



The Evolution of an MIS Program: Case Study at Southern Connecticut State University

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ABSTRACT

The education of a computer systems analyst remains in high demand. Support of this education has been provided by Southern Connecticut State University for twenty-five years. However, the extent of the support has increased during the last ten years which will eventually culminate with a major in MIS. This case study described the process of evolving the program into its present status.

INTRODUCTION

Computers have been used for a variety of applications in business since the 1950s. In the early years the focus of education of a computer professional was in learning languages to program the computer. In the 1960s, business began to recognize a different form of education for computer systems analysts who design computer systems but do not build them. The difference was knowledge needed in the nature of business itself rather than how computers are programmed. Business schools began offering programs in MIS, as this new field was known. Computer programming was taught by the Computer Science Department usually found in the school of Engineering at a University rather than the School of Business.

BACKGROUND OF THE PROGRAM

In the 1970s, the School of Business Economics (title of the current School of Business of Southern Connecticut State University in the 1970s) began offering a few courses in business applications of computers to support the growing Computer Science program in another area. Southern increased its stature to a university rather than a college by increasing the breadth of its program offerings. The number of MIS courses offered to support the applications track of the Computer Science increased during the 1980s from four to eight but all were electives. In the early 1990s, The author was hired from industry where he held the position of Director of MIS into a full-time tenure-track faculty member with the specified purpose of developing a more extensive program in MIS in the School of Business. Although never specifically written by the then dean, Dr. Alan Leader, his vision was MIS taking over the Computer Science program itself. The author had a different vision, one with a separate major but existing alongside of the Computer Science major. MIS majors could minor in Computer Science and Computer Science majors could minor in MIS.

THE TEN YEAR EVOLUTION

During the early 1990s, my focus was on updating the catalog descriptions of the courses to modern computer system technology (removing references to batch vs. on-line systems). The second step was to organize the existing courses in the catalog into a program allowing students to specialize in

MIS within their major of Business Administration along with the other disciplines – accounting, finance, economics, marketing, and management. The third step was to grow the program into a size (over 60 students) that justified the hiring of a third full-time faculty member (a requirement for any major program).

CURRENT STATUS

In 2002, we revised the program for a specialization in MIS to include more elective credits for Computer Science courses (four courses allowed) and encourage students to select two more courses from Computer Science to receive a minor in Computer Science to support their MIS specialization. We modified the program to encourage internships for MIS work experience. There are now 80 students in the program. In 2003, we revised the program for a specialization in General Management to include electing our MIS Global Information Systems for their international requirement and allow up to three MIS courses for their six courses in management.

FUTURE PLANS

By the end of the current academic year in May 2003, we expect to have in place a degree program in the School of Business at Southern Connecticut State University for a major in Management Information Systems with a minor in Computer Science. This plan requires the hiring of a third member of the MIS department to have sufficient faculty to teach the required ten courses in the major. The author is currently Chair of the School of Business Curriculum Committee so is in a good political position to accomplish this end goal.

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