

BEFORE AND AFTER EXAMPLE: PROPOSAL TO THE NATIONAL COLLEGIATE INVENTORS AND INNOVATORS ALLIANCE

Opening Paragraph: BEFORE

Historical Context

Since the inception of the Springfield Enterprise Center and the Entrepreneurial Institute in 1995, Springfield Technical Community College has been a leader in promoting entrepreneurship education and business incubation at the community college level. Our vision for community college entrepreneurship serves to complement the mission of the National Collegiate Inventors and Innovators Alliance by fostering innovation and entrepreneurship within the Community College segment of higher education. Community colleges now enroll almost half of all entering college freshmen and over 52% of all U.S. undergraduates. Given this increasing enrollment demand, coupled with our historic role of supporting local and regional economic and business development, progressive community colleges now view entrepreneurship education as integral to achieving their mission.

Opening Paragraph: AFTER

Introduction: For a lot of people, engineering carries an undeserved stigma—they think it is not a creative endeavor, that it has no room for individual self-expression. As a result, many students who might thrive in and contribute to the field avoid it, lessening the available pool of potential engineers needed to meet workforce demands. In a July 2007 speech to Workforce Innovations 2007 in Kansas City, Missouri, U.S. Department of Labor Secretary Elaine Chao noted that, “Over the decade ending 2014, our country will need over 900,00 engineers, including aerospace, biomedical, civil, computer software, and environmental engineers.” Springfield Technical Community College’s (STCC) focus and coursework strives to address this demand, but training just those expressing interest in engineering isn’t enough, more students need to be recruited to the field. Therefore, recruiting from those groups typically uninterested and/or under-represented in engineering isn’t just about opening doors of opportunity, it’s also a sensible way to meet industry demand.

Yet meeting engineering demand isn’t only about filling jobs. Because engineers are essential to design, it’s also about ultimately improving the conditions under which all people live. STCC shares the Lemelson Foundation’s and, thus, the National Collegiate Inventors and Innovators Alliance’s (NCIIA) vision that “Invention, innovation, and entrepreneurship are powerful forces that catalyze real and meaningful improvements in people’s lives.” For that reason, STCC not only seeks to turn out functionally competent engineers, it seeks to produce engineers who can approach their tasks with open-minded, team-oriented imagination.

Toward this end, STCC proposes a first level, E-Team-based course, *Entrepreneurship: Where Art Meets Engineering*, which addresses the overall need for engineers combined with the equal need to inspire a more creative approach to societal problem-solving through design.

Opening Paragraph: ASSESSMENT

The old narrative started out with historical context (which I put in a different location in the new narrative). As a consequence, you didn't know what the proposal was about until the second page. My guess is that the reader subconsciously would have been unenthused by this point. I wanted to grab the reader right up front. I was able to cut a sufficient number of unneeded words in the rest of the narrative so I could add a half-page introduction in the beginning and still meet the five-page limit.

Everything about the way the new introduction was written was quite intentional. For example, NCIIA's website notes that "The NICCA places a high value on grant proposals that demonstrate concern for the earth and the health and welfare of humans." The funder is telling me something I need to pay attention to here; it even uses the words *high value*. It would be foolish to not address issues on which they said they place a high value. So, in the new second and third paragraphs I speak to this four times. Can you see those four occasions?

- It's also about ultimately improving the conditions under which all people live.
- STCC share the Lemelson Foundation's and, thus, the National Collegiate Inventors and Innovators Alliance's (NCIIA) vision that "Invention, innovation and entrepreneurship are powerful forces that catalyze real and meaningful improvements in people's lives."
- It seeks to produce engineers who can approach their tasks with open-minded, team-oriented imagination.
- The overall need for more engineers combined with the equal need to inspire a more creative approach to societal problem-solving through design.

I also learn this from the NCIIA website: "NCIIA grant proposals are reviewed by panels of busy professionals who volunteer their time." I took a guess that these busy professionals who care about entrepreneurship, innovation, and invention might be engineers, or at least were used to working with engineers. I figured that maybe they were sick of how engineers are regarded as being smart but staid and that they would care about having more people in the workforce who approach the world and their work with creative design. The first sentence was intended to draw in the reader by acknowledging what they already know and the unfairness of it. The next three sentences described the problem that was likely to ensue as a result of what was stated in the first sentence, intentionally using U.S. Department of Labor data and linking our school's efforts toward meeting this broad challenge. The reaction I hoped to elicit from the readers as a result of the last sentence of that first paragraph was a resounding "Yeah!" How could you not feel good about opening doors of opportunity and being sensible at the same time?

The short, final paragraph of the introduction tells the reader how in one effort we will address the dual problem of not having enough engineers and needing to use engineering creatively in addressing societal problems.

At this point, I want the reader to be excited, to feel understood, and to be ready to hear more. Because it was recommended by NCIIA that the narrative now present the historical context—and because it is wise to follow the suggested format—I am hoping that the reader wants to know about the entity that appears to get it.