



Academic Skill Preparation & Importance

"I could not have asked for a better university experience. UCSB holds a very special place in my heart, and I will always appreciate the things I learned, the people I met, and the opportunities I was given to grow as an individual."

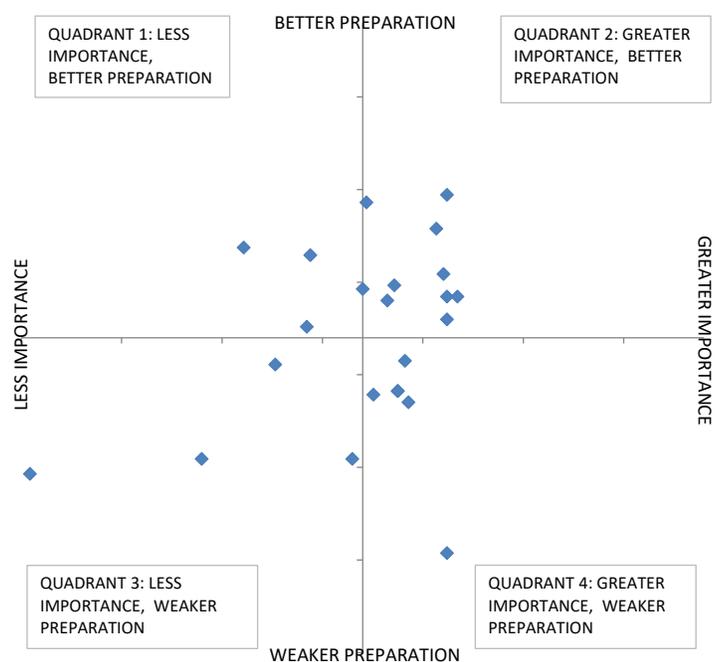
-UCSB alumnus, English major, Class of 2016

UC Santa Barbara students experience a comprehensive liberal arts education that helps them develop the broad skills of scholarly inquiry in a variety of disciplinary contexts (e.g. analysis, independent thought, critical reasoning, written and oral communication, quantitative and information literacy, etc.). The Undergraduate Alumni Survey collects indirect evidence of the value and quality of skill preparation provided by UCSB. Alumni are asked to rate the importance of various skill areas to their current activities ("very important," "somewhat important," "not important") and the level of preparation they received at UCSB in the same skills ("excellent," "more than adequate," "adequate," "less than adequate", "poor").

In this report, quadrant analysis is used to help identify gaps between the importance of various skill areas to alumni's current activities and the preparation UCSB provides in those same skills areas. Ratings are standardized and plotted on a quadrant showing the importance of each skill along the horizontal axis and the level of preparation received along the vertical axis, relative to the other skills listed. Below is a sample of how the results are plotted in a quadrant analysis and what the four quadrants represent.

- Skills that appear in Quadrant 1 are less important to alumni, yet UCSB provides satisfactory preparation in these areas.
- Skills in Quadrant 2 represent valuable strengths, receiving high ratings for both importance and preparation.
- Students are less prepared in the skill areas in Quadrant 3, but these skills are also not as essential to their current activities.
- Areas for improvement appear in Quadrant 4, where important skills receive weaker preparation ratings.

Figure 1. SAMPLE Quadrant Analysis Chart



Overall, undergraduate alumni are well prepared in all of the skill areas addressed in the survey. The majority of respondents report that UCSB provided “more than adequate” or “excellent” preparation in each skill.

Many of the skills are also considered “very important” by recent alumni – the most important being:

- problem solving skills
- the ability to acquire new skills on one’s own
- teamwork
- ability to get along with people of diverse backgrounds and perspectives
- effective speaking skills.

“The overall experience at UCSB was amazing. I wish I could return and learn more, or maybe double major just to get even more instruction from the wonderful faculty.”

