appreciate industry guest speaker visits, but do they, in fact, enhance the student learning experience? Do students value them as much as educators do? The purpose of this study was to explore student perceptions of guest speakers, specifically in undergraduate fashion and apparel classes.

### Literature Review

The scholarly literature related to industry guest speakers can be divided into several general categories. The first consists of reflections of the authors’ own involvement with either being a guest speaker or bringing one to class. McCleary and Weaver (2008), for example, concluded that the most successful hospitality industry speakers had the ability to relate their day-to-day workplace experiences to the topics studied in class. Payne et al. (2003) and Riebe et al. (2013) discussed who to consider as a potential guest speaker in the criminal justice and business classroom, respectively. Davis (2009) addressed faculty of all disciplines on how to best incorporate guest speakers into a course curriculum. Sources like these often promote particular pedagogical techniques that the authors believe will

increase the efficacy of guest speakers, such as Dalakas' (2016) requirement that his marketing students prepare complex, multi-part questions to be forwarded to speakers before their visits. Instead of asking them to plan their own presentations, Duening and Markiewicz (2013) conducted structured interviews with speakers in their business entrepreneurship courses. Tenenberg (2009) co-taught an entire computer science course with an industry guest. The data furnished in this category of articles are primarily anecdotal.

While incorporating a guest speaker visit into a single class session of a face-to-face course is common, little literature explores that framework; instead, researchers have concentrated on specialized occurrences. Thus, the second category in the guest speaker literature features studies analyzing the use of guest speakers in explicit contexts. For instance, Eveleth and Baker-Eveleth (2009), Hemphill and Hemphill (2007), Kumari (2001), and Li and Guo (2015) focused on asynchronous virtual guest speakers in online classes in a variety of disciplines (i.e., management, instructional technology, and information systems). Other scholars utilized guest speakers to aid students in completing a particular assignment. Guest lectures were one source of information for student papers in a public health policy course (Rooks & Holliman, 2018); they were also used in teacher education to enable development of students' teaching philosophy statements (Caukin & Brinthaup, 2017). Other studies have evaluated events with multiple guest speakers (e.g., panels, seminar series) in accounting (Metrejean et al., 2002), business (Riebe et al., 2013), and pharmacy (Zorek et al., 2011). These articles document ventures that were developed expressly to increase the employability of students and were often part of professional development activities rather than a traditional classroom environment.

The third category of articles evaluates multiple pedagogical techniques and simply considers guest speakers – and the assignments that surround a guest speaker's visit – as one among many. Some researchers examined instructors' perspectives, such as Rehm and Allison (2006), who explained that of family and consumer sciences instructors who utilize guest speakers, 72.5% perceived their effectiveness as high or very high. Others analyzed student perceptions, like Jimenez-Silva et al. (2019), who found that education students "generally stated that they had benefitted from the guest speakers" (p. 9), and Sadachar et al. (2017), who concluded that retail student attitudes towards assessment techniques, including reflections on guest speaker presentations, are significant predictors of perceived success in attaining course objectives. Karns (2005) compared marketing student perceptions in 1993 and 2004: In 1993, "guest speakers were found to be the most preferred learning activity" and were considered among the most effective as well (p. 164). Students in 2004 lauded guest speakers for being a link to the "real world" (Karns, 2005, p. 167). While these studies lend credence to the impression that guest speakers are valuable, they were all quantitative and by their very nature, did not explore the thinking behind these perceptions, leaving a void in the body of knowledge.

Another gap lies within the fields under study. The literature on guest speakers encompasses a wide range of disciplines, including chemistry (Zheng et al., 2018), education (Caukin & Brinthaup, 2017), foreign languages (Albirini, 2009), instructional technology (Hemphill & Hemphill, 2007), law (Payne et al., 2003), management (Eveleth & Baker-Eveleth, 2009), mass communication (Merle & Craig, 2017), nutrition (Conklin et al., 2005), psychology (Glenwick & Chabot, 1991), and tourism and hospitality (Casado, 2000). While Sadachar et al. (2017) included a cursory mention of guest speakers in an apparel merchandising class and Jablon-Roberts and McCracken (2022) addressed textile and apparel guest speakers solely through the lens of the virtual modality, no academic research has been discovered that investigated these students' perceptions and expectations of industry guest speakers in general. In response to this dearth of research, this study was developed, employing established qualitative research methods to explore student perceptions of industry guests who speak during a single session of fashion or apparel classes, to address the research question: "What value do students taking fashion and apparel courses find in industry guest speakers?"

