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Business Research Proposal:

Who Cares About Soft Skills? Faculty and The Workforce, That's Who!

1 November 2016

Abstract

College graduates are facing a sharp increase in competition. As a result, potential employees—i.e., individuals fresh out of college—have been tasked with three critical sets of outcomes: 1) education, 2) experience, and 3) certifications. Notably, employers have strongly suggested that new hires *must* have people skills (work ethics/employability skills/soft skills). Using these skills as the topic of this proposal, the present research project will analyze embedded perceptions, practices, and experiences by comparing these factors in three groups: a) employers; b) students; and, c) faculty in the community college (subsequent college/university studies may expand this investigation). It is anticipated that the findings will suggest that the perceptions, practices, and experiences within and between these groups will significantly differ in terms of viable soft skills reported in the dataset. Moreover, the outcomes of the study will identify soft skills indicators to frame informed decision-making that will impact organizational objectives. It is expected that this proposal will afford the Board of Directors important information that may be used to establish direct and indirect planning to determine if the soft skills of individuals are adequate or these skills are lacking and need improvement via professional development and other organizational expenditures.

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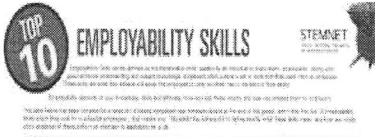The Workforce, That's Who!

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Abstract

College graduates are facing a sharp increase in competition. As a result, potential employees—i.e., individuals fresh out of college—have been tasked with three critical sets of outcomes: 1) education, 2) experience, and 3) certifications. Notably, employers have strongly suggested that new hires *must* have people skills (work ethics/employability skills/soft skills). Using these skills as the topic of this proposal, the present research project will analyze embedded perceptions, practices, and experiences by comparing these factors in three groups: a) employers; b) students; and, c) faculty in the community college (subsequent college/university studies may expand this investigation). It is anticipated that the findings will suggest that the perceptions, practices, and experiences within and between these groups will significantly differ in terms of viable soft skills reported in the dataset. Moreover, the outcomes of the study will identify soft skills indicators to frame informed decision-making that will impact organizational objectives. It is expected that this proposal will afford the Board of Directors important information that may be used to establish direct and indirect planning to determine if the soft skills of individuals are adequate or these skills are lacking and need improvement via professional development and other organizational expenditures.

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Introduction to the Proposal

Soft skills have been defined in numerous ways through the years. And just as numerous as the various types of methods used to define soft skills, so is the list of items that are included in the domain of what factors constitute valid and current soft skills (*see Table 1*). Not only are the list of variables at issue, so are the specific soft skills that are considered important when potential employees submit their resumes and applications to organizations in the workforce. For example, Workforce Solutions Group at St. Louis Community College found that more than 60 percent of employers said applicants lack "communication and interpersonal skills" — an increase of about 10 percentage points in just two years. Many managers also said that today's applicants can't think critically and creatively, solve problems or write well (*St. Louis Community College, 2013*).

When considering the impact that soft skills have on the bottom line of CRM (Customer Relationship Management), in addition to all organizational fiscal concerns, who might be primary stakeholders interested in assessing the soft skills of employees---not only presently in the organization, but also those who are being considered as future members of the institution? For this proposal, three groups will be considered and their role in the process defined: 1) faculty in the community college as direct influencers of soft skills for students during their tenure in their respective Plans of Study; 2) employers, because this is the collective group that will depend, directly and indirectly, on the proficient soft skills of all its employees to support organizational effectiveness, efficiency and the 'bottom line'; and, 3) students themselves, who may assume— correctly or otherwise—that they, in fact, have the soft skills necessary to be successful in sundry organizations throughout the workforce. Take, for instance, the idea proposed by Robles (2012, p.453): "While technical skills are a part of many excellent educational curricula, soft skills need further emphasis in the community college curricula so that students learn the importance of soft skills early in their academic/technical programs before they embark on a business or other career."

Consequently, this research proposal is compiled and submitted to the Board of Director for full funding consideration. The research that is to be undertaken will investigate the three groups noted to ascertain if the soft skills are perceived to be adequate or needs improvement. If the findings bear out inadequate soft skills from employers, it may guide future planning as to the amount of fiscal resources dedicated to professional development to upgrade these skills. This may include present employees and new personnel to bring these 'people skills' up to standard within the organization. Thus, this is a critically important research/financial-based proposal.

Table 1: *Top 10 Soft Skills in Demand*

Soft Skill Identifier	Soft Skills Descriptor (Soft Skills/Employability Skills/Work Ethics/People Skills/Interpersonal Skills)
Communication Skills	It's more than just speaking the language. Communication skills involve active listening, presentation as well as excellent writing capabilities. One highly sought-after communication skill is the ability to explain technical concepts to partners, customers and coworkers that aren't tech savvy. [oral, speaking capability, written communications if all facets, presenting, listening]
Computer and Technical Literacy	Almost all jobs nowadays require basic competency in computer software, but many job seekers fail to provide this section because they think it's implied. If computer skills are relevant to your field, insert a "Technical Skills" or "Systems Proficiencies" section to your resume.
Interpersonal Skills	The ability to work in teams, relate to people and manage conflict is a valuable asset in the workplace. This skill is important to get ahead--and as you advance in your career, the aptitude to work with others becomes even more crucial. Personal accomplishments are important on your resume, but showing that you can work well with others is important too. [nice, personable, sense of humor, friendly, nurturing, empathetic, has self-control, patient, sociability, warmth, social skills: cooperative, gets along with others, agreeable, supportive, helpful, collaborative; businesslike, well-dressed, appearance, poised]
Adaptability	Don't underestimate the ability to adapt to changes and manage multiple tasks. In today's technology driven and rapidly evolving business environment, the ability to pick up on new technologies and adjust to changing business surroundings is important. Display your relevancy in the workforce by referencing an example of how you adapted to a sudden change at work in your resume. [adaptability, willing to change, lifelong learner, accepts new things, adjusts, teachable]
Research Skills	With Google at the tip of your fingers, it's easy to find answers to common issues. However, hiring managers seek employees that are skilled at assessing situations, are able to seek multiple perspectives and gather more in depth information.
Project Management Skills:	Organization, planning and effectively implementing projects and tasks for yourself and others is a highly effective skill to have. In the past, this was a job in itself. Nowadays, many companies aren't hiring project managers because they expect all of their employees to possess certain characteristics of this skill. **[Note: The use of Project Managers in an organization is specific to individual organizations and is a separate study apart from this present study.]**
Problem-Solving Skills	The ability to use creativity, reasoning, past experience, information and available resources to resolve issues is attractive because it saves everyone at the organization valuable time. Highlight this skill by listing an example of when your organization had a sticky situation and you effectively addressed it.
Process Improvement Expertise:	The number one goal every company has in common is to save money. Optimizing business procedures can save a company time and money. Quantify results in your resume by listing the before and after facts of projects that you took on.
Strong Work Ethic	Employers are looking for employees that take initiative, are reliable and can do the job right the first time. Managers don't have the time or resources to babysit, so this is a skill that is expected from all employees. Don't make the hiring manager second-guess by sending a resume with typos, errors and over-exaggerated work experience. [hard working, willing to work, loyal, initiative, self-motivated, on time, good attendance: honest, ethical, high morals, has personal values, does what's right; accountable, reliable, gets the job done, resourceful, self-disciplined, wants to do well, conscientious, common sense]
Emotional Intelligence	Although you will most likely never see this in a job description, EI is a highly sought after skill that relates to your social skills, social awareness and self-management abilities. Emotional intelligence is usually something that is revealed through actual interactions with the hiring manger, but you can hint that you have it with a strategic resume that addresses areas where your experience and skills are lacking relative to the job requirements. [optimistic, enthusiastic, encouraging, happy, confident; manners, etiquette, business etiquette, gracious, says please and thank you, respectful]

Sources: 1) Downloaded from https://www.livecareer.com/career-tips/career-advice/soft-skills-in-demand from LiveCareer. 13 October 2016; 2) Robles, M. (2012). Executive Perceptions of the Top 10 Soft Skills Needed in Today's Workplace. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 75(4), 453-465.

