

Wildcard Proposal

i-Schools and Undergraduate Education

Organizer: Derek L. Hansen

Presenters: Susan M. Bonzi, Lori Kendall, David W. McDonald

Introduction

Undergraduate education is an important component of many i-Schools and of potential interest to many others. The nature of undergraduate education within the i-School movement will, no doubt, have a significant effect on our collective future.

Undergraduate programs are often the most visible programs to other departments within the Universities in which we reside. They help shape first impressions of many current and prospective students. And, they force us to synthesize our various interests into a more basic core.

While all i-Schools have significant graduate programs, i-Schools vary widely in their stance toward undergraduate education. Some offer a full Bachelor Degree program, others offer a minor, and still others teach a single course at most. What's more, the undergraduate courses and curriculum vary widely across schools. This diversity is likely a natural outgrowth of historical processes unique to each University and is unlikely to disappear. Indeed, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to dealing with i-School undergraduate education.

However, despite our different needs, there are some fundamental issues that all i-School undergraduate programs must grapple with: the interdisciplinary nature of i-School education, the shared domain knowledge, and the need to explain our relatively new curriculum and programs to the wider University, students, and employers. This session is designed to start a conversation about these (and other) commonly shared issues and provide a platform for us to learn from one another's experience. It is most likely to benefit faculty members and administrators involved with undergraduate education in their schools. It is also intended to be useful for schools considering expanding their undergraduate program.

Goals

Specifically, the goals of the session are to:

- characterize the current state of undergraduate education in the i-Schools including how they fit within the wider Universities they are a part of;
- discuss common challenges and best practices for introducing and maintaining undergraduate programs in i-Schools, as well as the decision not to pursue an undergraduate program;
- characterize the core competencies that should be covered in i-School undergraduate programs; and
- help initiate relationships among individuals with an interest in undergraduate education.

Outcomes

If there is sufficient energy from participants, the session could lead to a brief report on undergraduate education within i-Schools. Depending on the nature of the report it could be shared via the i-School website or published in an appropriate forum such as the Chronicle for Higher Education or JALISE.

Format

The session will include an online component and a 1.5 hour session at the conference as described below. (Note: Ideally the session would last for 2 hours, but if that is not possible perhaps it could be held at a time slot where individuals who are still interested can meet together directly after the session for lunch or dinner).

Wiki Website

A publicly accessible wiki website will be created and used to compile information on current i-School undergraduate programs including links to their websites, names of current and past program chairs, and any documentation they are willing to share related to the programs. Those interested in attending the session will be encouraged to read through the materials before the session, in order to use our in-person time effectively. After the session, the wiki will be used to draft the report, which will summarize the discussion of the in-person session and summarize the documents collected on the wiki.

Conference Session

The conference session will approximately follow the schedule outlined below:

Introduction & Overview (20 minutes).

Participants will introduce themselves and their interest in undergraduate education. Derek Hansen (UMD) will give an overview of the state of undergraduate education within i-Schools based on the materials that were shared on the wiki website.

Prepared Presentations & Discussion (30 minutes)

A current or former undergraduate program chair of three different i-Schools will briefly discuss their program, focusing on its relationship with the wider University, its strategic position within the i-School itself, the core curriculum, and any major lessons learned. The three presenting i-Schools (UW, Syracuse, and ILL) were chosen because of their apparent success and their diversity of experience. Questions will be encouraged throughout the presentations.

Breakout Sessions (30 minutes)

At least two breakout sessions will convene after the prepared presentations. One group will focus on defining some of the core components of an i-School undergraduate curriculum. Another group will focus on the place of an undergraduate i-School in the broader University. Other topics may be proposed at the session itself. Each group will have a recorder who uploads a summary of their discussion to the wiki and a presenter who will briefly summarize their discussion to the larger group.

Wrap-Up (10 minutes)

We will summarize and the discussion and agree on next steps, including the drafting of a report if there is sufficient interest.

Participants

The event will be organized by Derek L. Hansen, assistant professor of the University of Maryland. Like other i-Schools the University of Maryland is interested in expanding its undergraduate offerings and thus has an interest in this important topic.

The following participants have committed to share their school's experience:

- Susan M. Bonzi, Director of Syracuse's IST Undergraduate Program (1993-present) and Undergraduate Committee Chair (2002-present)
- Lori Kendall, UIUC Undergraduate Minor Committee Chair
- David W. McDonald, Former UW Undergraduate Informatics Program Chair (2004-2006)