

# Developing Professional Writing Skills that Prepare Applicants for Professional Internships and Positions after Graduation

Debra Caires

Director, Internship Program CoSci and Faculty in Residence, Writing Center

## Introduction

Our goal was to deliver highly interactive workshop sessions (one-on-one tutoring/mentoring/coaching) that helped student participants assess their personal knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) and incorporate practical, workable tips for writing a compelling, persuasive résumé, cover letter, or professional document by transferring marketable skills, knowledge, and outcomes into a written document, and learn how to use these tools (résumé, cover letter, LinkedIn, Portfolium) to secure an interview and, ultimately, either obtain an internship, a full time position, or entrance into graduate school.

## Results

**Client demographics:** 40 individual visits (14 repeat visits) 10 female students (38%) and 16 male students (62%) (Male student numbers increased due to active recruiting on my part.)

**Client was scheduled for 30 minutes, and 60 minutes given if warranted:**

21 30-minute sessions (53%) 19 60-minute sessions (8%)

**Client preparedness on a scale from 1 to 5 (1=grossly ill prepared and 5=extremely prepared):**  
1=3%, 2=0%, 3=25%, 4=38%, and 5=35%

**Clients sought individual coaching for the following (may need more than more area):**

- Statement of purpose for graduate school (15%)
- statement of purpose for an exchange program (0%)
- cover letter/résumé help (68%)
- LinkedIn profile help (20%)
- offer letter response (8%)
- how to get started (8%)
- and other professional letters (13%)

**Seeking help with a statement of purpose or letter of intent, the number of clients who successfully had a plan of action, prior to their appointment, is as follows (may include more than one area):**

- researched school's mission statement (28%)
- researched program's mission statement (43%)
- researched program's faculty and faculty area of interest (68%)
- researched Alumni (graduates of the program) (21%)

Overall, students applying to a graduate program or exchange program, initially, lacked a plan of action for writing the personal statement or letter of intent.

**For those seeking an internship or employment, the following areas were lacking for a successful outcome:**

- did not have a targeted internship/job spec (brought in the internship or job announcement) (38%)
- did not determine the type of résumé that would be best suited for their level of knowledge, skills, and abilities (functional, chronological, or blend of both) (15%)
- did not know the difference between what information is placed on a résumé as apposed to the cover letter (15%)
- did not explore other options for creating a résumé and cover letter, such as LinkedIn (25%)
- and neglected to research the company or organization they wished to apply to for an internship or employment (45%)

## Conclusions

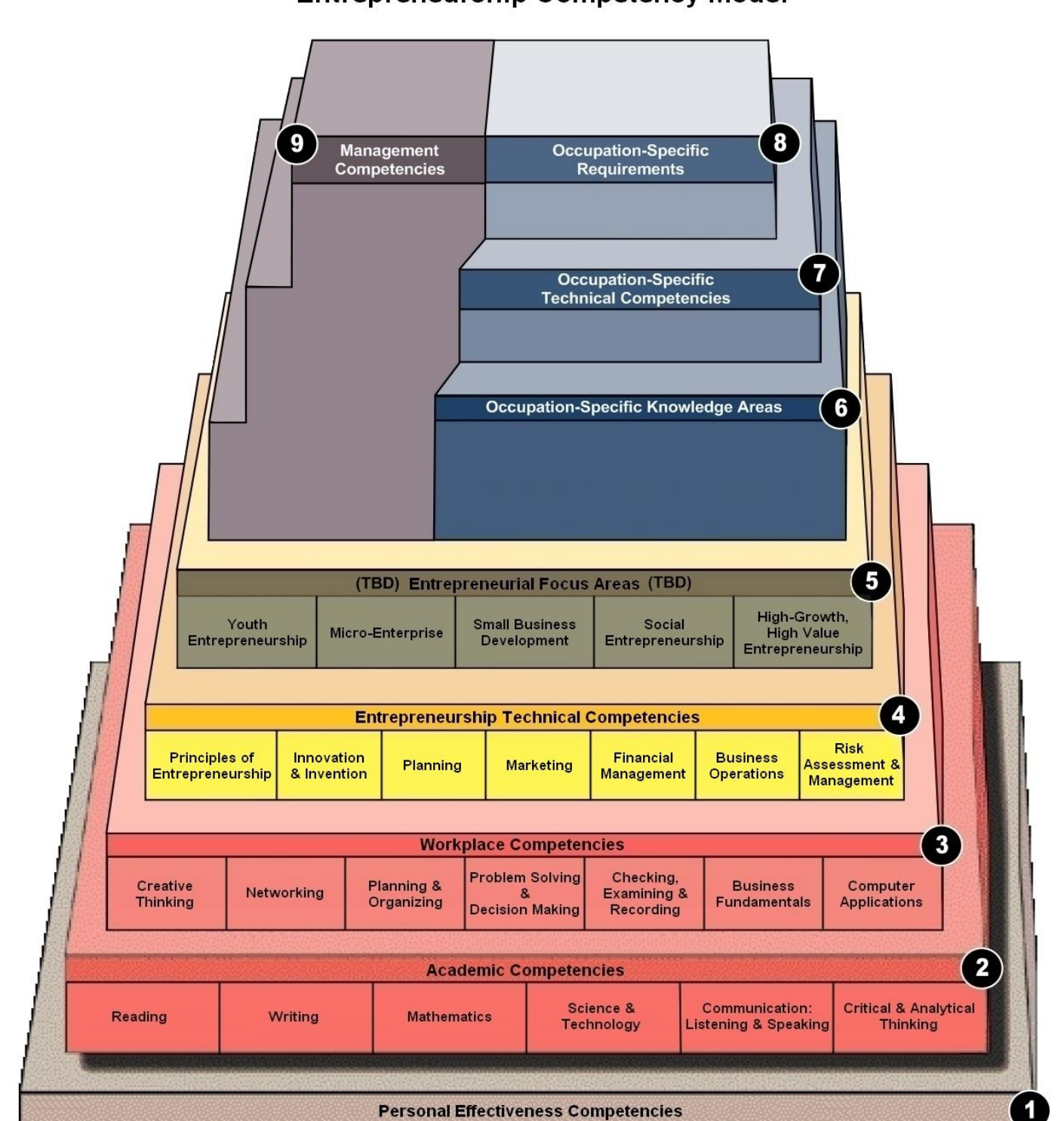
**After individual coaching, it was expected that the client would do the following before the next session (student may need more than one area):**

- research their audience and know their reader (20%)
- determine the purpose of the document (10%)
- identify what they wanted to accomplish with their document (30%)
- identify goals and communicate those goals to the reader (45%)
- substantiate their claims (I am able to XYZ based on ABC.) (48%)
- organize their document (tell a story) (28%)
- use the STAR method (Situation, Tasks, Actions, Results) (75%)
- use KSA (knowledge, skills, and abilities) for their cover letter (40%)

One-on-one meetings (and workshops) focused on entrepreneurship and teaching potential student hires (clients) the importance of building their professional brand.

- The economy has changed drastically: the internship is now the entry level job and the entry level job requires two years experience.
- Problem-based learning is critical to student development and ultimately student employment.
- Possessing the entrepreneurial mindset and skills will allow for success in our future economy and ever-changing workplace.

Entrepreneurship Competency Model



## Literature cited/Lit Review

- *Career Development Quarterly*
- *Career World*
- *Careers and Colleges*
- *Going Global Career Guides*
- *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*
- *Journal of Business Communication*
- *Journal of Career Development*
- *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication*

This project was funded through the Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISI) Project at SJSU, which is funded through the U.S. Department of Education (P382B110017).