Note: While the list and descriptors in Table 1 suggest a list of the top 10 soft skills by name, research may expend on this list by name, descriptor, and/or application. While the list may vary, the overarching application of these soft skills cannot be overemphasized, as it has also been consistently reported that inadequate soft skills impacts the bottom-line in organizations, either by direct or indirect costs. Thus, this proposal has solid basis in fiscal considerations.

Methods, Materials & Manpower Considerations

### *Methods or Methodology of the Proposed Business Research Project*

This particular study or investigation is a quantitative research project, in which the dataset that is sought does not exist in the form that is required by the Principal Investigator (PI). Therefore, the PI has developed three separate and independent original-design surveys for the collection of the data from each respective group. These surveys are titled: 1) Soft Skills/Work Ethics/Employability Skills/People Skills in the Community College: Employer Survey; 2) Soft Skills/Work Ethics/Employability Skills/People Skills in the Community College: Faculty Survey; and, 3) Soft Skills/Work Ethics/Employability Skills/People Skills in the Community College: Student Survey (see Appendix A, B, and C in the Appendices). The original design surveys will be distributed to individuals in the organizations identified on the surveys and will follow the full and complete rules of confidentiality and anonymity (Ref: Institutional Research Board). The data will also capture IP addresses, but that information will be in the control of the PI for the required number of years (3) to protect the identity of participants.

The surveys will be pilot tested to maximize reliability and validity prior to their respective release to the sample populations noted above (Faculty, Students & Employers). The data, once collected in sufficient return-rates, will be analyzed using various types of applications. Some of the data will be analyzed in MS Excel and some of the data will be processed in SPSS. The statistical calculations will then be structured to provide useful information that can be used to make data-driven informed decisions regarding whether to fund training for soft skills, use peer-training, workshops, develop in-house training modules, etc. The resulting data will support these and other business-driven financial and human resource decisions.

Moreover, the methodology of showing comparisons, variance between groups, and to graphically represent the findings, will cover a significant spectrum of samples, tables, graphs, charts, and follow-up with a presentation to the Board of Directors as determined by the Board. While this proposal is based on statistically-derived quantitative methods, it will also endeavor to avoid the usage of numerical data to the exclusion of the written explanation so that the report might be more easily understood in tone, overview, and 'statistically significant' descriptors. The overall methodology can be found in Figure 1, in which the general process is to conduct the research in the most detailed statistical manner possible; however, the presentation of the materials

for the Board will be as identified below as: a) Business Research Report; b) Business Research Poster (for Marketing and internal/external application); c) Business Research Executive Summary; and, d) Business Research PowerPoint Slide Deck. Other forms of presentation are available upon request from the Board of Directors. (Note: Due to the process of the data analysis, statistical calculations in multiple forms, and the ability of the research to produce numerous types of materials, reports, and/or outputs, availability of these various types of reports and marketing materials are available to the Board of Directors and to all leadership/management within and throughout the organization, including the Parent Company, Alabama Community College System, Chancellor's Office).

Figure 1: Graphical Representation of the Proposal Outcomes
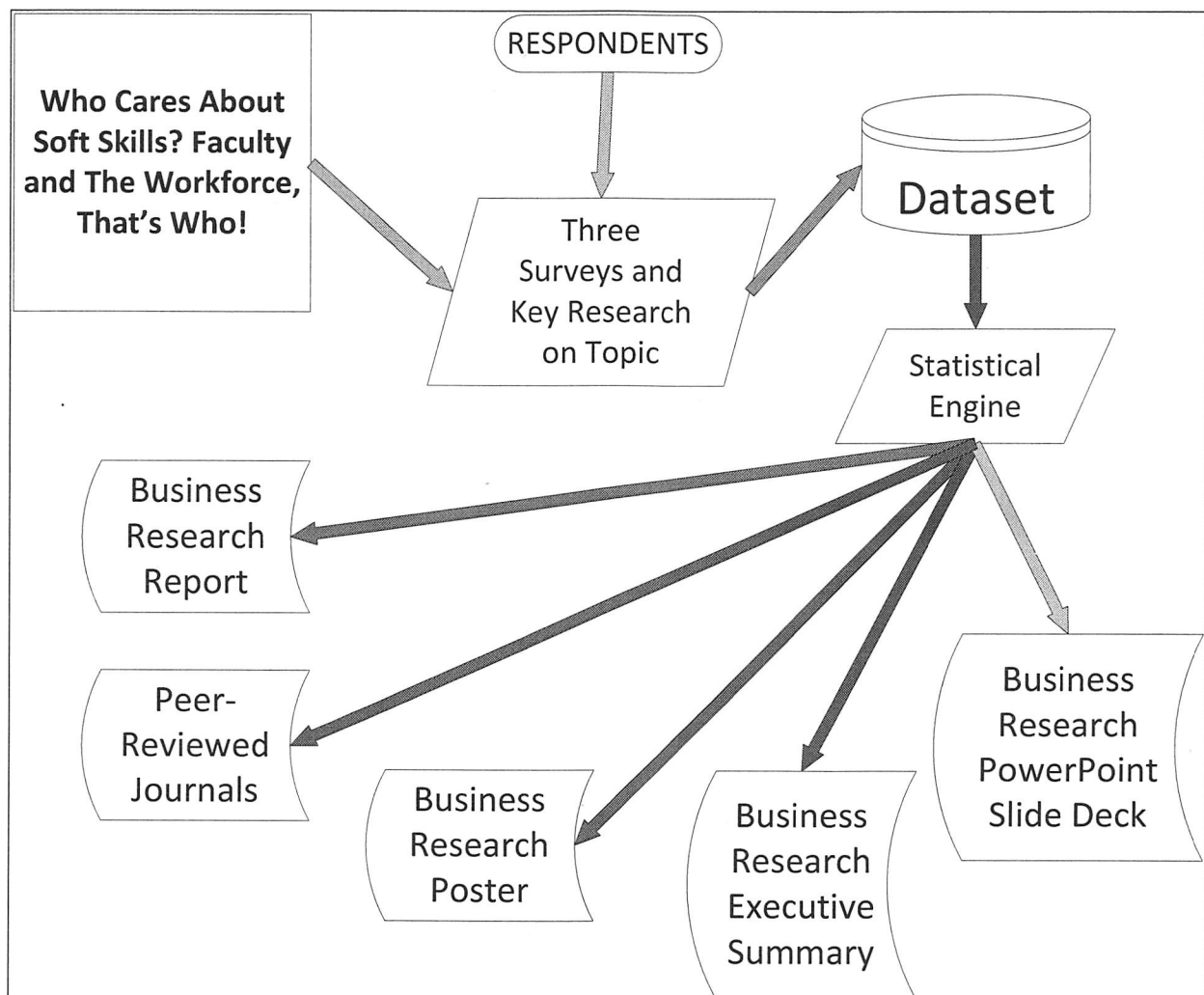
Materials & Manpower of the Proposed Business Research Project