-UCSB alumnus, Evolution, Ecology, and Marine

A quadrant analysis chart for all respondents is shown in Figure 2 on the following page. Relative to other skill areas, those that receive **higher ratings on both importance and preparation** (Quadrant 2) include:

- Ability to acquire new skills and knowledge on your own
- Effective writing skills
- Ability to judge the value of information, ideas, actions and conclusions based on the soundness of sources, methods and reasoning
- Problem solving skills
- Intellectual curiosity, or the desire to explore new topics, knowledge, or ideas in depth
- Ability to work as a member of a team or group
- Ability to get along with people of diverse backgrounds and perspective

“UCSB has an amazing culture. I loved being on campus and in IV. I was extremely happy there and had the best time of my life and received an amazing education. Wish I could do it all over again. ’

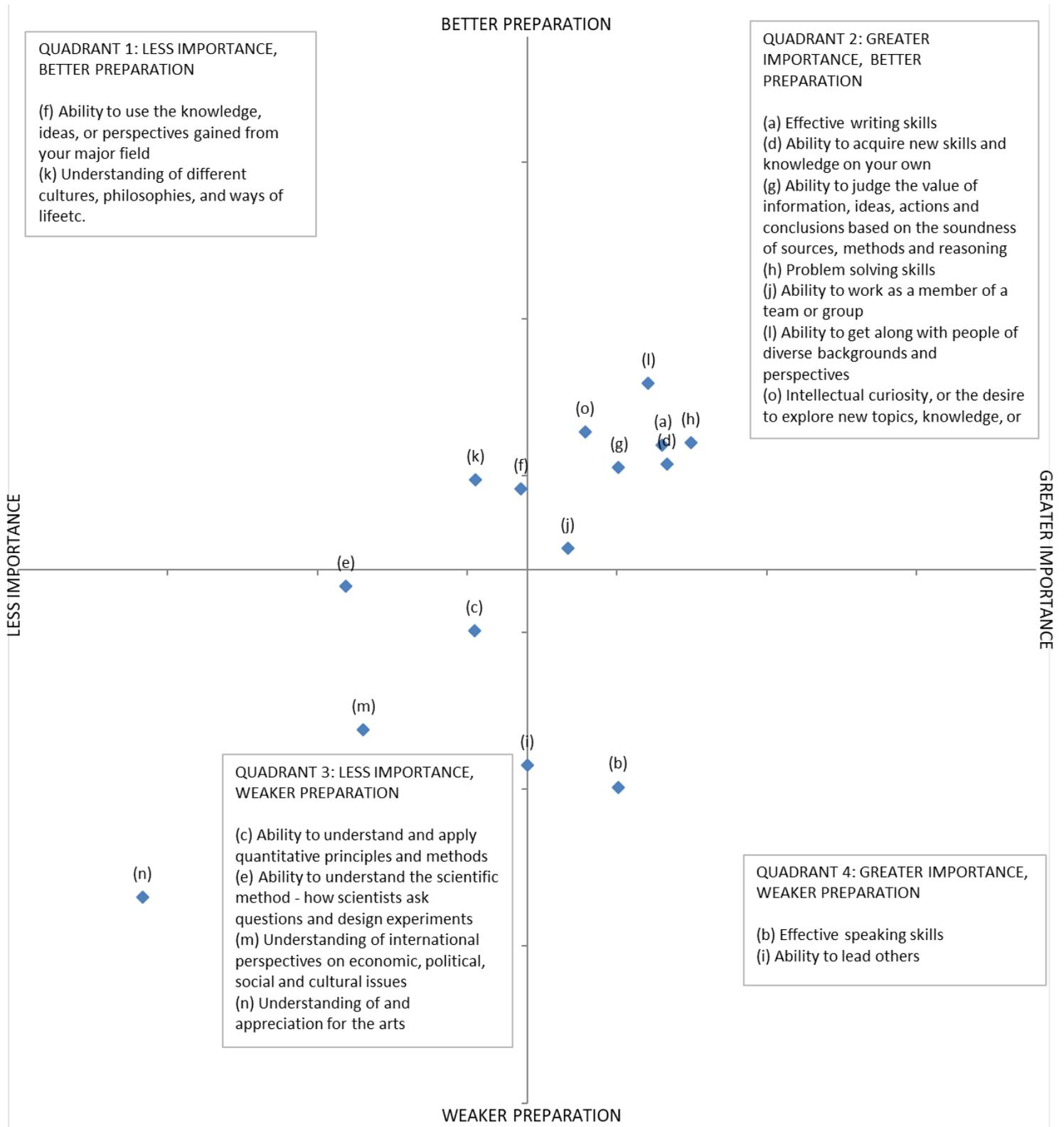
-UCSB Alumnus, Economics major, Class of 2016

