Digital Excellence: A Missing Link

TREO Talk Paper

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Abstract

Computer literacy is an essential skill for the modern student. Through misconceptions and wishful thinking, we assume that so-called “digital natives” who grew up around computers understand fundamentals that make them exceptional computer users. However, research has shown little to no difference between digital natives and “digital immigrants” in computer competency (Bennett et al. 2008). Employers place computer skills as one of the key competencies important for new graduates (National Association of Colleges and Employers 2019), yet feedback from employers has shown that outside of technology fields, computer skills are lacking among graduates. Within the last year, the employer perception gap has widened where computing knowledge is becoming more critical, outpacing graduate abilities (NACE 2019). In essence, day-to-day computing use and skills are not matching with the skills students and workers need to be productive.

Just as many universities provide extra resources for fundamental skills like writing or math, we propose that similar resources should be created to develop students’ computer competency and self-efficacy. Through improving their comfort, confidence, and competence with computing, students can better leverage their amazing tools. By maximizing their technological capabilities, they will be more successful as students, and later as employees. The computers they use will be transformed from a necessary hassle, or even an impediment, into a powerful ally.

Working at the intersection of technology, people, and business, Information Systems as a discipline has an opportunity to contribute to students’ essential computing skills. With our focus on technology, we may be missing an opportunity to be a focal point for basic skills across the curriculum, regardless of student major.

The purpose of this research is to identify fundamental computer skills that are beneficial to students in all disciplines, including those outside traditional business and STEM fields. We will work to create a self-directed curriculum that students can use to improve their fundamental skills. Like Khan Academy’s tree of knowledge for mathematics, we want to provide basic resources that everyone can use to develop competency and confidence with computing. These basic skills form a missing link between casual technology use and technology-enhanced productivity.

References


1 https://www.khanacademy.org/exercisedashboard