

# Letter from the Editor Business and Education Partnerships

**Robert G. Brookshire**

I recently attended a meeting of the Midlands Education and Business Alliance (MEBA), an organization based in Columbia, South Carolina. Its mission is to connect “students, parents, and educators to career opportunities through business partnerships, training, and resources.” Many localities around the United States have similar organizations, which can provide important services and linkages for organizational and end-user information systems (OEIS) academic departments. Here are just a few of the benefits that business partnerships can provide.

Student internships are critical to the education of our information technology students. We can give them only limited experiences in the classroom. On-the-job training in a business setting reinforces classroom learning, gives students additional examples of technology applications, and provides critically important experience in professional deportment, team work, working under supervision, and other life skills. Close business ties enhance the availability and quality of student internships.

Just as students need internships to complete their education, faculty members need business experience to sharpen their skills. Faculty development internships provide instructors with business insight, new approaches to material, interesting examples, and up-to-the-minute technical knowledge. Having completed a faculty internship myself, I can testify to its rejuvenating effect on my classroom performance. Faculty internships can only be arranged with firms with which you have warm relationships.

Teachers in higher education always need case studies for instruction and research. Business partners are ideal for developing these case studies. Having close ties with a business facilitates opportunities for observation and research. The kind of in-depth knowledge required to create a complete business case study

can only be acquired through a trusting association with a firm.

Likewise, we have a continuing need for guest speakers for our classes. Students notoriously do not want to take an instructor’s word for anything. They want their classroom learning to be validated by business experience. Business relationships are critical to the development of a pool of guest speakers who have a variety of backgrounds and expertise.

Field trips or site visits are valuable tools to enhance classroom instruction. Having established relationships with businesses makes setting up field trips much easier. Every academic year, or even every semester, new groups of students can have the opportunity to see business operations up close.

Many college and university courses require students to complete projects, whether in telecommunications network design, systems analysis, web site development, or database management. When these projects are based on real companies or organizations, student motivation is improved. Students are excited and challenged by opportunities to apply their new skills to business problems, rather than merely completing textbook exercises. Having a network of relationships with local businesses enables faculty and academic departments to provide live business projects.

Curriculum development has always been a problem for faculty in the rapidly evolving information technology field. New programming languages, new software tools, changing workplace practices, and evolving standards mean that curricula must be reshaped constantly. Close contact with businesses helps academic programs

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predict trends and validate changes. Practitioners provide an outside perspective that, while it does not replace the reasoned judgment of faculty, supplements the design of courses, majors, and programs of study.

Businesses with which academic departments have relationships are often eager to provide students with scholarships. They like having the visibility that named scholarships provide, they enjoy the tax advantages that donations can give, and they get a warm glow of satisfaction from the appreciation of the students and their parents. Larger firms may want to set up endowments for continuing scholarships, while smaller firms may prefer to give on an annual basis. Both methods can cement ties between academic programs and companies.

Perhaps most importantly, firms with close associations to academic programs can support them financially. This might come through donations funding specific research projects. Their contributions might establish endowed chairs, centers, or institutes. They might provide long-term financial maintenance through naming a school or program in information technology. Obviously, these kinds of monetary arrangements can only arise between academic departments and businesses that have long, well-established, ongoing, fruitful relationships.

It should be part of the mission of every OEIS program to develop a web of relationships with business partners. The variety and number of potential benefits clearly warrant serious efforts to build and maintain close industry ties.

## **In This Issue**

This issue of the *Information Technology, Learning, and Performance Journal* has a diverse set of articles, with something to interest every reader. In "Assessing Office and Business Information Systems Programs: A Pilot Case Study," Lana Carnes, Faridah Awang, and Marcel Robles of Eastern Kentucky University present a case study of the development of an assessment protocol for an OEIS department. With assessment becoming increasingly significant in higher education, especially for those schools with

AACSB accreditation, assessment methodology is of critical importance.

Catherine Chen and Charles Ray of Ball State University investigate whether students are able to apply their classroom knowledge to problem solving tasks in "The Systematic Approach in Teaching Database Applications: Is There Transfer when Solving Realistic Business Problems?" They find, disappointingly, that they are not, especially when taught with the widely used systematic approach. This research presents a challenge to OEIS educators teaching any kind of technology, not just database applications.

My colleague at the University of South Carolina, Tena Crews, updates her study of the telecommunications curriculum first presented in these pages in 1998 in her article, "Telecommunication Course Content: Comparison of 1997 & 2002 Delphi Studies." She finds that there is a lot of agreement on the topics that should be included compared to her previous study. Faculty developing or revising telecommunications courses should pay close attention to this article.

In "Extending the Technology Acceptance Model and the Task-Technology Fit Model to Consumer E-Commerce," Inge Klopping and Earl McKinney of Bowling Green State University look at two models previously used to explain a variety of information technology adoption processes. They find that a combination of the two works well to explicate online shopping among a sample of undergraduates.

Finally, Sheila Smith of Ball State University investigates student perceptions in "Career Barriers among Information Technology Undergraduate Majors." She reports that women and minority students perceived that they will encounter barriers in various aspects of the careers, including career choice, finding a job, job performance, and balancing work and family life. This research has important implications for the advisement of students on their future careers.

As I turn over the *Information Technology, Learning, and Performance Journal* to the new editor, Susan Feather-Gannon, I would like to give my profoundest thanks to Bridget O'Connor, Lynn Bacon Keane, and Lisa Gueldenzoph for all the hard work they have put into making the

*Journal* a quality publication. I would also like to thank Donna Everett for her remarkable efficiency and support. Lastly, I need to express my appreciation to the researchers and scholars who have submitted such impressive work for

publication, and the dozens of reviewers who patiently read and commented on these manuscripts. The *Journal* is truly a reflection of you, not of those of us who merely put it together.

#### GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS

The *Information Technology, Learning, and Performance Journal*, formerly known as the *Office System Research Journal*, publishes articles related to the field of organizational and end-user information systems (OEIS). Submissions may present the results of research in the discipline, deal with research methodologies and data treatment techniques, or describe research or experiences related to instruction in the discipline. For the "Making a Difference" section, manuscripts that discuss our theoretical bases or describe an innovative policy, procedure, method, technique, or practice that has potential benefit for systems professionals and/or educators and technology trainers are encouraged. We also accept reviews of current books—both academic and popular press—related to OEIS. All submissions are submitted to a blind review process.

Authors should follow the style described for manuscripts and bibliographies in the Fifth Edition (2001) of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*; however, tables should be single-spaced. Tables and figures should be attached at the end of the manuscript, one table or figure per page. Authors should not be identified anywhere in the manuscript. Submit four copies of the manuscript. On the original copy, include a cover page with author name, title, organizational affiliation, telephone number, and email address. A 100-150 word abstract of the manuscript should be included with the manuscript.

Manuscripts should be submitted exclusively to the *Information Technology, Learning, and Performance Journal*. Previously published manuscripts are not acceptable. Manuscripts are selected through a blind review process involving the editors and referees selected from the Review Board. The Journal is indexed in the *Business Education Index*, the *Current Index to Journals in Education*, and the *Computer Literature Index*.

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