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PANEL ON ERP IN THE CURRICULUM

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Overview

Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software runs most of the large corporations in the US and the world. Some universities offer an Introduction to ERP course and several universities offer several undergraduate and graduate ERP courses. Since many universities do not offer an ERP course and they might be concerned with what are the implications if we decide to offer an ERP course, this panel will relate the experiences of several different universities of how the decision was made to offer the ERP course, what were the costs and what were the problems. Issues addressed include, but are not limited to the following:

- What are the benefits of offering ERP-related courses?

Many universities are examining various means for increasing the popularity of their information technology-related programs. While the IT job market shows signs of improvement, the IT programs at many universities are facing declining enrollments. Offering education in high-demand areas such as ERP is one option for attracting students.

- What are the benefits and costs of joining ERP vendor-specific academic alliances?

Offering hands-on reinforcement of ERP concepts is not only attractive to students, but many employers value even limited hands-on experience. Unfortunately, ERP systems are very complex; too complex for most academic computing departments to administer on their own. In addition, securing training for faculty and designing appropriate curriculum are significant challenges. Vendor-specific academic programs such as the SAP University Alliance (<http://www50.sap.com/usa/company/alliances/>) offer solutions to many of the challenges associated with ERP education.

There are costs associated with these programs. The financial commitment is not insignificant. In addition to enrollment fees, there are also costs associated with faculty training.

- What options are available for offering ERP courses? What are the advantages and disadvantages of these options?

Many different options are available offering ERP content in the IT curriculum. These include but are not limited to offering one or two courses that include an ERP component, integrating ERP into existing courses, and offering a sequence of ERP-specific courses. The panel will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the various options.

- What courses are best suited to the integration of ERP content?

A number of courses that typically exist in an information systems curriculum are suitable for the integration of ERP content. For example, existing electronic commerce courses may use ERP software to illustrate supply chain management and customer relationship management concepts.

- What should ERP-specific courses cover?

One strategy for implementing ERP content is to offer an ERP-specific course. However, traditional textbooks are scarce in this domain. Therefore, deciding on the topics to cover in an ERP course can be challenging. The panel will offer suggestions in this area.

Panelists

Panelists will include both highly experienced faculty as well as neophytes in ERP education. Having a range of experience levels allows the panel to offer a variety of perspectives.

Structure of the Panel

Each panelist will make a short statement on one or more of the above issues. (Note that other issues may be added.) This will be followed by a discussion among the audience members and panelists. Our goal is to have a highly interactive discussion on a topic of growing interest.