ONLINE MBA PROGRAMS GROW IN POPULARITY

Online MBA programs are gaining traction, in part because of the increased interaction students and professors say they receive from in-depth studies and discussions. The online MBA program at the University of Florida's Warrington College of Business has enrolled 40 students per year for the two years of the program's existence, despite the fact that it costs three times as much as a traditional MBA program. Kansas City's Webster University has about 275 students worldwide who participate in online courses, most of them obtaining a degree exclusively from online courses. Richard St. Clair, who teaches part of the online MBA program at Webster, said he has greater interaction with the students than he would in a traditional classroom setting. (Kansas City Star Online)

NETWORK MANAGEMENT FOR NEXT TO NOTHING

Many network administrators cannot afford network-management software from such vendors as Tivoli and Computer Associates. Now, however, several programmers and institutions have made available a wide range of network-management tools at no cost. For example, the University of California at Davis offers net-snmp for handling the SNMP protocol. The toolkit lets users receive data such as network latency, device availability, and throughput, and users can set the software to perform some corrections automatically. The University of Delaware offers the SHAMAN software program, which lets network administrators configure it for certain management functions based on the critical nature of those functions. Network administrators can also program SHAMAN so that certain network-management functions occur automatically. Also available is Loriot, a network-node-management program designed for Windows that provides management for SNMP devices on numerous networks, including LANs, WANS, and metropolitan-area networks. (Network World)

EIGHT COMMUNITY COLLEGES COLLABORATE

The eight community colleges that are part of the Alliance of Community Colleges for Electronic Sharing spend, on average, less than 1 percent of their general operating budgets for the maintenance of their administrative information systems. These systems oversee such aspects of administration as payroll, finance and accounting, and student records. The institutions share purchases of hardware and software, and they share a staff of four operators and eleven programmers who oversee the system's physical hardware at Kirkwood Community College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. The system keeps data from each institution separate within the overall system, and members access the data over leased data-communications lines. Each member pays an annual membership fee, with the fee based on its general operating budget. Savings derived from the arrangement can be significant. For example, by purchasing degree-auditing software as one unit, the group paid only $27,000, rather than $216,000 if each member had purchased the software on its own. (Chronicle of Higher Education Online)

A NEED TO KNOW

The Library of Congress is launching a system to link reference libraries across geographical areas in order to let the libraries refer questions outside their purview to libraries that specialize in those areas. Although still under development, the reference system—known as the Collaborative Digital Reference Service (CDRS)—is already being used in some libraries. CDRS creator Diane Kresh, director for public service collections at the Library of Congress, said the system was hatched to allow reference librarians to remain relevant in an age when the Internet provides instant access to a smorgasbord of information. Although Web reference sites and search engines use keyword recognition to pull up Web site reference points, CDRS can, for example, send baseball-focused questions to librarians at baseball-
SITE ON FINANCIAL AID

IBM has developed a “subportal” for Michigan’s Department of Treasury that deals exclusively with financial aid for colleges. Although such information has been available for two years on the department Web site, officials wanted a single site where applicants could research information about grants, loans, scholarships, work-study programs, and related matters. The portal is user-specific, with students, parents, counselors, lenders, and loan-holders all having their own links to relevant data. In the future, a bulletin board where experts can answer questions and a “chat night” option will be added. IBM’s Vignette content-management software was praised by state officials for its ability to allow quick updates. (Civic.com)

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