

FACTORS IMPACTING ENROLLMENT IN INFORMATION SYSTEMS PROGRAMS

Manouchehr Tabatabaei, Georgia Southern University, mtabatab@georgiasouthern.edu
Mehdi S.Tehrani, Bemidji State University, mtehrani@bemidjistate.edu

ABSTRACT

The recent history of declining enrollments has overwhelmed the Information Systems field in institutions of higher education. This trend is mainly alarming in light of the recent growing demand for employees to fill Information Technology related jobs. Students are considering many factors when choosing a field of study including employability. Information Systems has always been an attractive field of study and a popular choice of students. However, there is no consistency in the name of the department offering Information systems degree among institutions of higher education. This lack of consistency can be misleading as what Information Systems is and has to offer. The primary purpose of this study is to examine if there is a relationship between the name of department offering Information Systems program and enrollment. This relationship is further investigated based on location of the institution, program accreditation, size, and the institution being public or private.

Keywords: Information Systems, Enrollment, Curriculum

INTRODUCTION

Computing has many fields including Information Systems (IS). The field of IS has always been attractive and a popular choice for students.

Students who like computing, but not programming choose IS for the field of study. One reason for attractiveness of this field to students is low programming requirements. Students with a great interest in programming often chose Computer Science (CS) as a major. However, those with little or no interest in programming chose IS. The focus of IS has been primarily on application and adding values to Business. The graduates of IS have a good understanding of Business as well as Technology. They can envision the use of technology in business for improvement and advancement. For example, they can apply technology to add value by improving quality, reducing the cost of operation, increasing

customers, increasing profits, improving customer satisfaction, and increasing service to customers.

This field of IS has evolved over the years and it is usually hosted in the College of Business and it is a Business degree. The IS model which is widely accepted and adopted has provided guidelines for offering IS curriculum degree programs. This model is developed by the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM), and the Association for Information Systems (AIS). Please see Tope H. et al, 2009 for the latest revision of this model. The IS programs following this model are accredited by different accreditation bodies such as AACSB as part of College of Business accreditation.

There has been a decline of enrollment in IS programs in institutions of higher education despite what the IS has to offer. This trend is mainly alarming in light of the recent growing demand for employees to fill information technology (IT) related jobs (Locher, 2007). There will be a growing demand for IT skills, related products and services. Considering this demand, the declining enrollment in CIS, MIS or BIT programs is worrying for the society (James P et.al., 2009). Therefore, it is important that institutions understand how and why students choose their majors, in particular IS.

The popularity of outsourcing and off shoring of information technology in recent years has made many wonder about job opportunities for IS graduates (Weber, 2004), and has created a dilemma for parents and students for pursuing the IS degree. Therefore, the enrollment in the field of IS has been low recently for many reasons including off shoring. The institutions as a result have been very creative and innovative in making changes to their IS programs in order to increase IS employability and therefore enrollment in IS. One change has been the name of the department. Other names used in addition to (IS) Information Systems are CIS (computer Information Systems), MIS (management information Systems), BIT (Business Information Technology), ITM (Information Technology Management).

The institutions are looking for factors impacting the enrollment in their IS programs. The primary purpose of this study is to investigate and examine the research question of existence of a correlation between the name of the department and enrollment. The main hypothesis of this study is then:

H: There is no correlation between the name of the department and the enrollment in the IS department.

METHODOLOGY

A random sample of institutions representing all states in United States will be chosen for this examination. The chosen institutions will be categorized based on region, accreditation, size, and public or private. Therefore the secondary purpose of this study is to examine the correlation between the name of the department and the enrollment based on the location of the institution, program accreditation, size, and the institution being public or private.

Expected Findings

It is expected to reject the hypothesis and conclude there is a correlation between the name of the department and the enrollment and therefore the name of the department should be carefully chosen. Further, it is to conclude the name of the department and where is housed are important factors impacting the enrollment in the field of IS.

This study is in its early stage and some data should be collected and analyzed by the time of conference. The plan is to present a preliminary data analysis at the conference.

Conclusion and Future Works

Many are not aware of IS field and do not necessarily know what it offers and what are the capabilities of the graduates of IS. Many have false assumptions about the IS programs and what IS professionals do. Therefore, it is important to find a descriptive name for the department and make sure everyone is on the same page as what is the purpose of the IS department and what are the expectations from IS graduates.

Other factors to be considered in this study as well as future studies to examine the impact, if any, on the enrollment are: Inclusion of emphasis areas such as Security, Network, Ecommerce; The importance of job placement and affiliation with employers, the importance of accreditation and type, Where the department is housed and for how long; The

importance of offering certifications and types, The importance of including SAP in the IS program, The importance of having internships opportunities for students, The importance of offering minor to complement the major in the department.

Further, the difference between offering a BS in IS versus BBA in IS should be examined. It is important to determine which offering is more effective make more sense considering the current state of the world today.

Future studies should compare Information Systems programs with high and growing student enrollment versus programs with low and declining student enrollment. The characteristics of the two programs should be compared to learn what factors has helped some IS departments to be successful in terms of student enrollment.

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