

The WebBSIT: The Development of a Multi-Institutional Fully Online Baccalaureate Degree in Information Technology

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ABSTRACT

The Web Bachelor of Science in Information Technology (WebBSIT) is a fully online baccalaureate degree program in Information Technology, jointly developed and offered by five colleges and universities within the University System of Georgia (www.usg.edu). The five participating institutions are Armstrong Atlantic State University, Clayton College and State University, Georgia Southern University, Macon State College and Southern Polytechnic State University, and each offers a traditional on-campus program in Information Technology. WebBSIT students enroll in one of the participating institutions, and take courses offered by that institution, even if the instructor for that particular course may be a faculty member elsewhere. The program enrolled its first students in August 2004 and is slated to see its first graduates in May 2008.

The WebBSIT program is unique in a number of ways. First, it is one of the few programs offered by traditional universities that is fully online and is delivered completely asynchronously. It combines general education courses, which students can take through the University System of Georgia eCore program (<http://www.georgiacenter.uga.edu/ecore/>), and a set of information technology courses. Second, the WebBSIT is a multi-institutional program.

In this paper, we describe the genesis of the program and its current state, including its impact to this point, its curricular structure and rationale, and the make-up of the current student body. We also describe some of the obstacles we had to overcome, both in terms of administration of the program, attracting students and in delivery. While some of these difficulties were no doubt the consequence of the fact that this is a multi-institutional program, we believe that at least some of the lessons we have learned are applicable to any fully online program. We conclude with our expectations for the project's future.

I. INTRODUCTION

As the United States and other developed countries move away from an emphasis on industrialization to become service and information societies in a global economy, job markets are changing dramatically. Some companies with labor-intensive production are downsizing due to increased computer automation and outsourcing (Friedman, 2006), while others move their plants to areas with cheaper labor and lower operating costs. At the same time, there is a significant increase in the service sector. The new society that has resulted from these developments requires highly skillful workers whose knowledge will require constant updating (McGovern, 2002; Edwards, 1993).

One of the most important enabler of these developments is Information Technology (IT), and it is therefore not surprising that, as companies start to take advantage of this more global economy, the demand for IT workers is increasing rapidly. Thus, the US Department of Labor predicts that demand for information technology professionals will remain extremely high for the foreseeable future (Department of Labor 2003). The increasing demand on IT-related jobs and IT degrees is echoed by current news reports (Greenwald, 2007; workforce3one.org, 2007; Sahadi, 2006; money.cnn.com, 2007). Moreover, this demand for IT professionals is not restricted to the US and there are signs that countries, such as India, which have benefited greatly from the trend towards IT outsourcing, are started to struggle to fill their IT vacancies (Ready, D & Conger, J. 2007).

The increased demand for IT workers, and the fact that technology is advancing rapidly, thereby making skills acquired a few years ago obsolete, requires educational institutions to create opportunities that allows students to acquire new skills and/or to update their existing skills, for example through the development of new degree programs. However, most working professionals are not able to attend face-to-face classes offered during traditional school hours. Fortunately, the Internet has made online learning a viable and suitable mechanism in acquiring a college degree. Online learning can combine the best of distance education with the best of traditional campus-based instruction by offering convenience paired with faculty and peer interaction. Often described as “any time, any place” learning, the potential of online educational programs for flexibility, accessibility, customization and personalization make them particularly relevant to the needs of adult learners with career and family demands.

The potential of online education has not gone unnoticed. Thus, Allen and Seaman (2006) point out that

- Online enrollment continued to grow rapidly.
- Institutions of higher education reported record online enrollment in 2006.
- Most of the largest institutions with enrollments more than 15000 students had online offerings.
- Doctoral/Research institutions have the greatest penetration of offering online programs.

- Most of the Chief Academic Officers believe that the quality of online instruction is equal to or superior to that of face-to-face learning.

However, online learning is not without its problems. Students may run into road blocks because of issues to do with their self-discipline, time management, or experience in using technology for online learning (Beam & Cameron, 1998 pp. 258-264; Palloff & Pratt, 1999). Moreover, in at least some cases, faculty members are insufficiently prepared to deliver online courses. Finally, quality online degree program require significant resources, which institutions may be unwilling or unable to commit.

This paper describes the WebBSIT program, a fully online bachelor's degree in Information Technology, which was designed to mitigate some of these problems. The program is a joint program among five institutions within the University System of Georgia (USG) in the United States, namely Armstrong Atlantic State University, Clayton State University, Georgia Southern University, Macon State College, and Southern Polytechnic State University. The WebBSIT program is a multi-institutional program, and while this led to some complications, it also allowed the program to share course development and teaching load, thus lightening the cost and load on each individual institution. Moreover, as members of USG, the institutions could also draw on the resources of a range of central USG offices and resources for assistance in course development and support for faculty and student training in online teaching and learning.

