IT Programs and CS Departments

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Abstract

Computer Science departments are experiencing increases in enrollments that rival the expansion in the early '80s. At the same time, many of these students do not seem interested in or equipped to handle the rigor of a traditional computer science program. They are coming into computer science with expectations about computer science education that are significantly different from what they are finding on campus. Instead of courses on data structures and algorithms, automata, and operating systems, they want to learn Visual BASIC, linux, scripting languages, component-oriented computing, and obtain Microsoft certification.

Computer Science departments responses to these pressures differ widely. Some take the approach that this is a temporary aberration and should have no affect whatsoever on degree programs in computer science. Some provide one-credit courses or seminars to discuss practical aspects of information technology not covered in the curriculum. Others have started information technology programs to provide these students with an alternative program. In some cases, outside pressures (i.e., the university administration or external funding) has mandated that computer science departments provide such programs.

This panel will discuss these issues from varying perspectives. It will also provide some examples of information technology programs in computer science departments as they have evolved at different institutions.