There are minimal material and manpower components to the proposal. These proposal elements will be briefly discussed with cost factors included in Table 2. For this section, only direct costs will be indicated, with miscellaneous costs reflected in the Institutional Budget for the current fiscal year [TCO for IPs (Institutional Projects) w/± Variances in Funding Calculations, including inflation factors]. There are zero costs associated with the research participants, and no incentives are indicated and/or offered in the survey "announcement" that is included with each survey. (Because the participants are *totally random and voluntary*, no incentives are needed as the total populations in each group are varied, significant, and are expected to provide a return rate well within the nominal standard sample size using Microsoft Excel 'Survey Sample Size Calculator'.) The following Banner is provided to all groups:

> The purpose in this study is to acquire insight from Faculty, Students, and Employers, in regards to current perceptions and/or experiences that will indicate if students have the necessary [soft skills/work ethics/employability skills/people skills] for the workforce. The extended purpose of this research is to use the data and information as a catalyst to include soft skill outcomes in a student's Plan of Study for: 1) developing soft skills that are 'missing', and/or; 2) to enhance those that are present. The survey will take approximately 7-to-10 minutes and inclusion in the study is based on random sampling and voluntary participation. All participant data and/or e-identification (IP Address) is confidential and anonymous and will *not* be released in any form. This specific survey is intended for Employers in the State of Alabama [transferrable to other organizations as the application is deemed feasible].

The cost for salaries and benefits for this business research proposal will be prorated as the Principal Investigator (PI) will be responsible for the entire project, from proposal to final reporting and any/all presentations (see Table 2). (The PI will have a part-time administrative assistant to help with printing, copying, and routine and logistics support. The assistant has been cleared (Read and Signed Non-disclosure Agreement) to handle the respondent data). The time line is expected to be 8 months; with 2 months in the design of the study/surveys; 2 months in the dataset collection process; and, 4 months in the writing/publishing/presentation timeframe (see Figure 2).

Should there be an unexpected costs, those will be handled with established practices of Change Orders. Please note that the ROI for this project is ["Cost" / "Lower HR/CRM Costs."]

Table 2: Material and Manpower Total Cost of Operations (TCO)

Item	Description	Cost	% Cost of Budget
SurveyMonkey	Data Capture Software Applications	$300.00/1 Year	0.77%
Kinko Printing Services	Forms, Reports, Graphical Representations/Materials	$2,500.00	6.44%
Principal Investigator	Prorated Salary of PI (8 Months with salary/benefits) [Full Time on Project]	$24,000.00	61.86%
Administrative Assistant	Susan B. Anthony (8 Months with salary/benefits) [Part Time on Project]	$12,000.00	30.93%
Totals:		$38,800.00	100.00%

Figure 2: Progress Timeline & Outcomes

Design 2 Months	Collection 2 Months	Writing and Publishing 4 Months
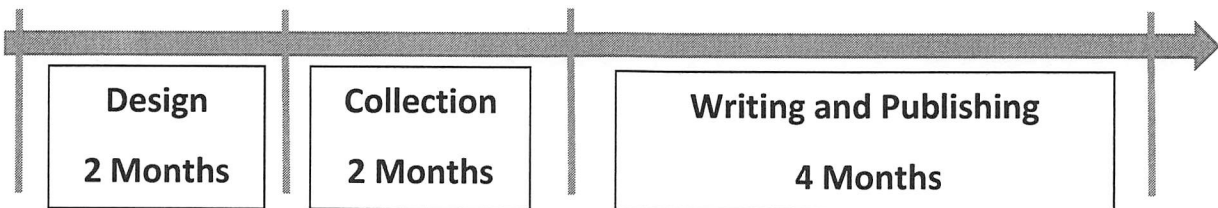
- *A full set of documents will be provided to each Board Member for review.*

Anticipated Results of the Proposed Business Research Project

While it is impossible to state the precise details of this proposal and its expected outcomes, it can be stated unequivocally that between and within the three populations of this study, variances do exist based on a lengthy review of the previous and current studies that have been conducted (see Table 3). Furthermore, a preliminary discussion with employers in the area would suggest that the current feedback will generally support the need for improved soft skills in recent graduates from the community college. This is not to declare that all graduates are in dire need of developing soft skills; rather, the data and interviews suggested that soft skills are important to organizational success and customer relationships. These considerations and applications of improvement will be addressed in various ways within and throughout an organization.

The anticipated results of this study will provide leadership in each respective organization a means to statistically and visually understand the similarities and differences between the samples from the populations previous noted. The analysis, in terms of soft skill deficiencies and what monetary impact that this may have within and across the organization, is discuss in the Business Research Report. Another way to state this can be found in the study conducted by

Burning Glass Technologies (2015, p.4): "Writing, communication skills, and organizational skills are scarce everywhere. These skills are in demand across nearly every occupation— and in nearly every occupation they're being requested far more than you'd expect based on standard job profiles. Even fields like IT and Engineering want people who can write."

According to Business Performance Pty Ltd[2], there are costs associated with poor workforce communication (one of the critical items on the soft skills list). These include, but are not limited to: a) increased employee turnover; b) increased absenteeism; c) poor customer service; d) ineffective change management; e) failed project delivery; f) greater incidence of injuries; g) higher litigation costs; and, h) lower shareholder returns. For example, "Two in three projects begun meet with project failure. The cost of project cost blowouts, budget overruns and project cancellations to business and governments is massive. Poor communication is cited as the main cause of failure for IT projects by 28% of respondents in a survey conducted by a national association of IT professionals."[3] Therefore, the anticipated results will enable organizational leaders to make better informed decisions as to the level of soft skills reported, and how this data might support professional development decisions and training, tactically and strategically. This can be summarized as follows, from a study by Weise (2016, Abstract): "By 2020, the US economy is expected to create 55 million job openings: 24 million of these will be entirely new positions. And 48 percent of the new jobs, according to Georgetown's Center on Education and the Workforce, will emphasize a mix of hard and soft intellectual skills, like active listening, leadership, communication, analytics, and administration competencies."

Additionally, the expected outcomes of this proposal will also address leadership roles in the applications arena of soft skills, as noted by Mersino (2013, Abstract): "Research indicates that emotional intelligence (EI) accounts for an astonishing 70-80 percent of management success. Technical expertise just isn't enough anymore: project managers need strong interpersonal skills and the ability to recognize emotional cues in order to lead their teams to success." Stated in terms of 'the bottom line': soft skills, by any other name, have a direct and indirect impact on costs factors associated with the process of organizations 'doing business.' Thus, this research proposal is imperative to better understand the variables that impact HR in terms of people skills.

