


## Leadership and Professional Development: An Integral Part of Agribusiness Education at South Carolina State University

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## The “Soft Skills” Gap in Professional Education

[CII-Coimbatore launches soft skills training programme](#)

### Our Bureau

**COIMBATORE:** CII Coimbatore zone has launched a soft skills training programme to strengthen students communication skills and career prospects. The soft skills training initiative, according to Mr K. Jayaramakrishnan, Chairman-Task Force on Industry-Institute Interaction, CII (TN) would be replicated at other zones of CII very soon. Dr Mahalingam College of Engineering and Technology at Pollachi near Coimbatore is the first institute to take up this initiative. The CII initiative is based on feedback from industry. Delivering the keynote address at the inaugural session of the soft skills training programme, Mr Jayaramakrishnan, while emphasising that soft skills played a vital role in making students employable, pointed out that the candidates by and large failed to impress during interviews not because of the dearth in talent, but due to lack of soft skills.

CII has drawn up a structured approach for assessing students on their soft skills profile using scientifically developed, tested and validated psychometric testing tool.

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## Soft Skills in Business Education

- The business curriculum historically emphasizes technical skills and competencies
- Other skills, such as the ability to communicate ideas effectively, to work as a member of a team and to provide leadership are often just as important in determining long term career success
- These skills come naturally to some individuals but require a great deal of attention and nurturing in others

## The Importance of Soft Skills

“..a growing number of employers agree that it is communication, leadership, teamwork, and other so-called soft skills that truly distinguish M.B.A. candidates today. According to a 2006 survey by the Graduate Management Admission Council, nearly two fifths of employers say these are extremely important in selection and hiring. "The globalization of business requires companies to operate across a wider degree of diversity when it comes to clients, shareholders, and employees," says John Costas, chairman and CEO of Dillon Read Capital Management, a hedge fund in Stamford, Conn. "That's where things like leadership, being a team player, empathy, and excellent communication come into play." This is especially true over the course of a career, he notes, as executives take on general management responsibilities.”

[http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2007/03/29/grad\\_schools/main2625088.shtml](http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2007/03/29/grad_schools/main2625088.shtml)

## LAPD at SCSU: Bridging the Gap

- The Leadership and Professional Development Curriculum was initiated in 1997 as an attempt to provide additional preparation in business “soft skills”
- The goal of the program is to provide students with the capabilities to be competitive in the job market and successful in their business careers
- The program was designed as a supplement to the standard business curriculum that would develop soft skills and leadership skills throughout the student’s matriculation

## Core Business and Agribusiness Courses at SC State University

### **Business Core**

- Financial and Managerial Accounting
- Principles of Economics
- Principles of Management/Finance/Marketing
- Business Policy

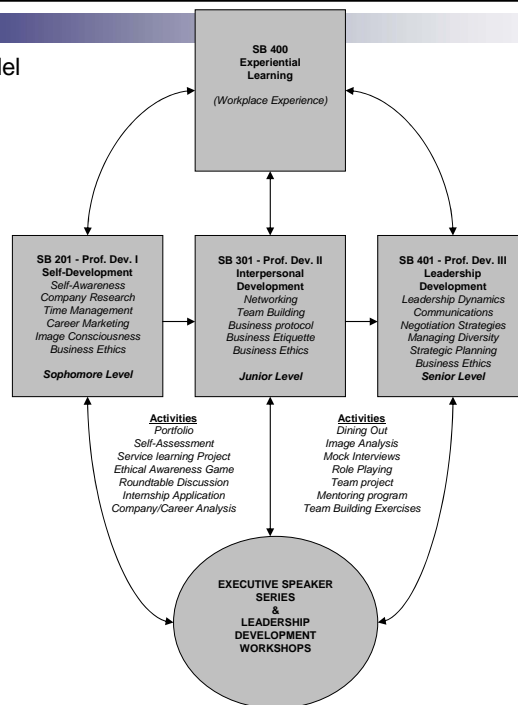
### **Agribusiness Core**

- Intermediate Micro/Macro Analysis
- Agribusiness Marketing and Price Analysis
- Commodity Futures and Options
- Agribusiness Finance
- Agribusiness Strategy

## How Agribusiness Curriculum is Integrated in the Business and LAPD Programs

<b>Year 1</b>	Gen Ed+Introduction to Business
<b>Year 2</b>	Gen Ed + LAPD/SB 201
<b>Year 3</b>	Core Business + Core Agribusiness + LAPD/BS 301
<b>Year 4</b>	Core Business + Core Agribusiness + LAPD/BS 401 + SB 400 (Experiential Learning)

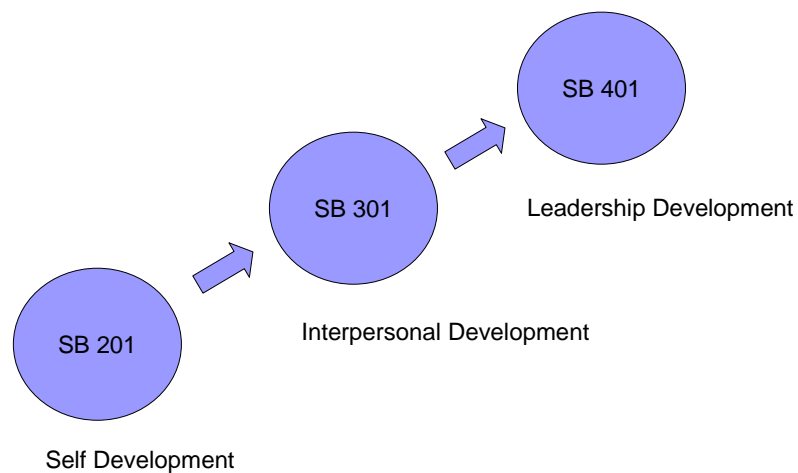
### The LAPD Model



## Critical Student Skills Outcomes in the LAPD Model

- Effective Communication
- Self Awareness & Development
- Networking
- Team Building
- Honesty & Integrity
- Business Etiquette
- Organizational Savvy/Business Protocol
- Leadership Development
- Career Marketing
- Technological Competence

