Teaching Soft Skills in Information Systems Analysis and Design Undergraduate Courses:
Benefits and Challenges

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Abstract:

In IT undergraduate programs, the importance of soft skills is often recognized, but not emphasized at the same level as technical skills. Technical skills are essential to students pursuing careers in IT. These are taught to varying degrees within undergraduate IT programs. Assignments and assessments for building technical skills are usually straightforward.

Assignments, and assessing those assignments, that build soft skills can be difficult. Selling the importance of soft skills to students focusing on technical skills is an additional challenge. A cursory discussion may not improve students' abilities in this area or motivate them to value their impact. But creating and implementing classroom assignments and activities for developing strong soft skills can be a way to improve these skills and to highlight how critical they are for IT professionals. Incorporating classroom activities that allow students to practice these skills and encouraging self-reflection regarding team interaction can be helpful in reinforcing soft skills growth. This paper takes a look at a current course method that includes activities that are engaging, fun, and hopefully, impactful. It focuses on a current classroom approach that attempts to address the issues around teaching soft skills to undergraduate IT students.