Areas for improvement in undergraduate preparation (Quadrant 4) include:

- Ability to lead others
- Effective speaking skills

Figure 2. Skill Importance & Preparation at UCSB

All respondents (n = 630)



A summary of the skill ratings by academic division (see Figure 3) reveals a consensus regarding competency areas related to lifelong learning and inquiry. In each field of study, alumni have been well prepared at UCSB to employ the following skills, which they consider important to their current activities:

- Ability to acquire new skills and knowledge on your own
- Ability to judge the value of information, ideas, actions and conclusions based on the soundness of sources, methods and reasoning
- Intellectual curiosity, or the desire to explore new topics, knowledge, or ideas in depth
- Problem solving skills
- Ability to work as a member of a team or group
- Ability to get along with people of diverse backgrounds and perspectives

*"I love UCSB! Engineering was an excellent choice as it opens the door to so many opportunities around the world."
-UCSB alumnus, Mechanical Engineering major, Class of 2016*

Divisional results also indicate where levels of preparation in important skill areas differ across divisions. For example:

- Science and engineering students are better prepared in quantitative methods, but less prepared in effective writing skills than students in the humanities or social sciences. Interestingly, while MLPS students still report high levels of preparation in quantitative methods, they no longer report this skill area as being important to their current activities.
- Women in STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) had a larger gap in the level of preparation they received in this area, compared to men in STEM. An opportunity for improvement among the men in STEM fields is the ability to get along with people of diverse backgrounds.

Because the value placed on certain skills tends to vary across disciplines (i.e. quantitative methods may be more relevant to science and math fields), separate quadrant analysis charts by academic division are presented in the remaining pages of this report.

*"I will always look back at my time at UCSB fondly - it facilitated my intellectual growth through rigorous courses that challenged me and my peers, while simultaneously facilitated personal growth by providing an amazing setting to come to an understanding that friendship and the bonds formed during undergrad are perhaps the most precious things I have."
-UCSB alumnus, Molecular, Cellular & Developmental Biology major, Class of 2016*

Figure 3. Summary of Skill Importance & Preparation by Academic Division

		ENGR: n = 50	HUFA: n = 73	MLPS: n = 271	SOCSCI: n = 223
		Quadrant			
Skills		1 - LESS IMPORTANCE, BETTER PREPARATION	2 - GREATER IMPORTANCE, BETTER PREPARATION	3 - LESS IMPORTANCE, WEAKER PREPARATION	4 - GREATER IMPORTANCE, WEAKER PREPARATION
BETTER PREPARATION	Ability to acquire new skills and knowledge on your own		ENGR, HUFA, MLPS, SOCSCI		
	Ability to use the knowledge, ideas, or perspectives gained from your major	HUFA, MLPS, SOCSCI	ENGR		
	Ability to judge the value of information, ideas, actions and conclusions based on the soundness of sources, methods and reasoning		ENGR, HUFA, MLPS, SOCSCI		
	Intellectual curiosity, or the desire to explore new topics, knowledge, or ideas in depth		ENGR, HUFA, MLPS, SOCSCI		
	Ability to work as a member of a team or group		ENGR, HUFA, MLPS, SOCSCI		
	Problem solving skills		ENGR, HUFA, MLPS, SOCSCI		
	Ability to get along with people of diverse backgrounds and perspectives		ENGR, HUFA, MLPS, SOCSCI		
MIXED	Ability to understand and apply quantitative principles and methods	MLPS	ENGR	HUFA, SOCSCI	
	Effective writing skills		HUFA, SOCSCI	ENGR	MLPS
	Understanding of different cultures, philosophies, and ways of life	MLPS	HUFA, SOCSCI	ENGR	
	Ability to understand the scientific method and how scientists ask questions	MLPS	ENGR	HUFA, SOCSCI	
	Understanding of and appreciation for the arts	HUFA		ENGR, MLPS, SOCSCI	
WEAKER PREPARATION	Understanding of international perspectives on economic, political, social and cultural issues	SOCSCI		ENGR, HUFA, MLPS	
	Ability to lead others			ENGR, HUFA	MLPS, SOCSCI
	Effective speaking skills				ENGR, HUFA, MLPS, SOCSCI

