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PANEL 6 CONNECTING: STRATEGIES FOR BRIDGING THE GAP FROM EDUCATION TO INDUSTRY AND GOVERNMENT

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PANEL 6

CONNECTING: STRATEGIES FOR BRIDGING THE GAP FROM EDUCATION TO INDUSTRY AND GOVERNMENT

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Panelists: Robert I. Benjamin, Xerox Corporation
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Rapid changes in information technology create unique challenges for business schools and educators who must prepare the professionals of tomorrow. Many universities are strengthening their ties to industry and government in order to meet these challenges. In the information systems area, the potential for developing these ties is particularly great.

Information systems professors are taking action to realize this potential in many ways. They are seeking industry and government support for their research. They are developing student internships and class projects to augment the educational process. They are establishing curriculum advisory councils and student mentoring programs. They are encouraging practicing managers to teach university courses and are taking leaves of absence to work in industry.

These activities and linkages with industry and government have raised a number of controversial questions. Some examples, reflecting contrasting views, are:

1. Do ties with industry and government strengthen the mission of the university by expanding its view to practical issues or weaken the mission of the university by limiting its perspective to contemporary problems?
2. Do ties with industry and government reduce the role of the university to that of a trainer of techniques as currently demanded by industry and government or do these ties enable the university to cultivate students' general problem solving aptitudes and hence to educate in the broadest sense?
3. Do ties with industry and government limit academic freedom or expand academic awareness?
4. Do ties with industry generate such extensive consulting rewards that university professors forsake their traditional role as impartial researchers or do these ties provide broad business knowledge enhancing academic credibility?

These and similar questions might be summarized with the following: How can the university strengthen its ties to industry and government and reap the benefits of such ties without compromising its traditional values?

The Panelists

The four panelists are uniquely qualified to discuss strategies for bridging the gap between the world of information systems education and the world of industry and government. Each has considerable experience in information systems education and in industry or government. Each is currently successfully carrying out a strategy for connecting those worlds. The panelists will present their diverse perspectives along with concrete examples and suggestions in order to help other information systems educators develop opportunities for themselves and their students. The panelists and the ensuing discussion will consider the controversial questions raised above.