II. Program Development

The Genesis of the WebBSIT Program

The development of the WebBSIT program was driven by the Advanced Learning Technology (ALT) division in the University of System of Georgia (USG). Responding to the challenge of increasing the number of IT graduates in the state, ALT issued an invitation in early 2002 to those institutions within USG that offered traditional face-to-face programs in IT to form a study group investigating a joint online IT degree program. ALT had already been instrumental in forming collaborations among institutions within USG to develop and offer online programs. The first two collaborative programs offered by USG institutions are ECore and WebMBA (eCore, 2007; Georgia WebMBA, 2007). The WebBSIT was to be the third degree program offered by the USG institutions. The primary reason for establishing a consortium, rather than asking a single institution to develop the WebBSIT, was resource limitations. There was a feeling that no single institution would have the resources to develop a high quality online IT program, but that by forming a consortium and hence enabling participating institutions to more easily share resources, the resources needed for developing the WebBSIT program could be secured without putting undue stress on a single institution.

The Development of the WebBSIT Degree Program

Representatives of the collaborating institutions first formed a working group that met intermittently face-to-face and by phone conference for about ten months to explore the implications of the project, ascertain institutional and departmental interest and outline a project plan. The USG provided some financial support to the effort through ALT, who hired a consultant to assist the working group.

After the group had ascertained institutional and departmental interest, the working group split into two teams: Administrative and Curriculum, which evolved into the Governing and Operating Boards respectively. The Administrative team defined the nature of the collaboration required to deliver the program, resulting in a Memorandum of Understanding specifying the commitment of participating institutions. The Curriculum team defined the curriculum and a sustainable system for developing and evaluating courses for inclusion in the program.

In addition, the planners sought the input of two ad hoc advisory committees, one for registrar/student data exchange and one for student services including financial aid, both of which have an ongoing role as the program matures.

Program Administration

One of the primary issues that had to be resolved was the administration of the program, and this turned out to be surprisingly complex. Although all institutions in the consortium were part of the University System, and used Banner (a web-based program for student course and degree administration) to help them in student administration, there were significant differences in the ways in which the institutions conducted their student administration operations. Moreover, the institutions each had their own academic calendars.

Initial discussions centered around the program model. For example, the administrative group considered whether the program should be cohort-based or not. The WebMBA, a highly successful online MBA program offered by 5 institutions within the USG, was a cohort-based model. However, because of the greater length of the WebBSIT program and the fact that students were likely to enter the program with a number of transfer credits, the decision was made not to adopt the cohort model.

There were also some questions about the processes for student admission and registration. The question was whether student admission and registration should be administered centrally by a single administrative unit set up for example within the central offices of USG, or whether this should be done on a decentralized basis at each of the participating institutions. The decision was made to follow the decentralized model adopted by the WebMBA program. Students would be admitted to an institution within the consortium, under whatever requirements the home institution had adopted, and use that institution's system to register for courses. This led to some interesting complications in that some institutions were of a more residential nature and had admission policies and procedures in place that might not be appropriate for online students. For example, one of the institutions insisted on students submitting their immunization records as a condition for admission, even though it was unlikely that students would ever physically set foot on the campus.

The fact that students would register for courses through the home institution obviously required each institution to include the WebBSIT courses in its catalog and in its registration systems, and in turn required the approval of the various campus curriculum committees both for the program as a whole and for the individual courses in the program.

The administrative team also developed a set of policies, including withdrawal policies, policies for handling student appeals, and so on, and set the academic calendar.

The administrative group also considered questions concerning the delivery of courses. First, since each institution would include each course offering within its own catalog, but might be taught by a faculty member at another institution, some mechanism had to be implemented for ensuring that faculty members from one institution could be appointed in some capacity by another. Second, policies had to be developed for sharing the course load among the consortium members, and to reward institutions that delivered courses.

In addition, the administrative group addressed a set of issues regarding student services. For example, help desk and hotline services would be provided by the Advanced Learning Technologies division as the various courses would be hosted on their servers. The group also coordinated with an online bookstore to provide students with the opportunity to obtain their textbooks from one central source. On the other hand, individual institutions were expected to provide services such as advising, career counseling and so on to the WebBSIT students enrolled at that institution as their home institution.