## Methods

Because of the open-ended and “nondirectional” nature of the research question (Creswell, 2007, p. 107) and the desire to collect detailed, thoughtful data, a qualitative research method was adopted. Qualitative methodologies are appropriate when attempting to gain understanding of “participants’ perspectives, their meanings, [and] their subjective views” (Creswell, 2007, p. 38). Data were collected using an online survey with open-ended questions developed from the existing literature, the researchers’ previous experiences, and student feedback from prior guest speaker visits (see Table 1). There were also several closed-ended questions (e.g., “Has an industry guest speaker ever made you rethink or change your mind about an issue?”) and one 7-point Likert-type scale question (“In general, how much do you like when an industry guest speaker comes to your college class?” with responses from “Like a great deal” to “Dislike a great deal”). These questions were immediately followed by textboxes asking respondents to explain their answers. In addition, demographic questions were asked about age, year in school, gender, and status as a first-generation college student. For the purposes of this study, guest speakers were defined as professionals who work or have experience in the fashion, apparel, or related industries, rather than guests from the university, who might come to class to talk about the writing center or opportunities to study abroad, for instance.

**Table 1. Survey Questions.**

1.	What do you think is the purpose of an industry guest speaker in a college class?
2.	What are your expectations of an excellent industry guest speaker?
3.	Have any of your previous college classes included an industry guest speaker?
	If yes:
a.	When industry guest speaker(s) came to your previous college class, did the speaker(s) achieve the purpose you previously identified? Why or why not?
b.	In general, how much do you like when an industry guest speaker comes to your college class? Explain your answer.
c.	What is your favorite aspect of industry guest speakers?
d.	What is your least favorite aspect of industry guest speakers?
e.	What kinds of information do you learn from industry guest speakers?
f.	Has an industry guest speaker ever made you rethink or change your mind about a topic? Explain your answer.
4.	What additional thoughts do you have about industry guest speakers in college classes?
5.	Do you have any thoughts you’d like to share about this survey? Please share them here.

The sample for this study was comprised of students enrolled in the researchers’ undergraduate fashion and apparel courses at their respective institutions: a mid-sized private Northeastern (NE) university and a large public Midwestern (MW) university. After researchers received approval from their individual Institutional Review Boards, students in multiple courses (NE: Introduction to Retail, Visual Merchandising, and Fashion Forecasting; MW: Retail Merchandising and two sections of Fashion Styling) over two consecutive terms (Fall and Spring) were instructed to complete the survey via Qualtrics online survey software. If guest speakers were planned for a class, the survey was administered prior to the visit, so that students would answer questions based on their general perceptions rather than their opinions of any specific speaker. All students were required to complete the survey as part of coursework, but only students (aged 18 and older) who explicitly provided their consent had their responses included in the study. After the completion of the course

in which a student participant was enrolled, responses were stripped of identifiers, and the data were analyzed.

As a qualitative study, data were coded and evaluated for emergent themes, which were grouped into larger categories or divided into subthemes, when warranted. The researchers independently coded the first ten responses and then met to examine and discuss codes and definitions, resulting in a preliminary coding guide. They continued to code independently, meeting periodically to discuss and resolve discrepancies until agreement was reached. After each meeting, the coding guide was revised. The constant comparative method was employed throughout the process to contrast themes both within and between responses (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Ultimately, an inter-coder reliability rate of 89% was achieved, above the threshold recommended by Creswell (2007).

## Findings

Of the 114 undergraduate students who participated in the survey, similar numbers were enrolled at each institution: 55 at the NE university and 59 at the MW university (see Table 2). The sample at each institution was mostly comprised of individuals who identified as female (89.1% and 88.1%, respectively). The two samples did differ by year in school and age of participants. The NE sample included 23 (41.8%) first-year students, but the MW sample only included sophomores, juniors, and seniors. Similarly, 17 participants (30.9%) in the NE sample were 18 years old at the time of taking the survey, but there were no participants of that age in the MW sample. Additionally, more NE students were first-generation college students (36.4% versus 22.0% in the MW sample).

