IT Workforce: Point-Counterpoint Dialogue between Academic Professionals and IT Industry Leaders

Panel

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ABSTRACT

The challenges of developing the IT workforce are greater than ever. The challenges include recruiting talented students into MIS and IT majors, retaining talented candidates in the MIS/IT field, and developing programs that prepare entry-level and experienced IT professionals in the right skill sets to meet the needs of employers. The dialogue we propose will enable both academic professionals and IT industry leaders to talk about the challenges they face and to exchange viewpoints about how to meet these challenges.

OBJECTIVES

To provide a dialogue/debate between academic professionals and IT industry leaders on questions relevant to developing the IT workforce of the future.

QUOTES FROM THE FIELD

"Academic professionals are out-of-step with workforce demands. I found the same thing at a STEM summit here in Boston where we were working with a number of educators. It was discouraging to hear from them that they were running the same IT or IS programs that they were running 20 or 30 years ago. Many of them even recognize the problem and they're struggling a bit on what they should be teaching kids as they put them through programs. They seem to focus a lot on what programming skills they should be teaching."

President of the SIM Boston Chapter.

"Tackling the many challenges of IT – from sourcing to funding to business alignment to arduous implementations and thankless support – requires having the best IT team possible in your corner. So, of course, you invest in keeping your team's skills honed and your people at the top of their game. But what skills – both technical and non-technical – do your people need? And how do you get those skills for them?"

SIM Management Council member, SIM Memphis Chapter

"We are not finding the IT graduates with the skill sets we need—both in quality and quantity."

Corporate IT Director, SIM St. Louis Chapter

QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED

1. What skill and knowledge requirements are IT Industry Leaders looking for in MIS graduates?
2. Are academic programs in MIS and Information Technology (IT) generating talented graduates with the skills and knowledge that IT industry leaders are looking for?
3. What innovative programs are MIS and IT Programs using to recruit talented students into MIS and Information Technology fields of study?
4. What innovative programs are IT leaders sponsoring to help colleges and universities develop courses and programs that meet their needs for IT talent?
5. How can academic professionals in MIS and IT work more effectively together with IT industry leaders: (1) to recruit talented students into MIS and IT majors; (2) to improve the quality and effectiveness of the curriculum in MIS and IT; (3) to provide students with internships and projects that will enhance their background for IT job opportunities; and (4) to bridge the gap between the classroom and practice in information technology.
6. What innovative programs are working? How can academic professionals and IT industry leaders partner in the future to develop IT workforce?

OUTCOME MEASURES

1. To establish a collaboration between academic professionals and industry leaders to jointly achieve the goals of encouraging talented students to major in MIS and IT programs and to fill the IT workforce pipeline.
2. To facilitate an ongoing dialogue to cross the chasm between academic programming and industry expectations.
3. To share best practices and resources for bridging the communications gap between academic professionals and industry leaders.

PANELISTS

Jana Markowitz is an experienced technology consultant and organization development professional with a special focus on helping IT organizations with change management, professional development and vendor relationship management.

She founded The Collective Mind, an OD consulting and training company in 1994 after a 15 year career at IBM. Her early work at IBM included technical support and systems implementations. Ultimately she moved into project management, IT strategic planning, and computer-assisted meeting facilitation. She has spent the last 15 years as an OD consultant, providing change management for complex IT projects, teaching the "people" skills she uses in her consulting engagements and coaching IT executives. Clients include NASA, Sears, Hilton Hotels Worldwide, Maybelline and the US Army Corps of Engineers.

Jana holds a bachelors degree in Computer Science and Mathematics from Vanderbilt University and a masters in Organizational Psychology from the University of Memphis.

In 2013 Jana became the Director of Outreach/STEM Initiatives for the Society for Information Management International, a professional organization of information technology executives, thought leaders and academics with 4000 members nationwide and 34 chapters.

Jack D. Becker is an Associate Professor of Business Computer Information Systems at the University of North Texas. He is past Director of the Information Systems Research Center and past Chair of the Department of BCIS (now ITDS) at the University of North Texas. He is Chairperson for PR and Communications for the Dallas Fort Worth Chapter of Society for Information Management (SIM), a past Vice Chairperson, and has been an officer and board member of that organization since 1995.

He served as a member of the ICIS Executive Committee from 1991 to 1994. Becker was co-program chairperson and co-editor of the proceedings for the 1992 ICIS meeting in Dallas, TX. He served as co-general chairperson of the Americas Conference on Information Systems (AMCIS) in Dallas in 2002, and served as the Chairperson of the AMCIS Executive Committee from 2002 to 2003. He was elected the first Vice President for Development of the Association of Information Systems (AIS).

Dr. Becker's recent research and teaching interest areas include analysis of IT Workforce requirements, demand and supply for IT/IS employees, and the role of STEM education in the K-12 educational system. He still dabbles in research on virtual teaming, logistics and eCommerce, data warehouse design and construction, data mining and business intelligence, and group decision support systems. He has published in numerous journals, including *Management Information Systems Quarterly, Journal of Management Information Systems,* and the *Journal of Financial and Quantitative Analysis*.

Dr. Becker received his Ph.D. in business administration and quantitative business analysis, an MBA degree and an AB in mathematics from Washington University in St. Louis, MO.

Mary Sumner is a Professor of Computer Management and Information Systems, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. Prior to that, she was on the faculty of New York University. She has been responsible for building the undergraduate and graduate programs in CMIS and has taught for 28 years in the areas of management of information technology, information systems design, project management, software systems design, and enterprise systems design. Dr. Sumner served as chief information officer for academic affairs and was responsible for organizing and managing information services to support the quality and effectiveness of academic programs at the university. She organizes business/university partnerships and executive programs in leadership, project management, and health informatics.   She has taught ERP systems design at the Norwegian School of Logistics over the past five years, and teaches executive MBA courses in Hong Kong and Singapore.

She has written seven textbooks, including college texts in Management Information Systems and Enterprise Resource Planning, and has published over forty research papers on enterprise resource planning, IT workforce issues, project management, and health informatics. Her research has appeared in Database, the Journal of Systems Management, Information and Management, the Journal of Computer Information Systems, Information Resource Management Journal, the Journal of Strategic Information Systems, and the Journal of Information Technology. Her education includes a B.A. Syracuse, M.A., University of Chicago, M.A., Columbia University, and Doctorate, Rutgers University. Her certifications include Oracle Master's and AMIA Health Informatics.

Pat Coffey is the Chief Information Officer for Allstate and past president of SIM, the Society for Information Management. In these roles, she has demonstrated leadership in IT strategic planning, IT workforce development, and IT alignment on a national and international scale.