Figure 4a. Skill Importance & Preparation at UCSB by Academic Division

Engineering (n = 50)

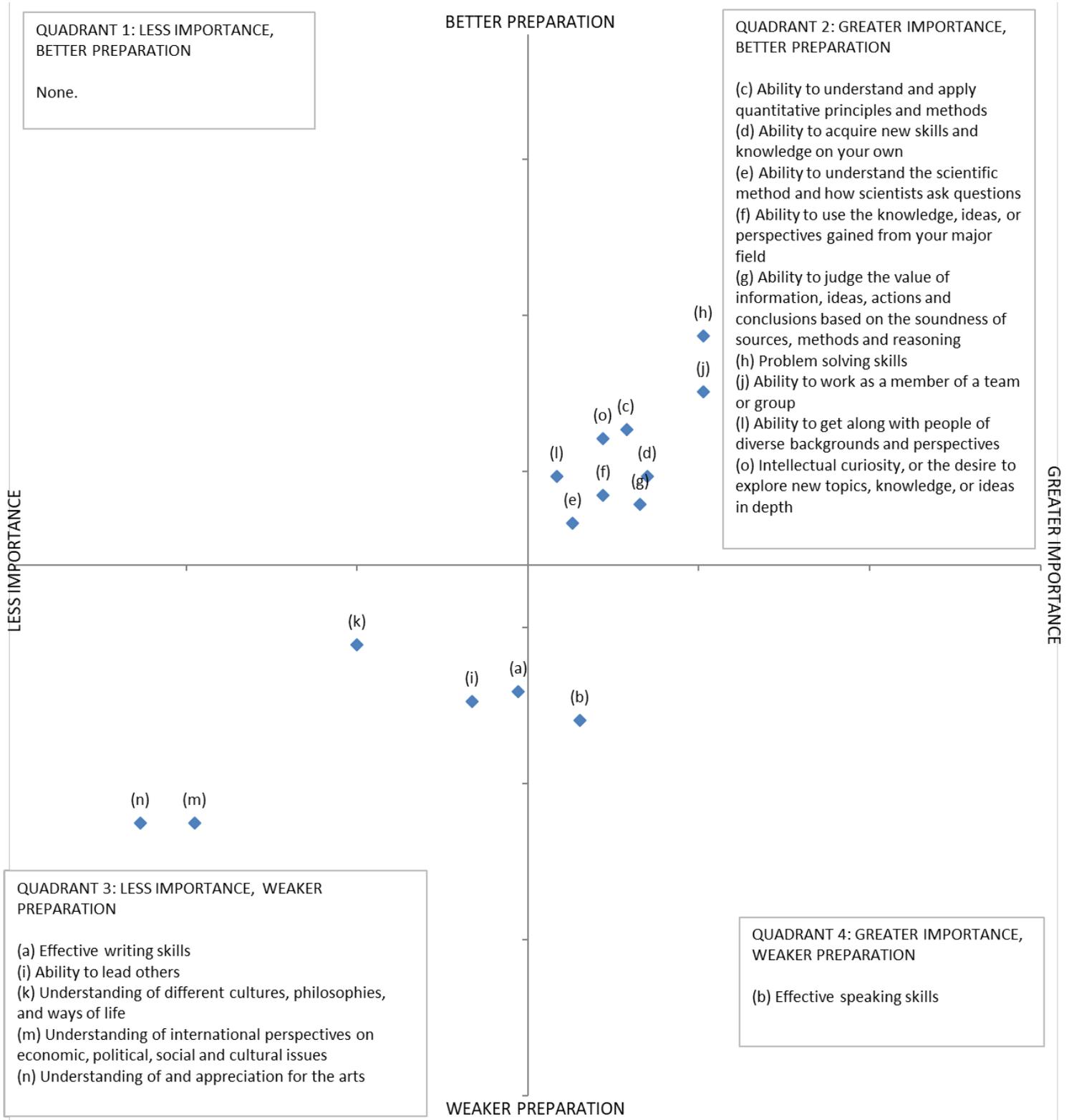


Figure 4b. Skill Importance & Preparation at UCSB by Academic Division

Humanities and Fine Arts (n = 73)

