Information Technology in the News

DISTANCE EDUCATION IS HARDER ON WOMEN THAN ON MEN, STUDY FINDS

Women who take distance-education classes face greater levels of difficulty than men, according to a report from the American Association of University Women. The report, based on interviews with five hundred students, most of them female, notes the presence of a “third shift,” a period of online study that women take between their regular job and their homemaking or child-care duties. Adding to this burden is the fact that distance-education courses can cost as much as traditional college classes, while additional expenses may be incurred from online subscriptions and equipment requirements. Almost a third of the interviewees are pursuing degrees, breaking the misconception by many that women generally choose a few courses for occasional enrichment or career advancement. (Chronicle of Higher Education Online)

OXFORD UNIVERSITY WINS NAME

Oxford University has seized control of the www.university-of-oxford.com domain name from an Australian resident going by the name of Dr. Seagle. Oxford University was awarded the name by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO); WIPO ruled that Seagle had no legitimate interest or rights to the domain name, marking the second time that Seagle has handed over a domain name to Oxford. Seagle previously gave up possession of the www.oxford-university.com domain, but this time Seagle changed his name to “Mr. Oxford University” in an apparent bid to shore up his claim on the domain, according to WIPO documents. The university wants ownership of the domain so that people are not misdirected when searching for Oxford on the Internet, said a university spokeswoman. (Reuters)

CSU, IBM TEAM FOR TECH HUB PROJECT TO PROVIDE LINUX TO COLLEGES

To give information systems students hands-on experience that would ordinarily be too expensive to provide, IBM Global Services will provide an IBM mainframe at its Boulder offices for use by Colorado State University students. The computer will be capable of hosting thousands of Linux “virtual servers,” which the students will use to develop and test applications without fear of affecting the other virtual servers on the mainframe. Students will also be able to simulate network environments by connecting a number of the virtual servers. “Partnering with universities like Colorado State is a natural fit because of their capability to pilot advanced research and education,” said IBM Global Services Vice-President Larry Longseth. The $21.6 million project aims to make CSU a hub for other colleges across the country. As many as twenty other schools will eventually be granted access to the IBM/CSU mainframe. (Denver Post)

TEACHERS’ UNION CRITICIZES APPROACH TO DISTANCE EDUCATION

Educational institutions that adopt business practices in order to implement distance education more quickly are likely to lose some of their academic integrity, according to a report from the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). The AFT has previously advised against all-online undergraduate education. Thomas J. Kriger, principal author of the report and director of research and legislation at United University Professions, said that distance education in itself is not bad but that some institutions may implement programs that take control from professors and spread it among the technologists that create the online course. University of Maryland University College Provost Nicholas Allen said that this threat, in principle, also applies to traditional higher education environments, such as when a five-hundred-student class is taught by a teaching assistant. Mr. Kriger said the State University of New York’s blended online program...
is one example of an online curriculum that remains under the control of the professor and melds well with the rest of the instruction. (Chronicle of Higher Education Online)

COLLEGE STUDENTS ADMIT THEY ARE CAUGHT UP IN WEB

One in ten college students claims to have a dependence on the Internet, according to a survey report authored by Richard J. DiGuardi of St. John's University. Fifteen percent of the 134 freshmen and sophomores polled exhibit classic manifestations of addiction, DiGuardi said; these include social isolation, encroachment on daily life, an urgent need for the Internet, and withdrawal symptoms. In addition, these students would probably use the Internet as a social outlet and consider it essential to their well-being. (Reuters)

E-MBA PROGRAMS GRADUATE

The first MBA graduates of the University of Florida, Gainesville, to take all of their classes online will get their degrees in December. At UF, the quality of the e-MBA is thought to be the same as the traditional, in-class degree. The same professors teach the classes, and the standards and admissions are the same as well. Most of the students in the online program enroll because they already have full-time jobs. Electronic MBAs have accreditation at UF; there is nothing to indicate whether an MBA is Internet-based. (Forbes Online)

COLLEGES PROMOTE ROLE AS INCUBATORS

The top research universities in the Washington, D.C., area are promoting technology transfer between themselves and private technology companies in an effort to “positively impact economic development in the state, region, and nation,” said Naiman Farvardin of the University of Maryland's engineering school. The Northern Virginia Technology Council hosted a conference where representatives of several area colleges met to discuss their goals as tech incubators. Dean Lloyd Griffiths of George Mason University's engineering school noted that many technology ventures are initiated by students and faculty while at the university, thanks to an entrepreneurial spirit that the school has nurtured. Among the successful ventures of the University of Maryland's program mentioned by Farvardin are NeuralStem, Digene, and Martek Biosciences. (Washington Post)

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