## Course and Skills Progression



# LAPD Course Competencies

## SB 201 - Professional Development I - Self-Development

Competency	Description
Self-Awareness	Ability to identify personal interests, values, strengths and weaknesses, and preferences
Company and Career Research	Ability to locate and utilize information sources to conduct company and career research
Time Management	Ability to prioritize assignments and manage time effectively
Career Marketing	Ability to market one's skill sets and abilities through effective resume writing and interviewing skills
Image Consciousness	Ability to project a professional image through attire and demeanor
Business Ethics	Ability to build trust and internalize honesty and integrity

# LAPD Course Competencies

## SB 301 - Professional Development II - Interpersonal Development

Competency	Description
Networking	Ability to build lucrative internal and external relationships
Team Building	Ability to understand group dynamics and work effectively within a team
Business Protocol	Ability to understand formal and informal organizational structures and cultures
Business Etiquette	Ability to apply accepted business etiquette in dining and other situations
Business Ethics	Ability to build trust and internalize honesty and integrity

# LAPD Course Competencies

## SB 401 - Professional Development III - Leadership Development

Competency	Description
Leadership Dynamics, Responsibilities and Development	Ability to define leadership, recognize leadership styles/personalities and internalize leadership characteristics and roles
Leadership Communications	Ability to apply effective communication and persuasion strategies
Negotiation Strategies	Ability to apply successful negotiation strategies
Managing Diversity	Ability to effectively embrace and utilize differences for common gain
Management and Strategic Planning	Ability to apply management and planning strategies
Business Ethics	Ability to build trust; to internalize honesty and integrity

# The Executive Speaker Series

- The ESS is a critical series of speeches and presentations by visiting executives from the private and public sectors
- The series is meant to enhance the business students' knowledge of current state-of-the-art approaches to problem solving and decision making in today's workplace.
- The series also provides a unique opportunity for students to meet, network, and develop professional relationships with senior executives as role models, potential employers, and mentors.

# 2006-2007 Executive Speakers

<i>Guest Speakers – Fall 2006</i>	<i>Guest Speakers – Spring 2007</i>
Theodore R. Daniels, President and CEO Society for Financial Education & Professional Development	Dr. Kelynn A. Moore, President National Black, MBA Association, Inc.
Ms. Equilla Wainwright, Director Diversity Business Development	Ms. Catherine "Cat" Angus Immediate Past District Governor Toastmasters International, District 58
Ms. Stephany Snowden Director of Public Information Richland County Government	The Honorable Senator John Matthews Senate District 39
Ms. Paula A. Reid, Senior Vice President Government Banking Group	Mr. Marcus Williams, Vice President of Diversity Michelin North America
Dr. Annette S. Jackson Assistant Professor of Marketing College of Business and Applied Professional Sciences	Mr. Ted Daniels President and Chief Executive Officer Society for Financial Education
Ms. Lynn Hutto, Director of Human Resources South Carolina Law Enforcement Division (SLED)	Mr. David Evans, Business Etiquette Consultant Milliken and Company
Mr. David Evans, Director of Food Services Milliken and Company	Mr. Rick Wade Vice President for Business Development Palmetto GBA (subsidiary of Blue Cross/Blue Shield of South Carolina)
Mr. Rudy Cunningham, Owner State Farm Insurance Columbia, South Carolina	Mr. Hank Allen, Regional Manager Pfizer Pharmaceuticals
Mr. John F. Carter Regional Director of FDIC	Mr. Dan Black, MBA, CPA Daniel Black and Associates CPA Firm
Ms. Deborah P. Breedlove, CSA Ameriprise Financial Services, Inc.	Ms. Nicole M. Chestang, Chief Operating Officer Graduate Management Administration Council

## Moving Beyond the Classroom

- An additional course in the curriculum (SB 400 -- Experiential Learning) provides students with the opportunity to practice their skills beyond the classroom
- All students are required to work at least 40 hours in the semester as a part-time employee or volunteer capacity
- Students are required to evaluate their experience and be evaluated by a supervisor at the worksite
- The students must also submit an essay describing their work experience and specific lessons learned relative to their exposure to concepts and theories in their academic fields and the LAPD program

## Outcomes and Expectations

- There is much qualitative evidence to support the conclusion that the LAPD program has added value to SCSU business graduates
- Quantifiable assessments are now being developed to measure the impact of the LAPD program relative to specific skills and opportunities for employment

## The Future of LAPD

- LAPD has added adjunct faculty to manage all aspects of the program including the monitoring of consistency across different course sections
- Staff support has been added to refine the ESS program and provide additional support for executive visits
- LAPD is currently being used as a model to extend professional development curricula across the University



## **Concluding Remarks**

- The LAPD program has had a significant impact on the overall business program and lives of our students since its inception almost ten years ago. The curriculum has evolved to become more integrative and self-reinforcing.