Chapter VII

A Stage Model for Academic-Corporate Partnerships: Using an Advisory Council to Build Bridges Between an Academic IS Program and the Business Community

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A strong partnership with the business community can serve as a critical factor for an information systems program in higher education. The purpose of this chapter will be to draw on 10 years of experience to discuss our insights and lessons learned with regard to the Corporate Partnership Program for Information Systems at Oregon State University. The chapter begins with an overview of a “Stages of Partnership Growth” model that provides a framework for understanding and managing the evolutionary stages of growth for the academic-corporate partnership. The model will be illustrated by examining the
evolution of the information systems program at Oregon State University. An advisory council comprised of representatives from the business community has played a key role in the development of the information systems program at Oregon State University. Suggestions regarding the creation and maintenance of an advisory council are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past 10 years, the undergraduate information systems (IS) program in our College of Business at Oregon State University has undergone substantial development and growth. One of the key foundations for our IS program has been our “Corporate Partnership Program.” The Corporate Partnership Program creates a strategic win-win situation between academia and the professional IS community in the Pacific Northwest region of the United States. The IS community that we work with encompasses a broad range of organizations including large Fortune 500 companies, small to medium-sized regional businesses, non-profit institutions, and municipal organizations. All of these organizations in our IS community share the same concern; they want to have a reliable source of highly qualified IS professionals. The Corporate Partnership Program supports the IS community by means of a formal alliance that enables our academic program to effectively meet the needs of industry and students.

The purpose of this chapter will be to draw on 10 years of experience to discuss a) our insights and lessons learned with regard to our Corporate Partnership Program, and b) the role of an advisory council in the evolution of our alliances with the business community. We believe that our experiences will be relevant to others, as there are presently many IS programs in colleges and universities that have been grappling with the issue of how to maintain a close connection with the business community. We begin this chapter with a brief overview of a “Stages of Partnership Growth” model that we have developed for academic-corporate partnerships. Next, we illustrate the Stages of Partnership Growth model by using our IS program as an example. In describing how our partnership with industry has evolved over the past 10 years, we will provide specific details regarding several aspects of our partnership program including the initiation and development of our IS Business Advisory Council.
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