**Table 2. Student Participant Sample Characteristics.**

	NE University N (%)	MW University N (%)	Combined Data N (%)
<b>Total participants</b>	55 (48.2%)	59 (51.8%)	114 (100%)
<b>Gender<sup>1</sup></b>			
Female	49 (89.1%)	52 (88.1%)	101 (88.6%)
Male	6 (10.9%)	7 (11.9%)	13 (11.4%)
<b>Year in School</b>			
First-Years	23 (41.8%)	0	23 (20.2%)
Sophomores	5 (9.1%)	26 (44.1%)	31 (27.2%)
Juniors	12 (21.8%)	22 (37.3%)	34 (29.8%)
Seniors	15 (27.3%)	11 (18.6%)	26 (22.8%)
<b>Age</b>			
18	17 (30.9%)	0	17 (14.9%)
19	8 (14.5%)	21 (35.6%)	29 (25.4%)
20	9 (16.4%)	17 (28.8%)	26 (22.8%)
21	12 (21.8%)	11 (18.6%)	23 (20.2%)
22	7 (12.7%)	7 (11.9%)	14 (12.3%)
23	1 (1.8%)	1 (1.7%)	2 (1.8%)
24	0	2 (3.4%)	2 (1.8%)
27	1 (1.8%)	0	1 (0.9%)
<b>First Generation<sup>2</sup></b>			
Yes	20 (36.4%)	13 (22.0%)	33 (28.9%)
No	35 (63.6%)	46 (78.0%)	81 (71.1%)

<sup>1</sup>No other genders were self-identified by students.

<sup>2</sup>Defined as the first in the student's family to attend a four-year college or university.

Overall, 63.2% (n=72) of respondents had prior experience with an industry guest in class. Speakers had been chosen by individual course instructors because of their industry knowledge and connection to course content. Instructors typically recruited guest speakers through their personal networks, focusing on alumni when possible. Previous guest speakers included a founder/designer of a sustainable fashion company, a merchandiser from an international footwear and apparel company, and a fashion marketing executive. Here again there was variation between the two universities, as 47.2% (n=26) of the NE sample had not had an industry guest speaker in any college class, as compared to 27.1% (n=16) in the MW sample. Much of the discrepancy between the two groups of students may be explained by noting that 18 of the NE students with no class guest speaker experiences were first-year students, and the MW sample did not include any first-year students. Given that many of these NE students responded to the survey in the first term of their first year in higher education, it is perhaps unsurprising that they had not yet experienced a guest speaker.

Most students who had experienced one or more industry guest speakers in their college classes felt positively about the occurrence (86.1% overall) (see Table 3). There was some divergence between the two universities' samples: 93.1% of NE students liked industry guest speaker visits, as compared to 81.4% of the MW sample. Overall, 12.5% noted that they neither liked nor disliked the practice, and only one respondent actively disliked it, but only a little.

**Table 3. If you had previous visits from industry guest speakers in your college classes, how did you like the experience?**

	NE University N (%) (n=29)	MW University N (%) (n=43)	Combined Data N (%) (n=72)
Like a great deal	7 (24.1%)	11 (25.6%)	18 (25.0%)
Like a moderate amount	14 (48.3%)	16 (37.2%)	30 (41.7%)
Like a little	6 (20.7%)	8 (18.6%)	14 (19.4%)
Neither like nor dislike	2 (6.9%)	7 (16.3%)	9 (12.5%)
Dislike a little	0	1 (2.3%)	1 (1.4%)
Dislike a moderate amount	0	0	0
Dislike a great deal	0	0	0

While not every respondent had guest speakers visit their classes, each had their own expectations of them, and regardless of prior experience with speakers, student conclusions were similar. Therefore, all responses were considered with regards to the purpose(s) of inviting guest speakers to classes, how the practice could benefit students, what the conditions of an ideal encounter would be, and what characteristics an ideal speaker would have.

### *The Purpose of Guest Speakers*

For students in all samples (i.e., comparing across universities and courses, by demographic characteristic, and by prior experience with guest speakers), the primary purpose of an industry guest speaker was to provide career guidance and offer inside information thought to be known only to those working in the industry. Students frequently noted the importance of guests' expertise and insider status, as these resulted in "intimate knowledge" (Respondent 25MW) that qualified them to communicate "what it is really like to work in the fashion world" (Respondent 31NE). Gaining an understanding of the variety of roles in the field from someone currently working in the industry, as

well as the specifics of the speaker's own company, was important to respondents: "It's interesting to learn about how different companies are run and how different each one is," Respondent 5MW noted. Visitors could also open students' eyes to new industry roles: "Guest speakers are important in major classes. The right guest speaker piques interest in career paths students may not have considered previously" (Respondent 54NE). One student began to consider the sustainability focus of potential companies after a particular guest speaker:

In [a previous] class, we had a sustainable dyer, who basically did the entire process by herself but in a sustainable way, which made me think about how fast fashion isn't the only way to go in this industry. (Respondent 51NE)

Perhaps even more interesting to students, however, were personal stories of speakers' day-to-day work responsibilities. Students appreciated guests who "gave us an inside peek at a day in their lives at work" (Respondent 21MW) and hoped they could "learn about real situations that [speakers] deal with daily" (Respondent 52NE). The undergraduates also felt it was essential to hear from professionals who would detail their own career paths, or "the background story of how they got to this point" in their careers (Respondent 43NE). In fact, one respondent pointedly mentioned that her least favorite aspect of class visits was when guests did not include any personal anecdotes or experiences in their remarks.

Students usually sought to relate information learned from these visitors to their own career plans and possible future lives. In this way, guest speakers served as inspirations and role models to many students. Industry guest presentations could also act as encouragement: "Someone inside the industry com[ing] to talk...gets me excited for my future. It also gives me realistic plans and insight on how to accomplish my career goals" (Respondent 7MW). Respondents were especially insistent on getting targeted guidance from class guests, including "what to expect in the industry" (Respondent 56NE), "how we can use what we are learning to be better prepared for the workforce" (Respondent 42NE), "how to stand out when applying for jobs" (Respondent 48MW), and most plainly, "how to make it in the fashion world and be successful" (Respondent 22NE).

Several respondents implied that college students could feel a great deal of uncertainty in choosing the major best suited for them and that industry guest speakers could aid in reducing that anxiety. As Respondent 7NE said:

Some students may think that the degree they are studying for is exactly what they want to do for the rest of their lives. More than 50% of the time students end up changing their mind. Therefore, bringing in a guest speaker can present real-life experience and advice for that student and ultimately help them decide if they made the right choice.

Guest speaker encounters did indeed enable Respondent 24MW to reaffirm to herself the appropriateness of her course of study decisions and career aspirations: "I know this is the major for me every time a guest speaker comes to talk. It's reassuring." Alternatively, visits occasionally led students to reevaluate their course of study or career choices. A first-year student noted, "One guest speaker made me realize I want to do a minor in either marketing or advertising after seeing how important their job is in the retail world" (Respondent 16NE), and several students indicated they changed their career focus within the field because of a speaker.

Speakers provided new or alternate viewpoints, and participants perceived this different perspective as a complement to the textbook and instructor. "Although our professors give students great information to take into the 'real world,' it's different hearing someone outside of the teaching telling us about our field," said Respondent 53NE. Another student stated that while "textbooks and

online information [are] extremely helpful, getting a look into the ever-evolving and fast-moving fashion industry from someone who is currently working in it is an incredible extra resource for students” (Respondent 25MW). For some, the perspective of working industry professionals was more valuable than that of instructors, because they believe practitioners are “someone who has actually worked in the industry instead of just [university] employees” (Respondent 5MW), perhaps forgetting that faculty often have industry experience as well.

All of these concepts were put forth by students both with and without previous guest speaker experience. However, students who had guest speakers visit their classrooms also identified their purpose as directly linking the college curriculum to necessary workforce information. Respondent 26MW explicitly noted this, writing, “Most of the time the guest speakers are [graduates of this university], so they do the best job with proving that what we are learning in class is important.” Respondent 48NE stated similarly:

It's amazing hearing and having someone from the outside talk about everything the professor talked about in class. Makes it feel like the lectures were worth it and also gives a sense of verification that what is being taught is useful.

### *An Ideal Speaker and Visit*

Survey participants had an extensive list of descriptors to characterize both an ideal industry guest speaker and an ideal visit, and the specifications were similar across all samples. As noted above, students wanted guest speakers with knowledge and expertise as evidenced by both the speakers’ career history and by the fact that they were currently working in industry. Respondent 20NE concluded that “guest speakers should still be active in the industry, so that they can give up-to-date information about the field and how it is growing/changing.”

Survey participants were especially interested when a guest speaker’s career path and industry role aligned with the students’ own areas of interests and desired future. In their responses, students indicated that they want a highly personalized experience that would include career advice tailored to them, resulting in the desire to ask questions of the speaker as much as possible. Commenting on the visit of a professional who had served in a variety of management roles in major department stores, Respondent 40MW explained:

Since I am very interested in being a manager of a store or department, I saw it as an opportunity to ask questions. Whether they may seem dumb or repetitive, I just really want to understand what it is exactly he does for his job before I apply for real jobs and internships within my field.