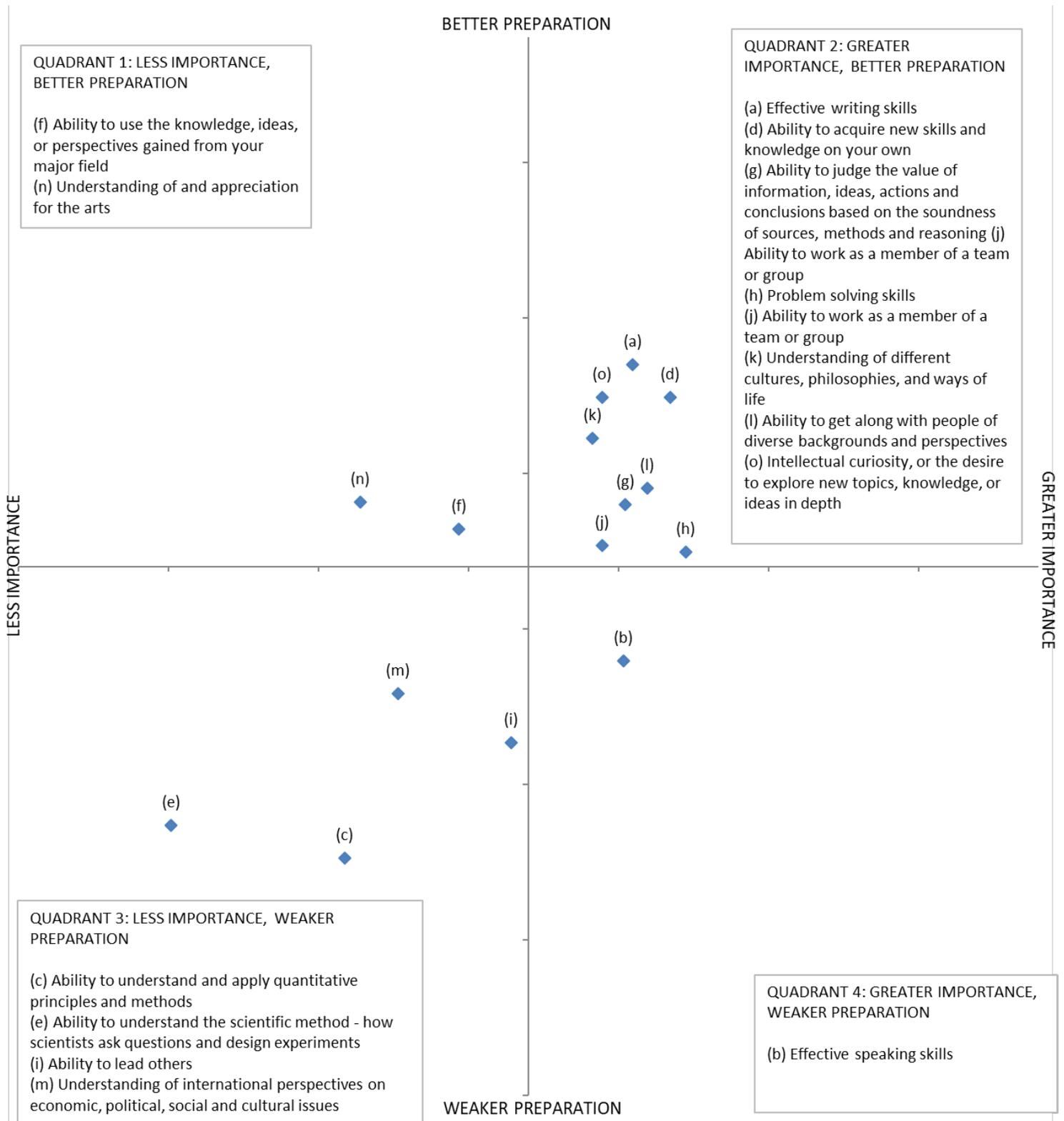


Figure 4c. Skill Importance & Preparation at UCSB by Academic Division

Math, Life and Physical Sciences (n = 271)

