Service Learning Utilizing "Live" Business Partnerships

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CATEGORY
Tutorial Presentation

GENERAL TERMS
Management, Measurement

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Student engagement, applied learning, community service, experiential learning

OVERVIEW
Numerous organizations and companies can provide students of computer science and computer information systems with high quality applied learning and service learning experiences. At Missouri Western State University (MWSU), students are divided into design and implementation teams directed by faculty members; local and national companies such as Inter-Serv, YWCA, and Buchanan County Prosecuting Attorney’s Office become project clients. This blends Service / Applied Learning models followed by other universities (Iowa State University and Virginia Tech, Service-Learning Models)[1] to engage students in "live" projects that strengthen problem solving and critical thinking skills while they analyze, design, and develop clients’ prospective application systems. Project clients, corporate sponsors and business officers bring industry’s needs, expertise, and peer review to projects that blend legacy with new application development using cutting edge tools.

Based on the successful practice at MWSU for many years, this tutorial will discuss the development of community and corporate awareness that leads to project opportunities, and will address the roles of all the players – student, faculty, and business. The blending of service learning and applied learning models will be discussed.[2] Risks, challenges, and benefits of these types of projects as an active component in the academic classroom will also be addressed. Included in the tutorial will be a discussion of the success of the model as verified through student competition entries that have taken first or second place over the past few years at national competitions, along with business partner’s commentaries. A discussion of alternative models and ideas for improvement will end the tutorial.

ACTIVITIES
After a short presentation on past and present work at MWSU, tutorial attendees will participate in the following activities:

Discuss and analyze examples of a “model” curriculum integrating applied/service learning components. The ‘model’, drawn from experiential learning theory [3], action research [4], and applied learning/community engagement models; incorporates six performance standards into course objectives tying objectives to activities and outcome measurement tools. [5]

Develop a course which includes the “live” projects model for their specific discipline; using examples of course syllabus, evaluation rubrics, assignments and student work. [6] Examples used come from every phase of academic development; freshmen through senior level capstone courses.

Facilitators will guide a discussion of the challenges, benefits, risks, responsibilities and outcomes of "live" projects due to changes in the traditional roles of the participants.

We will conclude the tutorial with a brainstorming session on developing business partnership opportunities.

PRESENTORS
Connie Hecker, is a Computer Science Instructor at Missouri Western State University. She has worked as an IT professional in the hospital industry at Cerner and the utility industry at St. Joseph Light & Power. She has a BS degree in computer information systems from MWSU and a MS in computer information technology from Regis University. Connie has taught over 15 courses including programming languages, database application development, system and data analysis,
Deborah Becker, is a Computer Science Instructor at Missouri Western State University. She has 25+ years of industry experience as a systems analyst, software design engineer and project manager. Her professional experience has been primarily focused in gaming and accounting. She has a BS degree in Business Management from Missouri State and a MS degree in Healthcare Information and Administration also from Missouri State. She is a graduate instructor at MWSU and has developed and taught courses in java, c++, web portal development and design, operating systems, network administration, project management as well as other courses in computer science and business.

REFERENCES