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[2] http://www.businessperform.com/workplace-communication/poor-communication-costs.html
[3] "Survey: Poor Communication Causes Most IT Project Failures" (2007). Computerworld Inc., http://www.computerworld.com/s/article/9012758/Survey_Poor_communication_causes_most_IT_proj

Table 3: 'Sampling Methodology" of "Lit Review" Data Collection/Information Resources

Source/Citation	Select Passage/Abstract
Weise, M. (2016). We Need a Better Way to .Visualize People's Skills. Harvard Business Review, September 20, 2016, p.1. Retrieved 2 November 2016 from https://hbr.org/2016/09/we-need-a-better-way-to-visualize-peoples-skills.	By 2020, the US economy is expected to create 55 million job openings: 24 million of these will be entirely new positions. And 48 percent of the new jobs, according to Georgetown's Center on Education and the Workforce, will emphasize a mix of hard and soft intellectual skills, like active listening, leadership, communication, analytics, and administration competencies.
Burning Glass Technologies (2015). "The Human Factor", Retrieved 2 November 2016, from http://burning-glass.com/wp-content/uploads/ Human_Factor_Baseline_Skills_FINAL.pdf.	Writing, communication skills, and organizational skills are scarce everywhere. These skills are in demand across nearly every occupation— and in nearly every occupation they're being requested far more than you'd expect based on standard job profiles. Even fields like IT and Engineering want people who can write.
Levasseur, R. (2011). People Skills: Optimizing Team Development and Performance. *Interfaces*, *41*(2), 204-208.	Task Work and Teamwork. Blake and Mouton (1964) were among the first to identify the importance of task work and teamwork to group success. They defined the ideal management style as a combination of a "high concern for production" and a "high concern for people" (p. 142). This ideal style, characterized as highly collaborative, is a team-oriented style. The connection to Tuckman's final performing stage of group development seems clear. Hence, the message for a group leader who wishes to develop a high-performing team is to approach the group development process with the attitude that a continuous focus on both task work and teamwork is essential to the development of a high-performing team.
Mersino, A. (2013). *Emotional Intelligence for Project Managers: The People Skills You Need to Achieve Outstanding Results*, 2nd Ed., American Management Association: New York, NY.	Research indicates that emotional intelligence (EI) accounts for an astonishing 70-80 percent of management success. Technical expertise just isn't enough anymore: project managers need strong interpersonal skills and the ability to recognize emotional cues in order to lead their teams to success.
Suzanne, A., & Benjamin, G. (2016, September). Teaching soft skills to business students. *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly*. *79*(3), 360-370.	Recent reports have suggested that many employees in the workforce today lack essential **soft skills**. This research analyzes the effectiveness of multiple classroom assignments for teaching **soft skills** in a Business Communication course. Five distinct pedagogical strategies were used in an effort to teach **soft skills**, including a self-analysis, an interview, a guest lecturer, a journal article, and a **soft skills** video. Results offer insights into students' perceptions of the most helpful pedagogical approaches for teaching **soft skills**.
Dabka, D. (2015). Soft skills as a predictor of perceived internship effectiveness and permanent placement opportunity. *IUP Journal of Soft Skills*. *9*(4). 26-42.	The study aims at examining the association between soft skills of management interns and its impact on the effectiveness perception of industry mentors. Sixty industry mentors, who had one first year management intern under their supervision, were administered a 39- item soft skills questionnaire, based on the framework proposed by Robles (2012). The intern was assessed on 11 soft skills. Each mentor rated the degree to which the intern possessed the specific soft skill on a five-point rating scale. The mentors also indicated their satisfaction with the intern's quality of work and the degree to which the mentor may consider the intern for final placement. A Pearson's correlation coefficient indicated that internship effectiveness perception of the mentor was positively associated with all the aspects of soft skills. The possibility of a permanent placement offering was also positively associated with all the aspects of soft skills. A multiple regression analysis indicated that interpersonal skills, courtesy, and positive attitude were positive predictors of internship effectiveness, explaining a variance of 55%. Similarly, professionalism, teamwork, and interpersonal skills emerged as the positive predictors of a chance of being considered for a permanent placement, explaining a variance of 58%.
Robles. M. (2012). Executive Perceptions of the Top 10 Soft Skills Needed in Today's Workplace. *Business Communication Quarterly*, *75*(4), 453-465.	Hard **skills** are the technical expertise and knowledge needed for a job. **Soft skills** are interpersonal qualities, also known as people **skills**, and personal attributes that one possesses. Business executives consider **soft skills** a very important attribute in job applicants. Employers want new employees to have strong **soft skills**, as well as hard **skills**. This study identified the top 10 **soft skills** as perceived the most important by business executives: integrity. communication. courtesy, responsibility, social **skills**, positive attitude, professionalism, flexibility, teamwork, and work ethic.

Source/Citation	*Select Passage/Abstract*
Thomas, W., & Fagin, T. (2015). *Hard and soft skills in preparing GIS professionals: Comparing perceptions of employers and educators. Transactions in GIS. 19*(5), 641-652.	Organizations that hire GIS professionals look for entry-level employees with specialized technical **skills** but also other competencies such as effective communication and a capacity to think critically and creatively. Indeed, the success of GIS projects and initiatives often depends on individuals who possess a combination of specialized GIS **skills** and more general competencies that influence their ability to collaborate and manage resources. This article presents findings from a survey of GIS employers and educators concerning the importance of hard and **soft skills** among entry-level GIS professionals. A key finding is the high level of consistency in ratings assigned by employers and educators concerning hard **skills** such as data editing and GIS analysis and **soft skills** including problem solving and adaptability. However, the groups were less similar in ratings assigned to data capture **skills**, project management, and written/verbal **skills**. GIS qualifications were also compared, revealing a greater emphasis on internships among educators and higher ratings assigned to academic GIS certificates among employers.
Charoensap-Kelly, P., Broussard, L., Lindsly, M., & Troy, M. (2016). Evaluation of a soft skills training program. *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly, 79*(2), 154-179.	This study was conducted to determine the effectiveness of a **soft skills** employee training program. We examined willingness to learn and delivery methods (face-to-face vs. online) and their associations with the training outcomes in terms of learning and behavioral change. Results showed that neither participants' willingness to learn nor delivery methods affected comprehension. However, both variables had significant effects on the reported behavioral change. This training is effective in teaching employees how to "flex" their personal styles and to improve their relationships with each other. Implications for business and professional communication training and directions for future research are discussed in detail.
Montiero de Carvalho, M., & Junior, R. (2015). Impact of risk management on project performance: The importance of soft skills. International *Journal of Production Research. 53*(2), 321-340.	This study aims to elucidate the relationship between risk management and project success, considering the contingent effect of project complexity. This approach also combines aspects of **soft** and hard **skills**. This methodological approach involves a literature review to underpin the conceptual framework and a survey for empirical validation, using structural equation modelling. The hypotheses were tested based on a field study involving 263 projects distributed among eight industries. The fieldwork involved interviews with project managers and risk managers and an analysis of internal company documents about the projects' performance. The structural model presented herein provides a means for correlating the hard and **soft** sides of risk management with project success, understanding the moderating effect of project complexity. The **soft** side of risk management appears most prominently and explains 10.7% of the effect on project success. Moreover, the **soft** side supports the hard side, since we found a significant correlation that explains 25.3% of the effect on the hard side.
Venkatesan, I. (2015). MBA: The soft and hard skills that matter. *IUP Journal of Soft Skills, 9*(1), 7-14.	It is no secret that employers when they recruit people for administrative positions usually look for candidates with an MBA degree, which has come to be seen as the leading postgraduate business degree. Naturally, an MBA degree holder is expected to possess the necessary knowledge and **skills** to manage businesses. However, as the demands change, so do the **skills** expected of the MBA degree holders. This paper examines what the employers expect of a recent business school graduate considered for a position in their companies and what is required of the aspirants and business schools to live up to such expectations.
Adams, J. (2014). Practical Advice for Developing, Designing and Delivering Effective **Soft Skills** Programs. *IUP Journal of Soft Skills, 8*(2), 7-20.	Although most business and community leaders understand and appreciate the value and importance of continuous learning and professional **soft skill** development, scarcity of critical resources like time and money, unfortunately, often get in the way. This paper offers practical research-based advice for developing, designing, and delivering effective **soft skills** learning programs aimed at maximizing the impact of e-learning when facing these common workplace and academic challenges. Some of the concepts covered include the importance of: (a) developing programs based on full awareness of underlying assumptions in content creation for **soft skills** development and how this can impact learning outcomes; (b) designing program strategies that empower learners to take ownership of their own learning **soft-skills** development; and (c) delivering programs that embrace constructive principles for rewards and accountability that