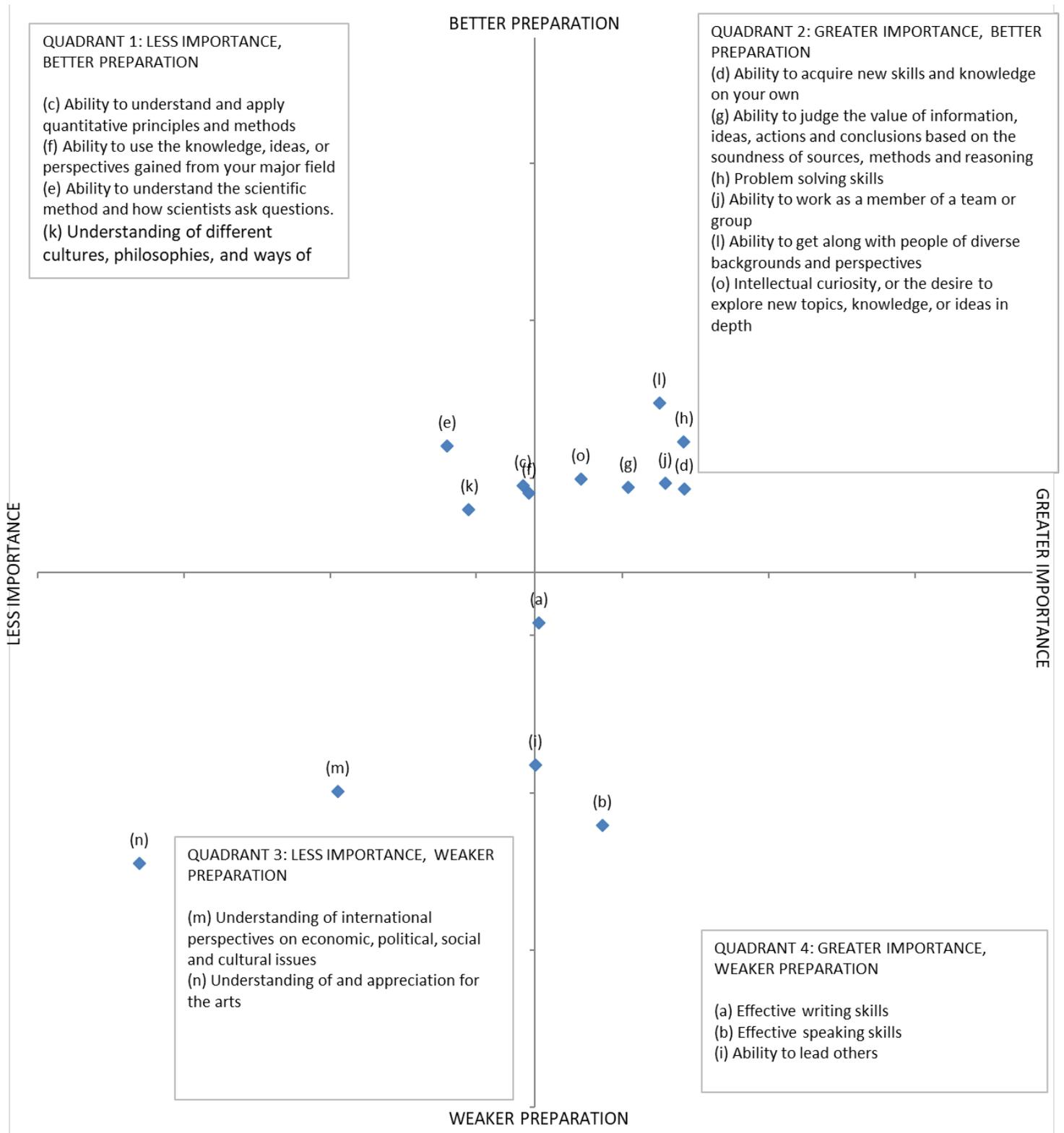


Figure 4d. Skill Importance & Preparation at UCSB by Academic Division

Social Sciences (n = 223)

