Reflect and Redefine: Deans’ Perspectives on the Positioning of IS within the Business School

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Reflect and Redefine:
Deans’ Perspectives on the Positioning of IS within the Business School

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ABSTRACT

Over the 12 years since the glory days of the dot com and Y2K phenomena at the turn of the last century, IS departments at many colleges and schools of business have suffered significant declines in student enrollments, elimination from core curricula, reduced faculty numbers, and overall a weakened strategic positioning within the business school. Recent AACSB faculty hiring and salary reports indicate that “CIS” is the only discipline which has seen an overall decline in faculty hiring over the past 10 years, in contrast with significant growth in all other disciplines. Many IS departments have been merged with other disciplines, or closed entirely. In contrast, however, a number of IS departments have continued to enjoy significant growth and success.

This panel of five current/recent business school deans and members of the IS community will offer their perspectives on the strategic positioning of IS within the business school, and share their recommendations on what IS departments need to do to strengthen their positioning within the business school across the domains of teaching, research and relationships with the broader academic and business communities.

Keywords: IS research agenda, Future of IS, IS education, IS curriculum

1. Panel objectives

We propose to engage the panel of business school deans in a highly interactive and provocative session that will offer the audience a variety of controversial and thought-provoking ideas, and foster debate on the current and future positioning of the IS discipline. Consistent with the conference theme, our hope is to offer the audience the opportunity to reflect on their own IS department’s positioning, and to generate some ideas to assist with redefining their future positioning with their home institutions. We anticipate that the session will be of interest to all IS academics who are affiliated with colleges or schools of business, especially those seeking to strengthen their strategic positioning.

2. Panel description

The panel will consist of five current/recent deans all of whom are long standing members of the IS community. Andy Schwarz and Dave Salisbury will serve as co-moderators. The panel moderators will open by setting the context for the panel as described in the abstract above, introduce the panelists and outline elements of their background and
accomplishments that position them well to offer informed perspectives on the panel topic. For the purpose of fostering debate and controversy, one moderator will assume a highly optimistic perspective on the current and future positioning of IS across a range of areas, while the other will maintain a strongly pessimistic perspective. Across the domains of research, teaching, and external relationships, both moderators will advance an opening statement/proposition on the particular issue and then invite the panelists to respond. Drawing from their extensive and diverse experiences, panelists will be invited to share their perspectives on the current positioning of IS within the business school relative to this issue, and to share 1-2 key initiatives that could/should be pursued to address or further strengthen this positioning. Other panelists will be invited to offer alternative perspectives or additional thoughts on the initial panelist’s statements. Following the responses from the panelists, the moderators will assume the role of provocateurs and foster debate within the panelists and encourage active participation by the audience throughout the entire 90 minute session. The audience may be asked to vote on the “winning” perspective to sustain a high level of engagement through the entire session.

The issues to be discussed will be drawn from suggestions by the panelists and from a collection of essays that Andy and Dave have solicited from deans for a special issue of the DATA BASE for ADVANCES in Information Systems, which will be made available as part of (and perhaps prior to) the panel session. Propositions to be discussed will include:

- IS departments that offer courses and programs that attempt to replicate at a mediocre level the offerings of computer science (CS) or information technology (IT) units are doomed to fail.
- Social networking and mobility are spawning a new “golden era” for IS
- IS departments can find ways to add more value both within their home colleges or schools and with their broader universities.
- The value of IS to the business school is not likely to be found in building numbers in the IS major because those who desire deeper understanding of technology itself tend to gravitate towards CS and Engineering.
- IS departments must be more proactive in obtaining grant funded research and technology transfer.
- The IS discipline makes a significant contribution to the business school research portfolio through its diversity and vibrancy.
- IS academics should partner across the school to deliver integrative and innovative programs.
- IS departments are exemplars in demonstrating relevance to the business community.
- The survival of IS as a significant discipline within business schools is in doubt.

An appropriate mechanism (text messaging, online chat, and/or paper-based) will be used to collect short, provocative questions, comments or additional propositions from the audience for comment and response by the panelists. We also intend to capture the entire content of the panel session for possible future publication.

3. Participant Biographies

All participants have committed to attending if the panel is accepted.

Mark A. Fuller is a Professor and Dean of the Isenberg School of Management and holds the Thomas O’Brien Endowed Chair at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Prior to coming to the Isenberg School of Management, Dr. Fuller was Professor and Chair of the Department of Information Systems, Director for Professional Business Programs, and holder of the Philip L. Kays Distinguished Professorship in MIS at Washington State University. Professor Fuller’s research focuses on virtual teamwork, technology supported learning, and trust and efficacy in technology-mediated environments, and has appeared in outlets such as Information Systems Research, Management Information Systems Quarterly, Journal of Management Information Systems, Decision Sciences, Journal of the Association for Information Systems, IEEE Transactions on Engineering Management, Journal of Organizational Behavior, and Decision Support Systems.