Source/Citation	Select Passage/Abstract
.	enable **soft skills** development. The paper will be most relevant for today's coaches, mentors, educators and professionals particularly interested in leadership and management training and development.
Survey Collection Instrument: Soft Skills, Work Ethics, Employability Skills, People Skills in the Community College: Employer Survey	*N* = To Be Determined
Survey Collection Instrument: Soft Skills. Work Ethics. Employability Skills. People Skills in the Community College: Faculty Survey	*N* = To Be Determined
Survey Collection Instrument: Soft Skills, Work Ethics. Employability Skills, People Skills in the Community College: Student Survey	*N* = To Be Determined
National Soft Skills Association (2016). The Real Skills Gap. Retrieved 2 November 2016 from http://www.nationalsoft skills.org/research-publications/.	Research conducted by Harvard University, the Carnegie Foundation and Stanford Research Center has concluded that 85% of job success comes from having well-developed soft and people skills, and only 15% of job success comes from technical skills and knowledge (hard skills). This research finds its beginning with the work of Charles Riborg Mann from a Study of Engineering Education in 1918. There is a span of almost 100 years since Mann published his findings. But, what have we done with this information learned so long ago?
Heckman, J.. & Kautz, T. (2012). Hard evidence on soft skills. National Bureau of Economic Researech. Intro(2 pgs) – p. 52. Retrieved 2 November 2016 from http://www.nber.org/papers/w18121.pdf.	This paper summarizes recent evidence on what achievement tests measure; how achievement tests relate to other measures of "cognitive ability" like IQ and grades; the important skills that achievement tests miss or 'miss-measure', and how much these skills matter in life. Achievement tests miss, or perhaps more accurately, do not adequately capture, soft skills—personality traits, goals, motivations, and preferences—that are valued in the labor market, in school, and in many other domains. The larger message of this paper is that soft skills predict success in life, that they causally produce that success, and that programs that enhance soft skills have an important place in an effective portfolio of public policies.
Lippman, et. al. (2015. Soft skills that open doors. Presented to Federal Reserve Bank of Boston. 20 January 2015. Retrieved 2 November 2016, from file:///C:/Users/DrK /Downloads/child-trends-research-on-soft-skills.pdf.	Child Trends is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research center that improves the lives and prospects of children and youth by conducting high-quality research and sharing the resulting knowledge with practitioners and policymakers.
Tulgan, B. (2015). Unlocking the power of soft skills. *Professional Safety*, *60*(12), 24-25.	Show me an organization with a strong, positive corporate culture and I will show you an organization that is clear about which soft-skill behaviors are high priority and sings about those high-priority behaviors from the rooftops. This company does not just focus on young talent, of course, but an emphasis on key soft-skill behaviors makes everyone in the organization much better, even the youngest, least experienced employees. To make it easy to understand, think of the U.S. Marine Corps or Disney. Both organizations, in different lines of work, employ numerous young people and both famously imbue a huge number of soft-skill behaviors in their workforce. Many other examples exist.
Tores, N. (2015). Research: Technology is only making social skills more important. Retrieved 2 November 2016 from https://hbr.org/2015/08/research-technology-is-only-making-social-skills-more-important.	A new NBER working paper suggests it'll be those that require strong social skills — which it defines as the ability to work with others — something that has proven to be much more difficult to automate. "The Growing Importance of Social Skills in the Labor Market," shows that nearly all job growth since 1980 has been in occupations that are relatively social skill-intensive — and it argues that high-skilled, hard-to-automate jobs will increasingly demand social adeptness.

Note: There are substantial resources from research publications and datasets that will be consulted for this proposal and resulting Business Research Report and other findings and publications.

Discussion & Conclusion

The proposal submitted herein will investigate perceptions, experiences, and skills related to the future employee pool in terms of soft skills (people skills, work ethics, and employability skills). The resulting Business Research Report will descriptive statistics on the findings in a manner that will support the decision making of the Board of Directors and organizational leadership so that the costs of deficient soft skills might be addressed. Inclusive in this study/proposal, will be data that will also suggest whether there are indicators that point to specific soft skills that are less in need of remediation, thus reducing costs for training or professional development, inclusive of direct and indirect costs to the operations of the organization.

Moreover, this proposal—if funded—will result in information that can be used to establish partnerships between respective workforce organizations, collegiate programs of study, and students. The purpose in these types of partnerships is to initiate and promote 'soft skills best practices development' that can be effected as early in a student's program as possible—to maximize the best potential outcome for a student's soft skills acumen prior to entering the workforce.

A good example of what this project strives to accomplish as an outcome to enable enhanced decision-making is found in the words of Bruce Tulgan (2015, December; p. 24): "Show me an organization with a strong, positive corporate culture and I will show you an organization that is clear about which soft-skill behaviors are high priority and sings about those high-priority behaviors from the rooftops. This company does not just focus on young talent, of course, but an emphasis on key soft-skill behaviors makes everyone in the organization much better, even the youngest, least experienced employees. To make it easy to understand, think of the U.S. Marine Corps or Disney. Both organizations, in different lines of work, employ numerous young people and both famously imbue a huge number of soft-skill behaviors in their workforce. Many other examples exist."

Therefore, this proposal bids consideration by the Board of Directors for full and complete funding. The resulting reports to be made available will enable the Board members to gain a succinct and immediate understanding of the financial and human resource issues associated with soft skills deficiencies. The Business Research Report will also be published in various formats for the Board and Management, and has an option for requesting additional publications in various forms, types, and with modifications of the statistical and general presentation content.

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Appendices for Proposal

Appendix A:

Soft Skills/Work Ethics/Employability Skills/People Skills in the Community College: Employer Survey;

Appendix B:

Soft Skills/Work Ethics/Employability Skills/People Skills in the Community College: Faculty Survey;

Appendix C:

Soft Skills/Work Ethics/Employability Skills/People Skills in the Community College: Student Survey.

Purpose in this study.

The purpose in this study is to acquire insight from Faculty, Students, and Employers, in regards to current perceptions and/or experiences that will indicate if students have the necessary [soft skills/work ethics/employability skills/people skills] for the workforce. The extended purpose of this research is to use the data and information as a catalyst to include soft skill outcomes in a student's Plan of Study for: 1) developing soft skills that are 'missing', and/or; 2) to enhance those that are present. The survey will take approximately 7-to-10 minutes and inclusion in the study is based on random sampling and voluntary participation. **All participant data and/or e-identification** (IP Address) **is confidential and anonymous and will** *not* **be released in any form**. This specific survey is intended for Employers in the State of Alabama.

