Chapter XIX

Supporting Enterprise Systems Across the Business Curriculum:
The Microsoft Dynamics™ Academic Alliance

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ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses how enterprise systems supported by the Microsoft Dynamics™ Academic Alliance can be used by higher educational institutions in their business courses. The content is designed to be useful for both business educators and administrators as they plan and implement technology into their curricula. The chapter discusses the history and development of the Microsoft Dynamics Academic Alliance, a profile of its members, and key issues and challenges related to enterprise solutions use in the classroom.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE MICROSOFT DYNAMICS ACADEMIC ALLIANCE

A primary objective of any higher education business program is to prepare students for today's world and help them become lifelong learners who are able to implement best business practices and keep current on emerging trends. There are very few businesses that are able to achieve a competitive advantage through the use of best practices without a strong commitment to technology. A solid technological foundation is also a critical component of any business student's education. It can be challenging for many institutions to implement a curriculum that incorporates the use of technology in a manner similar to what is used by many leading edge organizations. The Microsoft Dynamics Academic Alliance helps address this challenge by donating business solution software to higher educational institutions for classroom use. This chapter discusses the background of the Microsoft Dynamics Academic Alliance and the types of systems available for its members. The chapter content is designed to be helpful for both business educators and administrators as they plan and implement technology into their curricula.

The Microsoft Dynamics Academic Alliance distributes leading edge business software and provides services to institutions of higher education that are interested in enhancing their academic curricula through the use of technology. This initiative is consistent with the Microsoft corporate mission "to enable people and businesses throughout the world to realize their full potential." The primary mission of the Microsoft Dynamics Academic Alliance is to help college and university students realize their full potential by enhancing and supplementing their theoretical knowledge through the use of real-world technology aimed at improving business activities related to financial, supply chain, and customer relationship management.

The Microsoft Dynamics Academic Alliance is championed by Microsoft Business Solutions (MBS), part of the Microsoft Business Division, a business group of Microsoft. The products offered by MBS help organizations with business activities related to financial, supply chain and customer relationship management, with a primary concentration on serving mid-sized organizations. The products are sold to end-users via a certified Microsoft partner channel.

This chapter is organized as follows: (1) the history of the Microsoft Dynamics Academic Alliance is explained; (2) a descriptive profile of Microsoft Dynamics Academic Alliance members is presented; (3) key issues related to enterprise solutions use in the classroom are discussed; (4) key challenges of the Microsoft Dynamics Academic Alliance are described; and (5) future challenges of the Microsoft Dynamics Academic Alliance are listed.

HISTORY OF THE MICROSOFT DYNAMICS ACADEMIC ALLIANCE

The roots of the Microsoft Dynamics Academic Alliance began in 1996 with a broad initiative launched at Great Plains Software, located in Fargo, North Dakota, USA. The initiative was referred to as the Center for Organizational Excellence (CORE), and it was formed to help Great Plains partners build capacity in their organizations to sell and implement more

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