Program Issues Facing the Two-Year and Community College

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Abstract

The two-year and community college information technology department faces an environment that is different from the typical four-year school. Our students come to us with widely differing goals and starting skills than do the four-year students who are working towards a bachelor's degree and have relatively close skill levels due to entrance requirements. Furthermore, we often work with lower levels of funding, and various government sponsored economic development and workforce-training programs that limit what we can do. Most current educational literature approaches curriculum and program development from a four-year frame of reference. This session will address some of the issues facing two-year schools, as well as possible approaches that can be taken.

The agenda for this session will include the following discussion areas:

1. How does the two-year school choose areas and specialties to emphasize in their programs? Is it possible to be *all things to all people*?

2. How does the two-year school meet the demands of the local economy while still remaining within the range of first- and second-year student skills?

3. What skills are required to prepare the two-year college student for transfer to a four-year institution? Is it possible to meet those demands in the two-year program?

4. Should the information technology program offer industry certification programs or should it try to remain product neutral? What are the pros and cons of each approach?

5. How do departments resolve the conflict between the academic and vocational nature of the information system program? Are we in math/science, business, or vocational education? How does this affect our funding and support?

6. How can schools use industry partnerships to enrich the two-year program?

7. How can the two-year school combine the demands for transfer courses, certification programs, industry training, and community education into a single information technology department?

The author will share lessons learned from 10 years' teaching experience in the California Community College system. Participants will be encouraged to work together, sharing from their experience and expertise, to develop new ideas that can be taken back to their respective schools.

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