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## Green IT in the IS Curriculum Can Generate Enrollment Increases

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### Abstract

One opportunity that seems to hold promise for increasing student interest and, hopefully, enrollments in information systems programs is Green/Sustainable IT. My long-term research will outline ways we might operationalize the idea of sustainable information systems in various ways across a university, including adding green IT/IS components to IS curricula.

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Numerous articles have outlined calls for innovative ways to address the enrollment crisis in information technology. One opportunity that seems to hold promise for increasing student interest and, hopefully, enrollments in information systems programs is Green/Sustainable IT. Whereas Watson, Boudreau, and Chen (2010) argue that IT and IS can address environmental sustainability issues, I add that, at the same time, we can also use the excitement that students tend to have for all things “green” as a way to attract more students to our majors and minors. By piquing student interest early on in their academic careers, we may have an opportunity to get more of them to make a commitment to our programs. This may be especially true in business schools where the opportunities to study sustainable issues is often less than it might be in other parts of a university, such as in engineering, architecture, biology, chemistry, or geology.

My long-term research will outline ways we might operationalize the idea of sustainable information systems in various ways across a university, including adding green IT/IS components to IS curricula. For example, sustainable IT concepts could be added to existing courses or even to brand-new courses that focus on sustainability and perhaps as part of a new major or minor in Sustainable Information Systems. At Miami University we have had sustainability added to the curricula in other parts of the university, including an environmental principles and practices co-major. In addition, a new energy policy co-major is currently being developed. However, thus far, our business school has done little in sustainability and especially in sustainable IT. Given the importance of giving environmental stewardship considerations to procuring, using, and disposing information technology components and the precarious political and economic situation that many western countries are in because of their reliance on energy sources from across the globe, the timing seems appropriate for making some bold curricula changes.

One possibility for engaging students in sustainable/green IT issues is to develop activities as part of student organizations, such as student chapters of the Association for Information Systems. In addition, research and projects with university IT functions seem to be ideal because of the possibility for real-world projects right on campus. For example, perhaps there is a need for better communications across the campus about the benefits of simply turning off computers that are not being used? If so, might a group of MIS and marketing students be an appropriate team to tackle such a challenge? Moreover, if people are reluctant to change their behaviors, perhaps psychology students could take part in such education campaigns. Such research projects would also require faculty engagement as mentors and coordinators, which could lead to scholarship productivity and/or ideas for the classroom.

Watson, R. T., Boudreau, M. and Chen, A. J. (2010) Information Systems and Environmentally Sustainable Development: Energy Informatics and New Directions for the IS Community. *MIS Quarterly*, 34, 1, 23-38.

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