

Using Live Projects in an Information Systems Capstone Course

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Abstract

Computing programs at various institutions attempt to offer students as many real-world technological development challenges as a curriculum will allow. Often times, the pivotal offering is in a senior project or capstone series of courses. While this is a paramount experience for the student, it can often leave the professors and/or hosting client hanging in anticipation without an implemented solution. The goal of this panel is to attempt uncover ways other institutions have overcome the hurdle of having their seniors implement the technological solutions developed in live capstone courses prior to graduating.

Keywords: Live project, senior project, capstone project.

1. PANEL DESCRIPTION

Faculty and industry often agree that "collaborations between business and academia provide valuable opportunities for students to connect classroom learning with practical work experience" (King, 2007). As

a result, Computer Information Systems (CIS) faculty members at various schools have successfully integrated live projects into their Senior Project/Capstone course. "Live projects are those that are intended for use by actual clients and where the students

have at least some measure of interaction with those clients" (Chase, 2007).

As an example, during the course of an academic year, CIS students at California University of Pennsylvania (Cal U) work in teams to complete a project that incorporates various skills learned in pre-requisite business and computing courses. Often times, live projects are given to student teams. These live projects range from industry-based projects, where students work on projects for local businesses, to service learning projects, where students work on projects for local non-profit organizations. Several example service learning projects initiated between Cal U and the H.J. Heinz History Center are provided in (DeLorenzo, 2009).

Along with their many benefits, live projects provide faculty with new challenges in the classroom, such as: providing and maintaining communication between the client and the student team, adapting the requirements of the live project to fit into an academic time frame, ensuring that the required software used in project implementation is available to both the student team and client and project installation and maintenance at the client site. This panel will describe some of the live projects completed by student teams at Cal U and other schools and will address the above challenges.

The remainder of the panel discussion will be used, not only for Q&A, but to solicit feedback and ideas from other university representatives attending the panel discussion. The panelists would like to learn more about how other institutions address the challenges mentioned above in addition to any unique and innovative ways that projects are handled by the instructor. For example, is there a hiring/firing scheme, how is it ensured that each student contributes to their team project, and once the project is complete and the student is about to graduate, how have they overcome the time challenge in instituting the solution into the sponsoring company. This is just to name a few areas of interest.

2. REFERENCES

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