NOTE: Soft skills, employability skills, people skills, and work ethics are interchangeable in this study. (Examples: Communication Skills; Computer and Technical Literacy; Interpersonal Skills; Adaptability; Research Skills; Project Management Skills; Problem-Solving Skills; Process Improvement Expertise; Strong Work Ethic; Emotional Intelligence) *[A Soft Skills Descriptor sheet is also provided with this survey.]*

Thank You,
Dr. Ken Scott & Dr. Syed Raza
Co-Principal Investigators
Trenholm State Community College

1. Please provide some basic demographic and background data: (Select all that apply)

☐ Our organization has less than 250 employees

☐ Our organization has between 251-500 employees

☐ Our organization has more than 500 employees

☐ We conduct business in Alabama only

☐ We conduct business in Alabama and other states

☐ We conduct business nationally and internationally

☐ We have Co-op/Internship programs with colleges and universities in Alabama only

☐ We have Co-op/Internship programs with colleges and universities in Alabama and from other locations

☐ We prefer employees with good technical experience <u>and</u> a solid set of employability skills

Please provide a general category of the type of business or organization you are and any additional information that will help define the organization:

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2. Workforce Solutions Group at St. Louis Community College found that more than 60 percent of employers said applicants lack "communication and interpersonal skills" — an increase of about 10 percentage points in just two years. Many managers also said that today's applicants can't think critically and creatively, solve problems or write well (*Fiscal Times*, 29 Jan 2014). As an employer, what is your opinion of this statement?

◯ I generally agree with this assessment

◯ I generally disagree with this assessment

◯ Not sure...

Do you have any comments on the idea presented by the Workforce Solutions Group statement above?

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* 3. For each of the following Soft Skill Attributes, please rate your overall opinion/perception/experience in the range of inadequacy (Poor) to adequacy (Excellent) for each of the work ethics/soft skills/employability skills/people skills attributes of employees now employed or those that are being considered for employment (i.e., college graduates), as noted below:

	Don't Know	Poor	Fair	Average	Good	Excellent
1. Writing Skills for Various Organizational Requirements:	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
2. Coming to work on time, keeping appointments, etc:	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

	Don't Know	Poor	Fair	Average	Good	Excellent
3. Organizational teamwork/committee objectives met, etc:	○	○	○	○	○	○
4. Employee motivation to succeed, promote the organization, etc:	○	○	○	○	○	○
5. Quality of Oral Presentations for meetings, customers, etc:	○	○	○	○	○	○
6. Consistently Producing **Workforce Quality** Work:	○	○	○	○	○	○
7. Computer Skills to Meet Organizational Requirements are:	○	○	○	○	○	○
8. High School graduate skills for the workforce:	○	○	○	○	○	○
9. Respect For Others (respect for ideas even when disagreeing, etc.):	○	○	○	○	○	○
10. Enjoyment for Learning New Things (Enthusiasm, attitude, etc.):	○	○	○	○	○	○
11. Planning Acumen (effective planning to carry out assignments, committee objectives, etc.):	○	○	○	○	○	○
12. Time Management (work always late or on time, need more time, etc.):	○	○	○	○	○	○
13. Employees have basic math skills to carry out organizational objectives:	○	○	○	○	○	○
14. Leadership (individuals step up to lead groups, committees, and community service work, etc.):	○	○	○	○	○	○
15. Proper Use of Social Media (not paying attention due to texting, etc.):	○	○	○	○	○	○
16. Integrity (responsibility for actions, follow policies, etc.):	○	○	○	○	○	○
17. Professionalism (strive to be the 'best' in presenting themselves, dealing with customers, quality of work produced, etc.):	○	○	○	○	○	○
18. Interpersonal Skills (getting along, helping others, etc.):	○	○	○	○	○	○
19. Communication Skills (representing self effectively within and without the organization):	○	○	○	○	○	○
20. Responsibility (accepting responsibility for actions and work produced):	○	○	○	○	○	○
21. Positive attitude towards work, supervisors, and the organization in general:	○	○	○	○	○	○

4. As a perception, how do you think the greater majority of college students would rate these Soft Skill Attributes for themselves?

◯ They will rate themselves higher in most or all attributes

◯ They will rate themselves about average in most or all attributes

◯ They will rate themselves lower in most or all attributes

◯ Not Sure

Comments on this question?

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5. According to Live Careers, the following list are the *Top 10 Soft Skills in Demand* in the workforce today. Please rate each item in terms of the options for each Soft Skill based on your experiences in working with recent college graduates and/or current employees.

	Required Skill	Optional Skill	Needs Improvement	Currently adequate	We provide employees training in this area
1. Communication Skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Computer and Technical Literacy	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Interpersonal Skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Adaptability	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Research Skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Project Management Skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. Problem-Solving Skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. Process Improvement Expertise	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. Strong Work Ethic	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. Emotional Intelligence	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Do you think it is possible to teach Soft Skills to students who lack these skills so that they might change their use of these skills in college, community service, and in the workplace?

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6. What is your opinion of the relationship between soft skills and technical skills?(**Please select all of the items below that apply to your experience.**)

- [ ] You <u>cannot</u> have one without the other and be successful

- [ ] You <u>can</u> have one without the other and be successful

- [ ] Organizations <u>require</u> individuals to have both employability skills and technical skills

- [ ] Organizations <u>do not require</u> individuals to have both employability skills and technical skills

- [ ] Soft skills should be learned 'at home', <u>not</u> on the job

- [ ] Learning soft skills takes away from the time needed to learn academic and/or technical skills

- [ ] I would be <u>agreeable</u> for students to having a course in their Plan of Study on Employability Skills

- [ ] I would <u>not be agreeable</u> to having a course in their Plan of Study on Employability Skills

Are there any two or three attributes that you would consider to be the absolute most important for students to have before entering the workforce? Would you please give a short discussion of why you selected these specific items?

7. What is your opinion of the following statement: "While technical skills are a part of many excellent educational curricula, soft skills need further emphasis in the community college curricula so that students learn the importance of soft skills early in their academic/technical programs before they embark on a business or other career." (Robles, 2012)
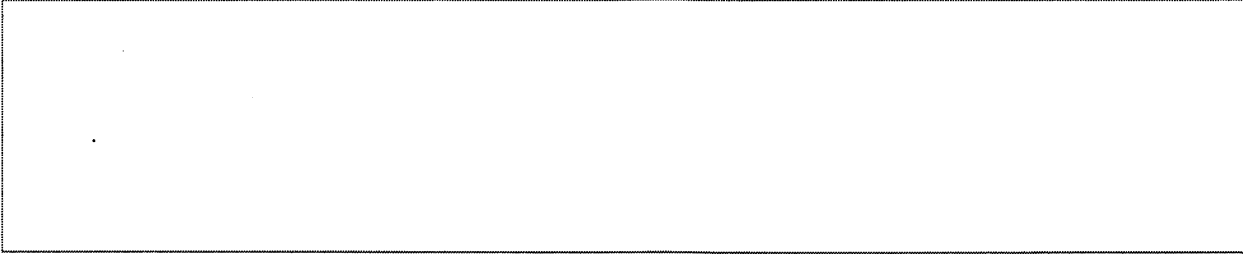
- ( ) I Agree

- ( ) I Disagree

- ( ) No Opinion

Any comments you would like to add to this?

