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ISCC '99

[Information Systems-Centric Curriculum]: Preparing Students to Work with Large Systems

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The ISCC '99 (Information Systems-Centric Curriculum) is unique in that it was specifically designed to prepare students to work on the large, complex systems upon which government, business and industry have come to rely. A Task Force with members from industry and academe developed ISCC'99, which has been reviewed by a large group of reviewers. The review process led to some revisions. The curriculum is now available for dissemination. This project was funded by several NSF/DUE grants and implementation has begun at a few institutions. The formative evaluation of these implementations and two pilot projects for the final course have been very successful and can serve as models for curricular reform in other institutions. The lessons learned in the development of the curriculum can be of help to others. Some schools have applied to NSF/DUE for grants to adapt or adopt parts of ISCC'99.

This curriculum places special emphasis on preparing graduates to work on very large, complex systems. To achieve this there is a great deal of emphasis on developing an understanding of 1) a systems view and 2) information being at the center of the system.

Some of the innovative aspects of the curriculum are: 1) having students begin to look at real computing systems and analyze them in the beginning course, 2) emphasizing learning about and practicing teamwork from the earliest

courses, 3) a course in Dynamics of Change, 4) having both a) a comprehensive project which covers all the important aspects of a system design and b) a real-life experience in the development of a part of a system in a business or industrial environment, and 5) integration throughout the curriculum of the development and practice of personal skills. This paper describes these unique aspects.

ISCC'99 recommends eleven courses, which are specifically described. In addition, courses in communications skills, quantitative methods, and psychology are needed as prerequisites for some ISCC'99 courses. However, ISCC'99 does not specify other courses outside this area, but recognizes that institutions will have their own requirements to ensure that students achieve adequate breadth in their college education. Elective courses are suggested and it is hoped that most programs will offer some or all of these plus courses which they believe necessary for students in their institution.

ISCC'99 contains, in addition to course syllabi for each of the eleven recommended courses, suggested activities to assure that the students have experience with the concepts which were specified by industrial members of the Task Force in their Profile of the Graduate. Further group activities, activities that enhance or develop communications skills are highlighted. Professional and ethical issues are emphasized in two courses.

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