Willingness to answer queries – being “open to any and all questions and responding with a detailed answer” (Respondent 55MW) – was critical to most survey participants. Respondent 4NE saw it as the best feature of a class visit, saying “my favorite part is being able to ask my personal questions. It really helps me engage with the speaker.”

However, a question-and-answer session was not all that students desired in a classroom visit. They also wanted speakers to fully prepare a structured presentation. Respondent 29NE hoped that any speaker’s “presentation is organized and well put together.” In addition, visits should include more than just speaking. Several students made similar statements to Respondent 35NE, who asserted that “visual aids or interactive components make the presentation more enjoyable.” Interestingly, this stipulation came only from students with previous guest speaker experience, who repeatedly rejected the idea of having the presentation “be formatted like a lecture” (Respondent 28NE).

Further, an ideal class guest should be an accomplished public speaker who is able hold the students' attention, because otherwise "some speakers ramble on and are hard to listen to" (Respondent 35MW) and are "tedious" (Respondent 2MW). Failure to achieve this standard was what Respondent 55NE liked the least about guest speaker visits; she decried speakers who delivered "dull and monotonous lectures that lack enthusiasm and inform like a research paper rather than something potentially interesting." Survey participants were often indignant when a guest speaker turned out to deliver an imperfect presentation, whether due to length, topic, or skill of delivery. Respondent 25MW wrote, "I also hold the same general expectations of guest speakers as my professors – professional manner and speaking manner." This was not an unusual perception among respondents.

Concomitant with the requirement of being a good public speaker were the traits of being engaging, friendly, and "happy to talk to us" (Respondent 11MW). One student detailed an undesirable speaker as embodying the opposite of these attributes:

My least favorite part is when... the presenter does not seem passionate about what they are speaking on. Especially when they are acting like the presentation is a chore and not something they are willing to do to educate students about the industry. (Respondent 28NE)

One personal trait that was deemed very important was honesty. Respondent 24MW implored, "Don't sugarcoat it if the job is hard or not, give it to us straight. That way we can be better prepared." Candidly discussing "what obstacles [speakers] faced and how to overcome them" were part of Respondent 7NE's expectations of an excellent industry guest speaker.

Students with prior guest speaker experience were also concerned by the fact that a given visitor might not address topics being covered in the class, which would take away from the learning otherwise happening in the course. Respondent 15NE mentioned both of these apprehensions, writing that one of the worst aspects of having industry guest speakers was "when [the visit] doesn't tie into our learning" and that "although helpful, sometimes having a guest speaker feels like it takes away from time where the professor can explain what we are learning in greater detail." Respondent 25MW said, "My least favorite aspect of industry guest speakers is the disturbance of the general class atmosphere and comfort of everyday class." In fact, the one student who disliked having guest speakers gave the same reason for his assessment: "It takes away from class time, in my opinion" (Respondent 57MW). Of course, other students in the sample with previous guest speaker visits liked them because of that very quality – "it breaks up the regular mundane [sic] of the classroom ... where the students aren't doing the same thing." Respondent 5MW thought "it's nice to hear from [guest speakers] if it's a company I have interest in"; if not, "I'd rather just have normal class."

Yet, although there were some caveats about the practice, inviting industry speakers into the college classroom was highly regarded. Almost 85% (n=61) of survey participants who had experienced an industry guest visit in a college class concluded that the speakers had fulfilled the students' expectations. In general, industry guests were perceived as useful additions to the regular course curriculum, "valuable resource[s]" (Respondent 2MW) that are "vital to learning" (Respondent 4NE).

## Discussion and Implications

Based on the themes that emerged during data analysis, it appears that students found a great deal of value in industry guest speakers. First, beyond just generally liking the experience itself, which more than 86% of respondents attested to, students evinced an unacknowledged but deeply held belief in the authority, wisdom, and general primacy of industry practitioners. Survey participants expected industry guest speakers to possess a profound depth and breadth of knowledge about their respective



career paths, current positions, and the overall industry; the capacity to offer suitable advice individualized to a given student; and a mastery of public speaking.

Students were so assured of the authority of guest speakers that listening to them could change their anticipated career path. In addition, when students saw course content linked to a professional's experience, it was seen as confirmation that the student was indeed making progress through coursework in becoming more informed about the industry. In this respect, the value of a guest speaker can be seen for students and educators alike, strengthening the trust of the latter by the former.