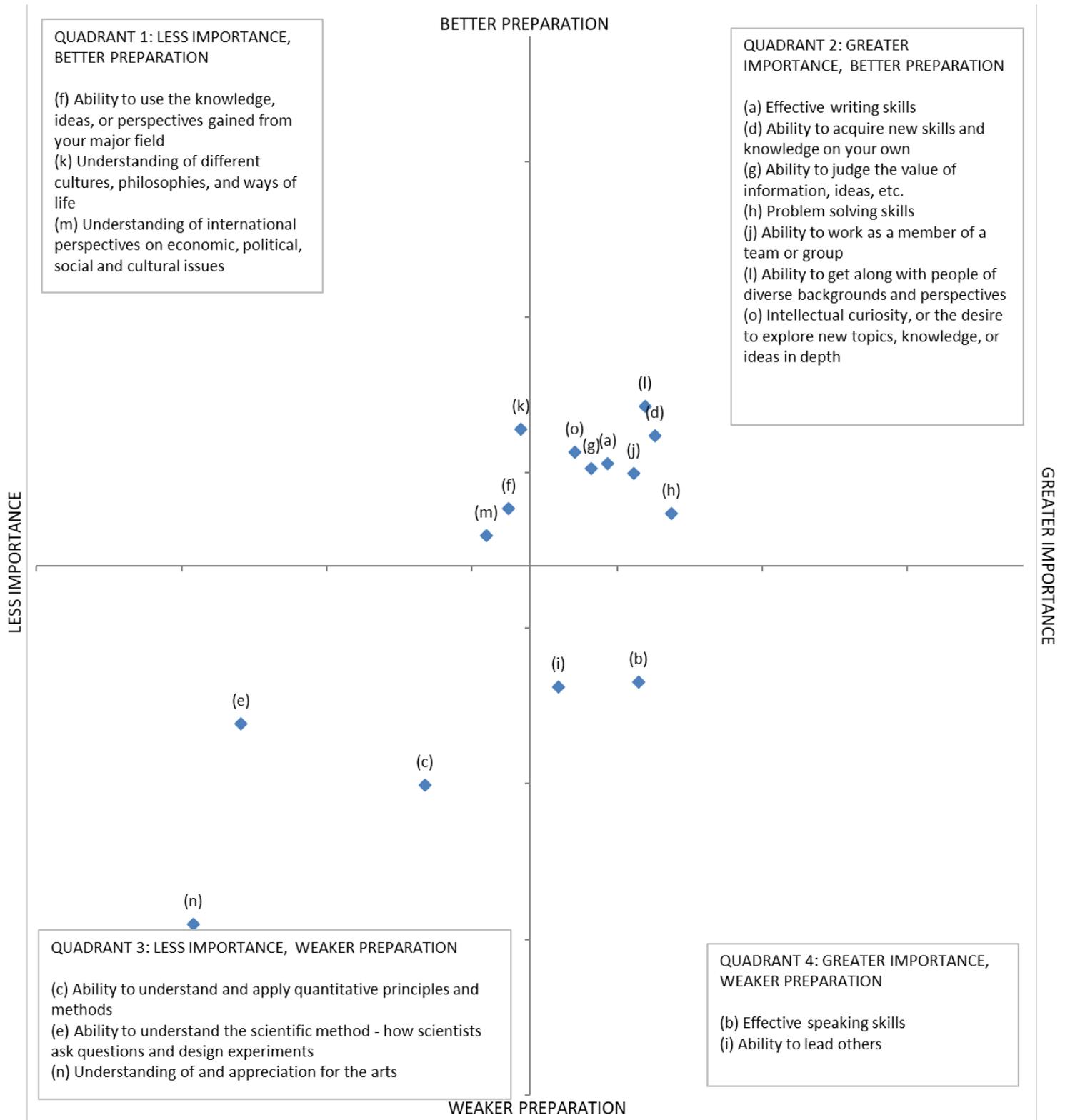


Figure 5a. Skill Importance & Preparation at UCSB – STEM fields by Gender

Women in STEM (n = 106)

