



## **Chapter 15**

# **IS Program Issues: From Origin to Accreditation**

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*This chapter suggests the challenges of academic information systems programs are a product of origin and evolution. Based upon the literature and survey results, the chapter suggests issues concerning origin, perceptions, solutions, and accreditation.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this chapter is to review information systems (IS) trends leading to the present, and to raise issues concerning IS program accreditation. The chapter discusses IS program origin, acceptance by other disciplines, and recognition from industry in reviewing answers to the following questions: Why and how did higher education IS programs evolve; will widespread IS program accreditation lead to acceptance by other disciplines and recognition from industry; how does a higher education IS program become accredited; and are clients demanding accreditation? A discussion of information system program accreditation and client perception of accreditation follows.

### **BUSINESS BEGINNINGS**

Business education is a relatively old and common discipline in higher education, borne out of demand for educated businessmen (Dudley, 1990; Dudley et al., 1995). The need to enhance commerce produced a demand for business education. Supplying business education eventually came to the hallowed halls of higher education, leading to degrees in business education (Cudd, King & O'Hara,

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1995). Business education initially included the traditional business cycle functions: management, finance, marketing, and accounting.

## **COMPUTER SCIENCE ARRIVES**

Long after many years of business and commerce activity and the introduction of formal business education, computers made their appearance. The advent of this general purpose tool occurred in the 1950s. Computer technology advanced dramatically during the next two decades, stimulating a demand for computer education just as business activity generated a demand for formal business education. In response, higher educational institutions offer degrees in a discipline called computer science.

## **INFORMATION SYSTEMS EVOLVE**

In the 1960s and 1970s, business education and computer science remained very distinct and independent disciplines in many, if not most, academic environments. Business functions, however, welcomed computer applications at operational levels. Implementing business computer applications employed graduates from computer science programs. Although success stories abound, major obstacles persist. Business professionals and computer science programmers were not communicating effectively (Smith & McKeen, 1992). Based solely on their major area of study, business graduates do not understand computers adequately, while computer science graduates generally do not have knowledge of business cycle intricacies. One business insider sums it up by confiding “We scrapped a new quarter of a million dollar accounting package after eighteen months because our accounting people and computer people didn’t understand each other.” This obstacle loomed only larger as businesses demanded applications for strategic advantages (Clemons, 1986; Kettinger et al., 1994; Weill & Olson, 1989). Businesses are no longer looking at computers to automate operations, but to improve efficiency and decision-making, and to increase product and service innovation (Kalakota & Whinston, 1993).

Business first demanded business graduates, then computer graduates, and once again demands a new type of graduate. The academia response was a degree in IS evolved from the academic blend of business and computer science disciplines. The structure and administration of IS vary among colleges and universities, but the curriculum content generally focuses on both computers and business. The computer core curriculum includes systems development, application development, database management systems, and telecommunications. The business core curriculum includes business cycle functions at levels of the organization encompassing business operations, operations, tactics, and strategies.

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