The final set of decisions that the administrative group had to make concerned finances. While USG was very supportive of the development of the WebBSIT program, it decided not to directly use state funds to support the program. This meant that the cost for the administration of the program had to be met out of tuition. The administrative group therefore decided to set a tuition based on the home institution's normal tuition and fees, and to add a significant premium tuition of about \$500 per course. The result is that tuition cost for the WebBSIT program is about 3 times as high as the tuition cost for on-campus courses. The administrative group also decided to pay an institution a fee of \$3,500 for each course it delivered, but to leave it up to the institution how it used this additional income (pay faculty overload payments, supplement departmental travel budgets, and so on)

Curriculum Development

The curriculum committee began the curricular design process by first examining the curriculum from each institution. The programs shared a good degree of commonality in the types of courses required although there were considerable differences in curricular structure. The team also looked at Board of Regents requirements for degree programs and at standards established by statewide curricular committees in Computer Science, Computer Information Systems, Information Technology and Software Engineering. The committee further investigated Information Technology Skill Standards developed by industry and documented by the NWCET (<http://www.nwcet.org/>). Further input was sought through a survey of various Georgia businesses. The needs assessment seemed to

point the way toward a concentration in E-commerce; a discipline that ties together the basic elements of information technology, and, by its nature, seemed uniquely appropriate for an online pedagogy.

The WebBSIT project team quickly determined that the general education core required of all Georgia students was entirely available for distance learning students (see section III). This allowed the team to concentrate its efforts on the Information Technology courses necessary to complete the curriculum. Work started on courses in Area F, one of the USG mandated general education areas and consisting of 18 credit hours of lower division courses related to the discipline(s) of the program of study and courses that are prerequisite to major courses at higher levels (<http://www.usg.edu/regents/policymanual/300.phtml>), and quickly moved to the IT core curriculum. Again, the committee found general agreement fairly quickly in the types of courses needed to prepare students for an E-Commerce focused major in IT. So, early on, a viable structure for an online degree emerged. Further details on the curriculum and the process that was put in place for the development of the individual courses are discussed in sections III and IV respectively.

III. STRUCTURE OF THE PROGRAM

The structure of the WebBSIT program mirrors the structure of the various on-campus programs closely, but it is not identical to any one of them (for a description of the structure of one of the programs whose structure differs most, see Reichgelt, Price & Zhang, 2002). The Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia (USG) mandates that each program offered at a USG institution offers a specific selection of lower division courses, known as area A through F. Areas A through E cover general education requirements, while Area F covers lower division courses appropriate to the major. Students who have completed areas A through E at any USG institution can automatically transfer these credits when they transfer to another USG institution. Area F credits can be transferred as well, provided that the student does not change their major.

Area A courses cover essential skills and typically consist of two English composition courses, and a mathematics course. They account for 9 credit hours. Area B covers institutional options and typically includes some orientation and study skill courses. They cover 4-5 credit hours. Area C accounts for 6 credit hours and cover fine arts and the humanities. Area D covers science and technology and is comprised of 10-11 credit hours. Area E, finally, covers social sciences and account for 12 credit hours.

Many students who enter the WebBSIT have completed a substantial proportion of their Area A through E courses, and therefore tend to start with their Area F courses. Moreover, at least some students entering the WebBSIT program have also completed some IT courses and may transfer some of their credits in this area. For students who have not completed their general education requirements, a number of institutions within the USG cooperate to offer the so-called eCore program, essentially a fully online set of courses covering the general education requirements. Of the institutions involved in the WebBSIT consortium, only Southern Polytechnic State University participated in the

eCore program. While it is possible for students enrolled at other institutions to take eCore courses offered through SPSU as transient students, there are some administrative complications for students that wish to complete a significant number of general education courses through eCore. Such students are therefore advised to register with SPSU.

Area F covers lower division courses appropriate to the major. The Area F courses for the WebBSIT program are

- Introduction to Information Technology
- Discrete Mathematics for Information Technology
- Statistics
- Programming and Problem Solving I
- Programming and Problem Solving II
- IT and the Enterprise

Of these, only the statistics course is offered in other programs as well, and was therefore not developed by the WebBSIT consortium. The Discrete Mathematics for Information Technology course is an online version of a discrete mathematics course that is found in many programs in computer science or information technology. With one exception, which we will discuss below, the Programming and Problem Solving I and II courses are essentially the first two introductory programming courses that are again familiar to many computer science and information technology programs. Currently, the language of instruction is Java.

The IT and Enterprise course covers the structure and management of an IT infrastructure. As such it covers both the management of technology and the management of people, and how to make an IT infrastructure effective, efficient and productive.

