Chapter X

Success Factors for Industry-University Collaboration Through IS Industry Boards: A University Case in a Developing Country

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This chapter examines the success factors for industry-university collaboration through IS industry boards. Based on an in-depth case of industry-academic collaboration in Mexico, the chapter addresses the following research questions: What are the critical success factors for achieving good outcomes from an IS industry board? What factors impede the achievement of good outcomes from such a board in a developing nation? What factors are distinctive and serve to differentiate IS industry boards of developing nations from those of advanced ones? In the case study, the IS industry board enhanced the IS academic program’s curriculum, the university’s computer labs, the student internship program, and faculty training. This case demonstrates that the critical success factors for the IS industry board were top management support, the department chair’s interpersonal skills, board member selection, proper board management, and appropriate university
policies regarding industry-university collaboration. The experiences of developing and advanced nations for such boards are mostly similar, but differ due to lack of tenure track careers for IS faculty in the developing nation under study.

INTRODUCTION

Since universities started offering academic programs in IS, they have been facing the challenge that information technology change triggers: new industry demands, academic programs updates, faculty training, lab enhancements, and development of didactic materials. Without knowing the ultimate direction and future impacts of several technologies, IS faculty have had to update and many times modify their academic programs faster than what is recommended for the programs’ evaluation and quality. It is critical for this quality and even viability of IS programs that they keep up to date with current technology and industry practices. IS programs, for instance, that fail to recognize today the dynamic changes in the Internet and e-business run the risk of becoming albatrosses that do not have credibility in industry. This chapter examines the role of the IS industry board in industry-academic interactions in information systems (IS) programs.

There are many forms of interactions between academia and industry, including corporate boards, student internships, faculty internships, corporate grants, speaker series, partnership courses, and curriculum revision committees (Schenk and Pick, 1998), website corporate partnerships (Kock et al., 2000), work contracts for IS students in industry (McGowan and Cornwell, 2000), and others. This chapter focuses solely on industry advisory boards to IS programs. The industry advisory board is widely utilized by IS programs. It is defined as a group of IS faculty, industry representatives, and others, with the goals of improving academic programs and industry knowledge and performance. It meets regularly to discuss issues in curriculum, research funding, internship opportunities, industry trends, job markets for program graduates, and other relevant topics at the interface between the IS academic program and IS industry practitioners. Although many benefits have been reported from such IS industry boards, problems and concerns have also occurred. The chapter will explore pluses and minuses of the IS industry boards in practice, and suggest ways to foster more successful boards.

The chapter is based on an in-depth case study of industry-academic collaboration located in a developing nation, Mexico. All of the prior literature of case studies on collaboration of IS programs and industry were from advanced nations (Kock et al., 2000; Schenk and Pick, 1999), although
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