

Undergraduate Education in iSchools

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Abstract

This workshop will provide an opportunity for attendees to share experiences and discuss opportunities and challenges associated with undergrad education in iSchools. A panel of presenters will begin the workshop by providing a fast-paced overview of existing undergraduate programs at several schools. Break-out group discussions will follow around topics such as undergraduate program differentiation and niche, teaching and student engagement, curriculum, student and employer expectations, the role of research in undergrad education, generating interest and managing growth, gender and diversity, and future directions for undergraduate education in iSchools.

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1 Workshop Description

The purpose of this workshop is to bring together faculty and staff interested in sharing experiences and discussing opportunities and challenges associated with undergraduate education in Information Schools.

2 Purpose and Intended Audience

Current undergraduate program chairs/directors, deans or directors considering adding a new undergraduate program, faculty teaching undergraduates or interested in future opportunities, undergraduate academic and career support staff.

3 Proposed Format

The workshop will begin with a one-hour rapid overview of several existing Information School undergraduate programs. Each presenter on the panel will be pre-selected before the start of the event by the workshop organizers. The goal is to have presenters from a variety of different types of iSchools - US and International, new and established programs, some with an LIS connection/history and some not. This should allow attendees to get a better sense of the scope and variety of programs being offered globally.

Each presenter will have 5 minutes to give an overview of their program. They will share information such as the name of their major or degree, number of students, curricular overview or areas of focus, and share one success and one challenge. They will have an additional two minutes to answer one question from other workshop attendees. Presentations will be carefully timed and the pace will be quick with the goal of maintaining attendee engagement and providing a baseline for later discussion.

There will be a break at the conclusion of the panel and during the break participants will indicate an area of interest for further group discussion. A list of starter topics will be provided and others solicited. Participants will select a topic of interest and join that group post break. One of the panel presenters will be assigned to each group to facilitate and insure that the discussion remains on-topic.

Sample topics include:

- Differentiation. What is the iSchool niche for undergraduate programs, how do we differentiate from other more established undergraduate programs such as computer science, business school information systems, art/design etc.? How do we differentiate between undergraduate and graduate programs that may be in the same department, school or college?
- Teaching and engaging undergraduates. Is it different than teaching graduate students? If so are there “best practices” to more effectively teach and engage undergrads?
- Expectations. What should students and employers expect from an iSchool education, what can students “do”, how technical should they be, what is the balance between skill and concepts, should there be standard curricular requirements across undergrad programs, how much variation can there be among institutions if we wish to be considered a single field of study?
- Research. What role does it play in undergrad education? If it is important, how can we better engage undergrad students in faculty research?
- Generating interest, managing growth and capacity. How do we generate student interest in our programs or meet student demand once they find out, how do we hire sufficient faculty and compete with industry for faculty talent, what is the proper balance between tenure-track and guest/practitioner faculty?
- Gender and diversity. Technology related undergrad programs are typically male dominated and many women who graduate ultimately change careers after entering the workplace. There are similar issues for other under-represented minorities. How can we attract a more diverse student body and insure those students have a more positive experience post- graduation?
- The future. Where are we going? Could lack of differentiation cause more iSchools to be merged with other related programs? Is the current “boom” in interest in technology related programs heading for a future “bust”? What is core/central in an iSchool undergrad education that will benefit graduates for their entire career, or do we just offer programs in the latest technology “fad” of the moment?

At the conclusion of the group discussion will be another break. The workshop will conclude with reports back to the entire group and further questions as time permits.

4 Goals or Outcomes

- Provide attendees with a general understanding of what’s happening at other schools
- Provide a forum for discussion and brainstorming of possible solutions to common challenges
- Advance the general level of maturity of undergraduate education within Information Schools globally

5 Relevance to the iConference

Undergraduate programs vary widely at Information Schools, some schools have them and some don’t. Many have only recently been established while others are still contemplating the addition of an undergrad program as demand for other programs declines. For these schools there is much to learn. Other iSchools have been offering undergrad programs for years and they have experiences to share. This workshop will provide iConference attendees with an opportunity to meet and exchange ideas with others, to learn what works and what doesn’t, and to discuss the future of undergraduate education in Information Schools going forward.

6 Duration

Half-day workshop.

7 Attendance

15-30. 40 maximum.

8 Special Requirements

None.