

# Individual Certification: A Complement to Program Accreditation

Lynn J. McKell, Ph.D., CCP, Panel Moderator  
Marriott School, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT, 84604, USA

John Schoonover  
Nivo International, American Fork, UT, 84003, USA

Kewal Dhariwal  
Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, Edmonton, Alberta - Canada

Herbert E. Longenecker, Jr.  
School of Computer and Information Sciences  
University of South Alabama, Mobile, AL, 36688, USA

**Keywords:** Certification, validating competency and skills, Accreditation

Recent years have seen an active dialog about the merits of accreditation of IS/IT academic programs. Curriculum committees have produced guidelines for courses and programs; and other committees have been formed to create an accrediting body and to set standards for a recognized and accepted standard of IS/IT program accreditation. This panel will explore the case for Individual Certification as a complement to program accreditation.

Program Accreditation focuses on measuring and validating the institution, the faculty and the curriculum which constitute the academic topical content and the pedagogical delivery process; whereas, certification focuses on measuring the output: namely, the competency and skills of the students and graduates. There is a roll for both approaches in satisfying the needs of the IS/IT industry.

The panel participants include the following:

John Schoonover will represent vendor specific certification. He is a national level officer in the organization, which manages the MOUS certification process and examinations for Microsoft. MOUS certification is emerging as the most widely recognized certification for Office computer skills. Many colleges and universities already adopt it as an entry-level standard. Other vendor certifications will be considered in the discussion.

Kewal Dhariwal has served as the President of the Institute for Certification of Computing Professionals (ICCP), and will represent professional level vendor neutral certification. The ICCP was formed in response to an industry need by a coalition of prominent IT/Computer professional societies in the early 1970's, and sponsors the oldest vendor neutral certification in the profession.

Herbert Longenecker has long-term experience researching the IS/IT body of knowledge and formulating related educational standards over several iterations of widely recognized and adopted curriculum guidelines. His insight will contribute to understanding where certification makes sense and identifying the pitfalls, which could be problematic.

The panel moderator will give a short presentation on certification issues relative to education; panel members will explain their organization's approach to certification and how it could be used to provide *value added* in the academic environment. Many institutions are already involved in teaching and promoting various certifications, and others are giving serious consideration to promotion or adoption. This topic is very relevant to IS/IT education and one that complements accreditation efforts.