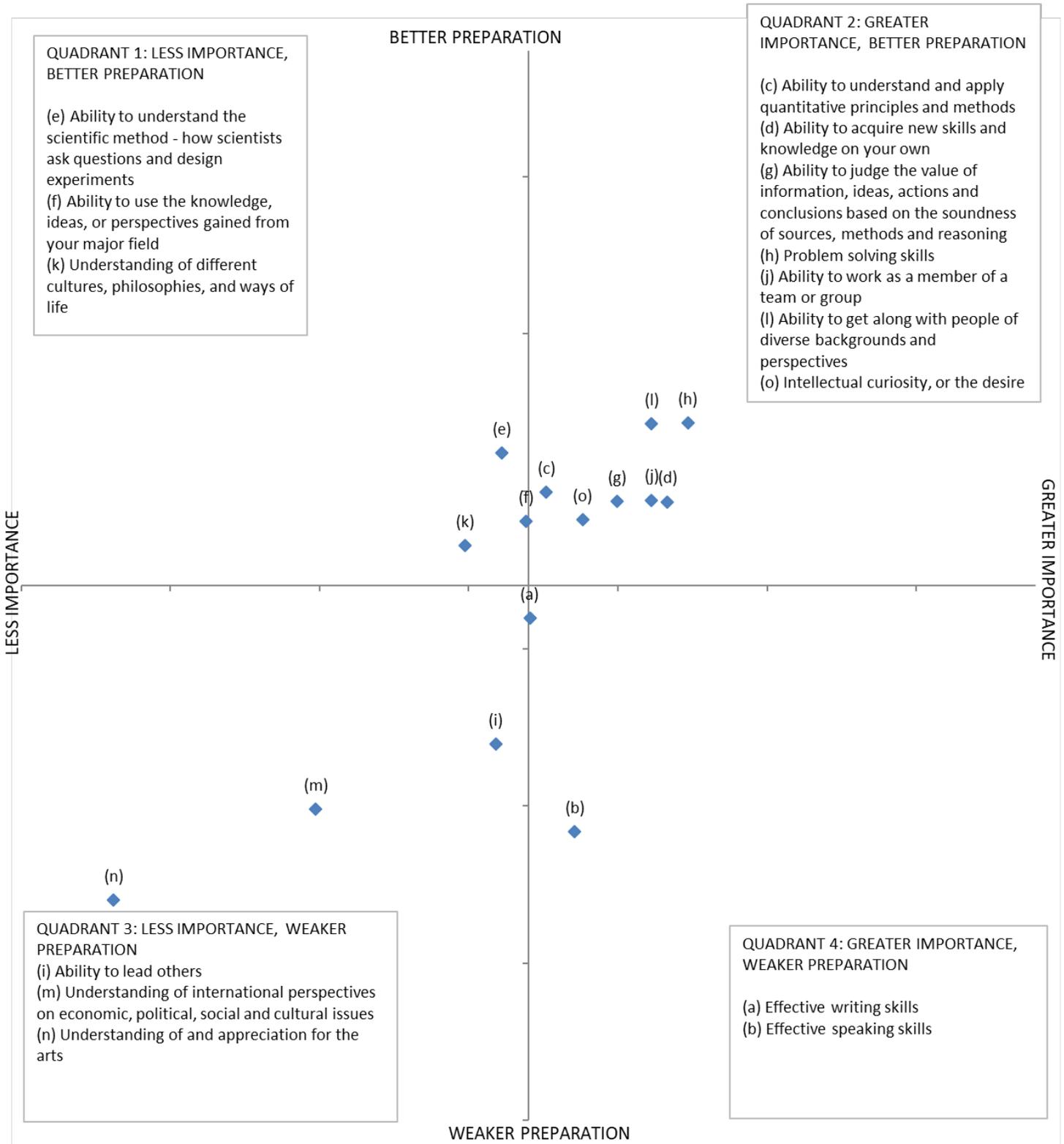


Figure 5b. Skill Importance & Preparation at UCSB – STEM fields by Gender

Men in STEM (n = 118)

