

Soft Skills for STEM Undergraduates

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Effective communication as a key to a successful project, regardless of the industry. When one reflects on the education of today's engineers and construction undergraduate students, there has been little effort to teach soft skills and identify how they can be applied in the professional world. Technical undergraduate curriculums which include engineering and construction along with other science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) degrees focus much of their effort on technical coursework. Engineering and engineering technology are technical fields; however, the future success of engineers and the society they are innovating is rooted in their ability to effectively communicate their ideas. Therefore, as educators, we must infuse ways to improve soft skills and particularly effective communication into the curriculum. These soft skills become invaluable when one considers the current globalization of the construction and engineering. Working in foreign land comes with several barriers like different technical practices, standard units, expertise, cultural norms and linguistic differences. Effective communication and being sensitive to other cultures can help overcome all these barriers. Soft skills play an important role in the success of professionals in engineering, construction and society as a whole.