8. In your opinion, do you think there is merit in having students and/or employees mentor each other to improve Soft Skills?

9. When appropriate, what is your opinion that team projects and presentations would improve many of the Soft Skills Attributes for students?

10. In your opinion, what should community college instructors and/or students do to improve the soft skills of future employees (students from high school and/or college)?

Purpose in this study.

The purpose in this study is to acquire insight from Faculty, Students, and Employers, in regards to current perceptions and/or experiences that will indicate if students have the necessary [soft skills/work ethics/employability skills/people skills] for the workforce. The extended purpose of this research is to use the data and information as a catalyst to include soft skill outcomes in a student's Plan of Study for: 1) developing soft skills that are 'missing', and/or; 2) to enhance those that are present. The survey will take approximately 7-to-10 minutes and inclusion in the study is based on random sampling and voluntary participation. <u>All participant data and/or e-identification</u>(IP Address) <u>is confidential and anonymous and will *not* be released in any form</u>. This specific survey is intended for Faculty Members of the Alabama Community College System.

NOTE: Soft skills, employability skills, people skills, and work ethics are interchangeable in this study. (Examples: Communication Skills; Computer and Technical Literacy; Interpersonal Skills; Adaptability; Research Skills; Project Management Skills; Problem-Solving Skills; Process Improvement Expertise; Strong Work Ethic; Emotional Intelligence) *[A Soft Skills Descriptor sheet is also provided with this survey.]*

Thank You,
Dr. Ken Scott & Dr. Syed Raza
Co-Principal Investigators
Trenholm State Community College

1. Please provide some basic demographic and background data: (Select all that apply)

- [ ] I have been teaching for more than 10 years.
- [ ] I have been teaching for less than 10 years.
- [ ] I teach in an Academic Area (Math, English, etc.)
- [ ] I teach in a Technical Area (CIS, Welding, etc.)
- [ ] I often communicate with members of the workforce about students' employability skills
- [ ] I have studied the issue of employers' views on soft skills
- [ ] I prefer to focus on technical or academic skills, rather than soft skills

2. Workforce Solutions Group at St. Louis Community College found that more than 60 percent of employers said applicants lack "communication and interpersonal skills" — an increase of about 10 percentage points in just two years. Many managers also said that today's applicants can't think critically and creatively, solve problems or write well (*Fiscal Times*, 29Jan2014). As a faculty member, what is your opinion of this statement?

◯ Agree; students' soft skills are generally inadequate for the workforce

◯ Disagree; students' soft skills are generally adequate for the workforce

◯ Unsure; students' soft skills range from adequate to inadequate in each class

Comments or suggestions?

* 3. For each of the following Soft Skill Attributes, please indicate the trending direction of each item as demonstrated by students in general. Example: if overall, writing skills are perceived to be trending towards poor to fair, please rate the overall skills as either poor or fair. These ratings are based on your opinion/perception/experience in the range of inadequacy (Poor) to adequacy (Excellent) for each of the work ethics/soft skills/employability skills/people skills attributes of students as noted below:

	Don't Know	Poor	Fair	Average	Good	Excellent
1. Writing Skills for Assignments (papers, projects, technical reports)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
2. Punctuality to Class & Office Hour Appointments	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
3. Work & Outcomes Produced in Teams/Groups	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
4. Motivation to Succeed at College-level Work	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
5. Quality of Oral Presentations (PowerPoint, Posters...)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
6. Consistently Producing **Workforce Quality** Work	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
7. Computer Skills to Meet Course Requirements	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
8. High School Prep for College Level Work/Technical Skills Development	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
9. Respect For Others (respect for ideas even when disagreeing, etc.)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
10. Enjoys Learning New Things (Enthusiasm, attitude, etc.)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
11. Planning Acumen (chapters read for class, pencils/pens brought to class, etc)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
12. Time Management (work always late or on time, need more time, etc.)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
13. Math Skills (are students Mathematically prepared for the class requirements?)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

	Don't Know	Poor	Fair	Average	Good	Excellent
14. Leadership (take the lead in groupwork, projects, community service, etc.)	○	○	○	○	○	○
15. Proper Use of Social Media (not paying attention due to texting, etc.)	○	○	○	○	○	○
16. Integrity (responsibility for actions, follows class/school policies, etc.)	○	○	○	○	○	○
17. Professionalism (strive to be the 'best' in presenting themselves, classroom assignments, appropriate attire, etc.)	○	○	○	○	○	○
18. Interpersonal Skills (getting along, helping others, etc.)	○	○	○	○	○	○
19. Communication Skills (representing self effectively with others)	○	○	○	○	○	○
20. Responsibility (accepting responsibility for actions and work produced)	○	○	○	○	○	○
21. Positive Attitude Towards You, the Instructor	○	○	○	○	○	○

4. As a perception, how do you think the greater majority of students would rate these Soft Skill Attributes for themselves?

○ They will rate themselves higher in most or all attributes

○ They will rate themselves about average in most or all attributes

○ They will rate themselves lower in most or all attributes

Comments on this question?

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5. Do you *currently and intentionally* include and/or observe many (or most) of these Soft Skill Attributes in your classroom/lab activities/work with students? *(Check all that you specifically do in your normal duties as a Faculty Member)*

☐ Yes, I include and observe ALL of these in various outcomes in my classes/labs/work with students

☐ Yes, I include and observe MANY of these in various outcomes in my classes/labs/work with students

☐ Yes, I include and observe SOME of these in various outcomes in my classes/labs/work with students

☐ Not really; I teach them technical skills and the soft skills are an ancillary part of that process

☐ Not really; I teach them academic skills and the soft skills are an ancillary part of that process

☐ I've never given much attention to soft skills unless a student has obvious issues

Do you think it is possible to teach Soft Skills to students who lack these skills so that they might change their use of these skills in college, community service, and in the workplace?

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6. What is your opinion of the relationship between soft skills and technical skills?**(Please select all of the items below that apply to your experiences.)**

☐ You <u>cannot</u> have one without the other and be successful

☐ You <u>can</u> have one without the other and be successful

☐ Organizations <u>require</u> individuals to have both employability skills and technical skills

☐ Organizations <u>do not require</u> individuals to have both employability skills and technical skills

☐ Soft skills should be learned 'at home', <u>not</u> on the job

☐ Teaching soft skills takes away from the time needed to teach academic and/or technical skills

☐ I would be <u>agreeable</u> to having a course in the Plan of Study on Employability Skills

☐ I would be <u>not be agreeable</u> to having a course in the Plan of Study on Employability Skills

Are there any two or three attributes that you would consider to be the absolute most important for students to have before entering the workforce? Would you please give a short discussion of why you selected these specific items?

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7. What is your opinion of the following statement: "While technical skills are a part of many excellent educational curricula, soft skills need further emphasis in the community college curricula so that students learn the importance of soft skills early in their academic/technical programs before they embark on a business or other career." (Robles, 2012)

○ I Agree

○ I Disagree

○ Neutral

Any comments you would like to add to this?

[ ]

8. In your opinion, do you think there is merit in having students mentor each other to improve Soft Skills?

[ ]

9. When appropriate, what is your opinion that team projects and presentations would improve many of the Soft Skills Attributes for students?

[ ]

10. In your opinion, what should community college instructors and/or students do to improve the soft skills of students?

[ ]

Purpose in this study.

