Chapter X

E-Commerce Curriculum Strategies and Implementation Tactics: An In-Depth Examination of DePaul University's Experience

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ABSTRACT

The fast-paced world of e-commerce demands flexible and rapid e-commerce curriculum development. This chapter describes a successful approach to e-commerce curriculum design and development implemented by DePaul University's School of Computer Science, Telecommunications, and Information Systems (CTI). The master's e-commerce curriculum, designed, developed, and implemented in just seven months, drew 350 students in its first year, and approximately 650 students with majors and concentrations in the e-commerce area in its second year. Underlying the curriculum is reliance upon the principles of the IRMA/DAMA 2000, ISCC '99, and IS '97 model curricula. Strong technological expertise and infrastructure, solid industry relationships, and an entrepreneurial culture

were critical success factors in developing and implementing the curriculum. The strategies that DePaul CTI employed and the lessons that it learned in the process of implementing its e-commerce curriculum are relevant to other universities seeking to move into the e-commerce arena. Projections are made concerning the future of university programs in e-commerce and the challenges that loom ahead.

INTRODUCTION

In the fast-paced world of e-commerce, where dominant technologies are in a perpetual state of flux and today's hot new business models may be obsolete tomorrow, educators can no longer agonize for years or even months over curriculum decisions. Instead of the measured deliberations of the past, e-commerce demands a rapid and flexible curriculum development that anticipates and keeps pace with ever-changing technologies and business models. This chapter discusses a successful approach to e-commerce curriculum design and development implemented by DePaul University's School of Computer Science, Telecommunications, and Information Systems (CTI). DePaul University, with over 20,000 students, is the foremost granter of master's degrees in the state of Illinois, USA (DePaul, 2001). Known for its entrepreneurial environment, DePaul CTI provides BS, MS, and PhD degrees in a variety of IT-related areas, including information systems, computer science, telecommunications and networking, distributed systems, human-computer interaction, and most recently, e-commerce. Its Master of Science degree in E-Commerce Technology (ECT), with over 400 majors and 650 students total in January 2001, is thought to be the largest e-commerce master's program in the world. While it is difficult to directly transplant any curriculum to another institution, the process that DePaul CTI went through to develop its curriculum, the curriculum design principles and learning objectives that it distilled, the implementation strategies that it employed, and the lessons that it learned all have wide-ranging applicability.

BACKGROUND

The E-Commerce Landscape

E-commerce is broadly defined either as conducting business online, typically by using the World Wide Web, or as applying Internet technologies,

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