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# Innovations in Teaching the Information Systems Curriculum

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# **Innovations in Teaching the Information Systems Curriculum**

**A Panel Discussion for the  
Teaching/Curriculum/Research Center Workshops  
Association for Information Systems Conference  
August 25-27, 1995 Pittsburgh, PA**

**Panelists:**

**Annette Easton  
San Diego State University**

**Irene Liou  
University of Baltimore**

**Joe Valacich  
Indiana University**

**David Jankowski  
California State University, San Marcos**

College students today make up a population that is highly diverse, with values that are often different from the professors. As educators, we are all faced with the question of "How can we effectively teach these students?" This panel proposes to explore several

innovative approaches and techniques that have been successfully integrated into the panelists' courses. These techniques include introducing technology, critical thinking, collaborative learning, and experiential learning. Our goal is to provide concrete suggestions that the audience can take with them and integrate across the IS curriculum.

Each panelist will present an overview of the particular technique they are using, and summarize how others could integrate similar processes into their classes. The panelists represent the range of research, teaching, and research/teaching institutions. Additionally the techniques have been integrated into both graduate and undergraduate courses. The panelists' proposals are summarized below.

## **Collaborative Learning Using Group Support Systems**

**Irene Liou**  
**University of Baltimore**

One approach emphasizing collaborative learning involved conducting class sessions in a group support systems room where all students participated in group sessions to generate ideas, share ideas, discuss issues, and/or make decisions. Typically, students will be assigned readings and work in pairs to design and conduct group sessions. The instructor becomes a facilitator in the design process when students need guidance. Both class objectives and expectations on learning outcomes are integrated in class activities. This approach values team work as well as individual contributions to the learning process. I have used this approach several times and have received many positive comments from students.

### **Using Advanced Communication Technologies to Support Inter-Institutional Student Project Teams**

**Joe Valacich**  
**Indiana University**

Over the past two years, the Indiana University and University of Maryland MBA programs have used desktop video conferencing technologies to support inter-institutional student project activities. The panelist will describe the evolution of the project, the technical capabilities of desktop video conferencing systems, lessons learned and the efficacy of the technology to support distributed learning activities. Ongoing and future projects will also be described.

### **Using the World Wide Web for Systems Development Projects**

**David Jankowski**  
**California State University, San Marcos**

The capstone information systems analysis and design course in the IS curriculum typically includes a semester-long term project, which incorporates the systems development life cycle. All too frequently these projects become coding marathons and result in a toy system that is never used. In order to focus on the other phases of the life cycle, Dr. Jankowski has turned to the World Wide Web for his systems development projects. He exposes his students to all phases of the life cycle (requirements, analysis, design, coding, testing, implementation, and maintenance) by having them develop WWW home pages for themselves, the College of Business Administration faculty, and the College of Business Administration's academic programs.

### **Experiential Learning in Information Systems Projects**

**Annette Easton**  
**San Diego State University**

Many of the Information Systems courses involve having students work on developing projects. Due to the small group size, and course length, systems projects are often forced to have a very small scope. In order to allow the students to get exposure to large scale projects, as well as to more realistic work settings, I have run several classes through a "one-team one-project concept." Using this concept, the entire class functions as a project team, subdivided into functional areas, all needing to coordinate. The benefits and concerns of using this approach will be shared with the audience.

#### Issues to be Addressed by Panelists

The panelists have been asked to address the following issues that can be grouped into student-centered issues and instructor-centered issues.

#### Student Issues

1. What are the benefits that your students have recognized from this technique?
2. Have you measured student performance to determine if students are learning more and/or better?
3. What are the disadvantages that your students have experienced in using this technique?
4. What must be done to best prepare the students to successfully use these new techniques?

#### Instructor Issues

5. What is the major benefit that instructors can recognize by introducing this technique?
6. What would you caution the audience about doing before integrating this technique?
7. What resources (e.g. time, money and equipment) are required to successfully implement this technique?
8. What additional techniques are you using in your courses?