Some survey participants described feelings of uncertainty in relation to choosing a major or minor, and they were appreciative of those industry visits that either reassured them or offered ideas that might fit better with a given student's skillset and interests. Their responses suggest that students desire the road leading from choosing a college plan of study to establishing a successful career to be as straightforward and unhindered as possible. This finding supports the conclusion that this generation of college students "takes more ownership of their career than previous generations, and they want to know the clear-cut path to success" (Cornwell, 2019). This may arise from the fact that compared to the previous generation, current undergraduates tend to be much more aware of financial issues, as many of them were teens or preteens during the 2007-2009 recession and are now facing the specter of financial insecurity in their own lives, especially because of the cost of college and student loan debt (Hope, 2016; Ringwood, 2020) and COVID-related economic woes (Chen et al., 2022). Hearing the journey of a guest speaker can provide comfort to students fearing uncertainty in their future.

Therefore, to best serve students, educators might consider the following recommendations when selecting and preparing for a guest speaker (see Table 4). First, guest speakers should be professionals currently working in the industry associated with the course, in a position directly related to class content. Certain disciplines could include additional categories of people who would have deep knowledge of a particular topic. For example, suitable speakers in the criminal justice classroom could also include victims of crime and former offenders (Payne et al., 2003). Guests should be asked to speak enthusiastically and honestly about a typical day at work, pitfalls they have faced, and the path they took to arrive in their position. They should include personal stories and also might reflect on the most beneficial college courses they took. Additionally, speakers should increase engagement, an attribute desired by students, by bringing visual aids to show the class (e.g., examples of work products, photographs of work environments) or involving interactive activities. This is supported in the literature, as when Zheng et al. (2018) suggested that chemistry class speakers develop labs or other opportunities for active learning. Ample time allotted for questions is also recommended.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, in the classes following a guest's presentation, instructors should draw attention to the speaker's topics that linked to course content. While Eveleth and Baker-Eveleth (2009) reported that after speaker visits, their business students "never struggled" to connect the presentations to course content (p. 420), it is suggested that instructors be explicit about the relationship.

**Table 4. Recommendations for Selecting and Preparing an Industry Guest Speaker.**

1.	Ask students what they expect of/would like to see from a guest speaker
2.	Choose a speaker who:
a.	Is currently working in the industry associated with the course
b.	Has or had a career position related to course content
c.	Has important experience with the discipline or content but is not a practitioner themselves (e.g., not only physicians, but also patients)

<sup>1</sup> The researchers required students to prepare open-ended questions for guests beforehand. Future studies will analyze the efficacy of this assignment.

3.	Prepare guests to:
a.	Speak about –
	• A typical day
	• Personal stories
	• Career path
	• Career pitfalls
	• Their own college experience and how it relates to their current position
b.	Be enthusiastic and honest
c.	Bring visual aids
d.	Develop interactive activities
e.	Answer questions
4.	After the presentation, explicitly link speaker topics to class content

Finally, several respondents were excited and thankful that their professors were surveying them about this aspect of their college lives. As Respondent 10MW reflected, “I have found this survey interesting as I’ve never been asked these questions prior to this survey. It really made me ponder experiences I’ve had with guest speakers.” Respondent 48NE went so far as to say:

I really appreciate this survey. It shows that you are truly interested in what students think and value. It also shows you take your job and your role in our lives seriously. Thank you for wanting to maximize our experience in class the best way you possibly can.

Based on this finding, a last recommendation to educators is to ask their own students what they are looking for in a guest speaker, both to identify desires specific to unique cohorts and to let students feel part of the decision-making process.

#### *Limitations and Future Research*

The conclusions of this study are limited in their generalizability due to the small sample and its qualitative methodology. In addition, because the reviewed literature did not report results related to participant race and ethnicity, the researchers chose not to ask respondents about those aspects of their background. However, the study’s reliability is strengthened by the fact that similar responses were found regardless of university, course, demographic characteristic (i.e., gender, age, year in school, status as a first-generation student), and prior experience with guest speakers. Another limitation is that this study focused solely on guest speakers invited to speak in person to face-to-face fashion and apparel classes. The next stage of this research explored virtual guest speakers presenting via videoconferencing software (such as Zoom), an increasingly common occurrence, especially in light of the proliferation of remote learning because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Findings from these studies will offer guidance to university educators wishing to maximize the value of guest speaker experiences to students.

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