The purpose in this study is to acquire insight from Faculty, Students, and Employers, in regards to current perceptions and/or experiences that will indicate if students have the necessary [soft skills/work ethics/employability skills/people skills] for the workforce. The extended purpose of this research is to use the data and information as a catalyst to include soft skill outcomes in a student's Plan of Study for: 1) developing soft skills that are 'missing', and/or; 2) to enhance those that are present. The survey will take approximately 7-to-10 minutes and inclusion in the study is based on random sampling and voluntary participation. <u>All participant data and/or e-identification (IP Address) is confidential and anonymous and will _not_ be released in any form</u>. This specific survey is intended for Students of the Alabama Community College System.

NOTE: Soft skills, employability skills, people skills, and work ethics are interchangeable in this study. (Examples: Communication Skills; Computer and Technical Literacy; Interpersonal Skills; Adaptability; Research Skills; Project Management Skills; Problem-Solving Skills; Process Improvement Expertise; Strong Work Ethic; Emotional Intelligence) _[A Soft Skills Descriptor sheet is also provided with this survey.]_

Thank You,
Dr. Ken Scott & Dr. Syed Raza
Co-Principal Investigators
Trenholm State Community College

1. Please provide some basic demographic and background data: (Select all that apply)

- [ ] I am pursuing an Associate Degree, with plans to enter the workforce after graduation.

- [ ] I am pursuing an Associate Degree, with plans to pursue a BS, Master's and/or PhD.

- [ ] My area of focus is in the Academic Majors (Math, English, Psychology, etc.)

- [ ] My area of focus is in the Technical Majors (CIS, Welding, Engineering, etc.)

- [ ] I work while pursuing my degree.

- [ ] I do not work while pursuing my degree.

- [ ] I believe that my soft skills/employability skills/work ethics is/are acceptable.

- [ ] I believe that my soft skills/employability skills/work ethics need improvement.

2. Workforce Solutions Group at St. Louis Community College found that more than 60 percent of employers said applicants lack "communication and interpersonal skills" — an increase of about 10 percentage points in just two years. Many managers also said that today's applicants can't think critically and creatively, solve problems or write well (*Fiscal Times*, 29Jan2014). As a student, what is your opinion of this statement?

○ I Agree; I think my soft skills need improvement for the workforce

○ I Disagree; I think my soft skills are adequate for the workforce

○ Not Sure because I'm not clear on what soft skills really are

Do you have any comments on the idea presented by the Workforce Solutions Group statement above?

[ ]

* 3. For each of the following Soft Skill Attributes, please rate your overall opinion/perception/experience in the range of inadequacy (Poor) to adequacy (Excellent) for each of the work ethics/soft skills/employability skills/people skills attributes of students (specifically yourself) as noted below:

	Don't Know	Poor	Fair	Average	Good	Excellent
1. My Writing Skills for Assignments (papers, projects, technical reports) are:	○	○	○	○	○	○
2. My Punctuality to Class & Office Hour Appointments are:	○	○	○	○	○	○
3. My Work & Outcomes Produced in Teams/Groups is:	○	○	○	○	○	○
4. My Motivation to Succeed at College-level Work is:	○	○	○	○	○	○
5. My Quality of Oral Presentations (PowerPoint, Posters...) is:	○	○	○	○	○	○
6. My Ability To Consistently Produce **Workforce Quality** Work is:	○	○	○	○	○	○
7. My Computer Skills to Meet Course Requirements are:	○	○	○	○	○	○
8. My High School Prep for College Level Work/Technical Skills Development is:	○	○	○	○	○	○
9. My Respect For Others (respect for ideas even when disagreeing, etc.) is:	○	○	○	○	○	○
10. My Enjoyment for Learning New Things (Enthusiasm, attitude, etc.) is:	○	○	○	○	○	○
11. My Planning Acumen (chapters read for class, pencils/pens brought to class, etc) is:	○	○	○	○	○	○
12. My Time Management (work always late or on time, need more time, etc.) is:	○	○	○	○	○	○
13. My Math Skills (Am I Mathematically prepared for the class requirements?) are:	○	○	○	○	○	○

	Don't Know	Poor	Fair	Average	Good	Excellent
14. My Leadership (take the lead in groupwork, projects, community service, etc.) is:	○	○	○	○	○	○
15. My Proper Use of Social Media (not paying attention due to texting, etc.) is:	○	○	○	○	○	○
16. My Integrity (responsibility for actions, follow class/school policies, etc.) is:	○	○	○	○	○	○
17. My Professionalism (strive to be the 'best' in presenting themselves, classroom assignments, etc.) is:	○	○	○	○	○	○
18. My Interpersonal Skills (getting along, helping others, etc.) are:	○	○	○	○	○	○
19. My Communication Skills (representing self effectively with others) are:	○	○	○	○	○	○
20. My Responsibility (accepting responsibility for actions and work produced) is:	○	○	○	○	○	○
21. My Positive Attitude (towards my instructor, others) is:	○	○	○	○	○	○

4. As a perception, how do you think the greater majority of students would rate these Soft Skill Attributes for themselves?

○ They will rate themselves higher in most or all attributes

○ They will rate themselves about average in most or all attributes

○ They will rate themselves lower in most or all attributes

○ Not Sure

Comments on this question?

[ ]

5. For the ten items below, indicate how these items relate to you in terms of the choices given. You should check each response that applies to you for each category. For example, if your communications skills are in need of improvement, and you are willing to learn to improve them, but you prefer technical skills over communication skills, you would select: I Need Improvement, I'm willing to learn, and I prefer technical skills over this item.

	Not sure what this item is	I Know I Need Improvement	I'm good with this one	I'm willing to improve in this area	I prefer technical skills over this item
1. Communication Skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Computer and Technical Literacy	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Interpersonal Skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Adaptability	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Research Skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Project Management Skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. Problem-Solving Skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. Process Improvement Expertise	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. Strong Work Ethic	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. Emotional Intelligence	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Do you think it is possible to teach Soft Skills to students who lack these skills so that they might improve their use of these skills in college, community service, and in the workplace?

6. What is your opinion of the relationship between soft skills and technical skills?(Please select all of the items below that apply to your experiences.)

☐ You <u>cannot</u> have one without the other and be successful

☐ You <u>can</u> have one without the other and be successful

☐ Organizations <u>require</u> individuals to have both employability skills and technical skills

☐ Organizations <u>do not require</u> individuals to have both employability skills and technical skills

☐ Soft skills should be learned 'at home', <u>not</u> on the job

☐ Learning soft skills takes away from the time needed to learn academic and/or technical skills

☐ I would be <u>agreeable</u> to having a course in the Plan of Study on Employability Skills

☐ I would <u>not be agreeable</u> to having a course in the Plan of Study on Employability Skills

Are there any two or three attributes that you would consider to be the absolute most important for students to have before entering the workforce? Would you please give a short discussion of why you selected these specific items?

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7. What is your opinion of the following statement: "While technical skills are a part of many excellent educational curricula, soft skills need further emphasis in the community college curricula so that students learn the importance of soft skills early in their academic/technical programs before they embark on a business or other career." (Robles, 2012)

○ I Agree

○ I Disagree

○ No Opinion

Any comments you would like to add to this?

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8. In your opinion, do you think there is merit in having students mentor each other to improve Soft Skills?

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9. When appropriate, what is your opinion that team projects and presentations would improve many of the Soft Skills Attributes for students?

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10. In your opinion, what should community college instructors and/or students do to improve the soft skills of students?