The Evolution of a Global Information System Course: Case Study at Southern Connecticut State University

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ABSTRACT
The education of a computer systems analyst in today's business environment requires exposure to the unique issues for dealing with information systems which cross country boundaries. One popular software package to deal with such issues is SAP R/3. This paper discusses the evolution of a course taught at Southern Connecticut State University in global information systems. The course is offered for the second time in the Spring 2003 semester at Southern and has 16 students currently enrolled.

INTRODUCTION
The writer participated in an MBA team-taught graduate course in global business operations. This experience led the writer to develop a new course, MIS400, Global Information Systems. This course is designed for undergraduate MIS students. A requirement for a program to become a major at Southern is that it have its own focused course on international issues for its field. This paper presents the experience to-date of that course.

CASE STUDY RESULTS
The first offering of the course was in the Spring 2002 semester at Southern. The schedule of topic for that course is shown as Figure 1. Lessons learned are discussed as the next generation of the course for Spring 2003.

Lessons learned from figure 1 include the following:
• Undergraduates need more guidance in research project work.
• Students seemed to like the opportunity to contribute research work to the class.
• Text book is too dated to use next semester. Need to find a new one.
• Include more coverage of SAP R/3 as example of global ready software.

Other future issues include:
• This would probably be a possible summer course that would attract the required ten students if offered in the late afternoon or early evening.
• This would probably be a good course to design for OnLineCSU to offer in the future in a distance learning situation allowing MIS students from sister schools in the Connecticut State University system to take this course for credit at their school.

Figure 2 represents the schedule for the upcoming Spring 2003 version of the same course demonstrating the changes from above analysis of the example.
Experience gained from the 2002 offering of the course. New textbooks were selected from IRM Press which provided three soft-cover books dated 2002 to overcome the outdated issue of the 1997 text used in 2002. The concept of students conducting research based on articles from one of the books will continue as the research assignment is thought to be important to this senior level course but which required more guidance for undergraduates. A third difference is the coverage of Enterprise Resource Planning software, in general, and SAP R/3 in particular, as examples of fully integrated packaged software ready for global implementation.

There appears to be enough students registered so far that the course will be offered. It is scheduled in one of the new classroom which will present an excellent environment for the course in a modern setting. Students will be informed that it is still considered a pilot offering of the course and their comments and suggestions for future versions will be sought and welcomed at the end of the course.

When this paper is presented in May 2003, experience from the Spring 2003 version will be available to compare to 2002 version. Suggestions for the 2004 version will also be available.

CONCLUSIONS

Courses in the MIS field need to undergo three iterations before they settle down into an acceptable pattern. Student input is critical to the evolution process.

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