Dr. Bill Hardgrave is Dean and Wells Fargo Professor at the College of Business, Auburn. Prior to his appointment at Auburn University, Dr. Hardgrave was professor of Information Systems in the Sam M. Walton College of Business, University of Arkansas, and served as the Executive Director of the Information Technology Research Institute, which he established in 1999. He also founded and directed the RFID Research Center. Dr. Hardgrave has published several books and more than 75 articles primarily on the topics of software development and RFID. His research has appeared in such journals as MIS Quarterly, Production & Operations Management, Journal of Management Information Systems, European Journal of Information Systems, Information & Management, International Journal of RF Technologies: Research and Applications, and many others.
Len Jessup is Dean, Professor of Entrepreneurship and Innovation, and Halle Chair in Leadership at the University of Arizona’s Eller College of Management, where he completed his Ph.D. in 1989. Prior to returning to the Eller School, Jessup served as Dean of the College of Business, Philip L. Kays Distinguished Professor in Management Information Systems, Vice President of University Development, President of the WSU Foundation, Chair of the Department of Entrepreneurship and Information Systems and Director of the Center for Entrepreneurial Studies at Washington State University. His research is aimed at helping people better understand, commercialize, and manage emerging technologies, and other innovations. Recent work includes papers on open innovation, commercialization of radical innovation, new venture strategies, and social entrepreneurship. He has served as an associate editor of MIS Quarterly and as reviewer and editor on over a dozen other journals and conferences.

John Mooney is Associate Professor of Information Systems and Technology Management at the Graziadio School of Business and Management, Pepperdine University, and Research Affiliate at the MIT Sloan Center for Information Systems Research. From 2005-2010, he served as Associate Dean for Academic Programs at the Graziadio School, during which time his responsibilities included leadership and oversight of the development and delivery of the Graziadio School’s portfolio of degree and certificate programs. He was a co-founder of the AACSB Associate Deans Affinity Group, and served as its co-chair from 2008-2010. John also served as Vice-President of Chapters and Affiliated Organizations for the Association for Information Systems (AIS) from 2004-2007. He received the AIS Technology Legacy Award in 2009 for his contributions towards the development of the AIS intellectual infrastructure.

Wm. David Salisbury is an Associate Professor with the Department of MIS, OM & Decision Sciences at the University of Dayton. Dave is interested in organizational impacts of information technology, having written on the interplay between information technology and knowledge management strategies in strategic change initiatives and more recently on how criminal and terror groups may engage in unanticipated uses of IT to advance their agendas. He has also co-authored papers featuring the use of structural equation modeling for confirmatory factor analysis in survey measurement development, and on how Internet information intermediaries may influence offered and transacted prices. His work has been published in Information Systems Research, Small Group Research, Information & Management, Decision Support Systems, The Communications of the Association for Information Systems, The Database for Advances in Information Systems, and Electronic Markets. Dave currently serves as Co-Editor in Chief at The Database for Advances in Information Systems.

Andrew Schwarz, the Milton J. Womack Developing Scholar and Francis M. Coates MBA Professor is an Associate Professor of Information Systems in the E. J. Ourso College of Business at Louisiana State University. His research interests focus on the adoption of new technology, IT-business alignment, and IT outsourcing. Previous work by Dr. Andrew Schwarz has been published in MIS Quarterly, Information Systems Research, the Journal of AIS, the European Journal of Information Systems, and others. He currently serves on AIS Council as the Vice President of Technology and is the Co-Editor-in-Chief for the DATA BASE for ADVANCES in Information Systems. At LSU, he is the Academic Coordinator for Online Graduate Programs and teaches in executive education. Dr. Schwarz is a frequent speaker at national and international practitioner conferences, has served as a consultant for the state of Louisiana on issues of public policy related to technology, and was named as one of the Top 40 business people under 40.

Peter Todd joined the Faculty of Management as Dean and Professor in the fall of 2005. Prior to his appointment at McGill, he was the Chesapeake and Potomac Professor of Commerce, and Senior Associate Dean in the McIntire School of Commerce at the University of Virginia. While at Virginia, he also served as Associate Dean for Graduate Programs. He has also been on the faculty of the Bauer College of Business at the University of Houston where he was a Professor and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Research, as well as Director of the Information Systems Research Center. Peter received his Ph.D. in Management Information Systems from the University of British Columbia. His research interests relate to the role of information technology in decision making, the adoption and diffusion of IT innovations and the management of the IT function. He has published over 30 papers in a variety of journals including ISR and MIS Quarterly.

4. Equipment needed

Projector, computer, Internet access