The Introduction to IT course has two major goals, namely to introduce students to the basics of IT applications and to introduce students to some basic IT techniques, including object-oriented design and database design and implementation. The first half of the course introduces such topics as the components of IT applications and computer networks, as well as the impact of IT. Students are typically asked to complete a group project in which they examine the impact of IT on a selected area of human activity. The second half of the course covers the basic notions of object-oriented design and requires students to complete an individual project in which they create an object-oriented design document for a simple application (typically consisting of 3 to 4 classes, 2-3 superclasses, and 5-6 method specifications). They are also introduced to the basics of SQL and complete an individual database project in Access, in which they are required to use the SQL view supported by Access.

The fact that Introduction to IT covers the basics of object-oriented design means that the first Java course (Programming and Problem Solving I) differs from many standard Java courses in that it does not have to cover the fundamental concepts of object-oriented terminology. As a result, students typically learn slightly more Java than is customary.

In addition to the approximately 60 hours in areas A through F, all students are required to take 14 core courses (42 credit hours), as well as 3 courses as a concentration (9 credit hours). This leaves students with 3 free electives (9 hours).

The current list of core courses comprises:

- Technical Communication
- Systems Analysis and Design
- Information Technology Project Management
- Database Design, Development and Deployment
- Introduction to Digital Media
- Web Application Development
- Architecture and Operating Systems
- Data Communications and Networking
- Introduction to E-Commerce
- Professional Practices and Ethics
- Senior Project and Portfolio
- Systems Acquisition, Integration and Implementation
- Human Computer Interaction
- Information Assurance & Security

Many of these courses are online versions of courses that are fairly standard in face-to-face IT programs. For example, most IT programs have a Systems Analysis and Design course, a Database Design, Development and Deployment course, and a set of courses in the areas of IT infrastructure and networking comparable to the Architecture and Operating Systems and the Data Communications and Networking courses. Many face-to-face IT programs also include an Information Technology Project Management course. Finally, most face-to-face IT programs include at least some courses on Web development, and the WebBSIT has therefore included a Web Application Development and an Introduction to Digital Media courses.

Other courses included in the WebBSIT program were designed based on the emerging IT model curriculum, promulgated by ACM (acm.org 2007). Examples include the Human Computer Interaction course and the Information Assurance and Security course.

The courses that are most unique to the WebBSIT program are the courses in Technical Communication and System Acquisition, Integration and Implementation. The first reflects the fact that IT professionals are required to be able to communicate effectively with a range of audiences, while the inclusion of the second was driven by the fact that many IT applications are no longer developed from scratch, but acquired from third parties. This in turn leads to a set of additional skill requirements for IT professionals, such as the ability to write a Request for Proposals (RFP) and the ability to evaluate responses to RFPs.

Currently, the WebBSIT supports only one concentration, namely a concentration in IT Strategy. The courses offered within this concentration are

- Customer Relationship Management

- IT Strategy, Design and Development
- IT Policy and Law

However, the consortium is considering the inclusion of additional concentration.

IV. COURSE DEVELOPMENT

Formation of Development Team

In this section, we describe the evolution and processes of early course development. The early course development and the processes in the development had set a model for our current course development. As described in the last section, the curriculum development started out by designing the curriculum structure of the program utilized standards.

After the curriculum structure was determined, the curriculum committee then decided to begin the development of the first few courses in Area F. The curriculum committee had brainstormed the course objectives and topics covered in the Area F courses. The curriculum committee also decided to use a team approach for the first few courses developments. The course development team consisted of several faculty members (content experts) and a course developer from ALT.

The first major course development effort using a team approach was the development of Programming and Problem Solving I and II (PPSI and PPSII) courses. It had set a model for later course developments. As we stated earlier, the course objectives and topics covered in the Area F courses were hammered out by the curriculum committee at that time. For PPSI and PPSII, the curriculum committee had also determined to use Java as the programming language. The course development team consisted of five content experts from three institutions and a course developer who both acted as the project manager and was responsible in putting the content onto the course website.

Phases of Course Development

After the formation of the course development team, the team had its first meeting to decide the phases of the course development. In the first meeting, the team decided that three faculty members from two closed-by institutions would work on the PPSI course and two faculty members from another institution would work on PPSII. The team also decided to conduct the two course developments in three phases. The first phase was the planning phase where the team would use approximately two months' time to hash out the deliverables of the course development. In the second phase, the team would use about four months to complete the development of the first halves of the two courses, and use another three months for completing the second halves of the two courses.

Course Development Deliverables

In the two months, the team met two times face-to-face and two times using teleconference for hashing out the deliverables. The team divided the tasks among team members: one team member was responsible for recommending and contrasting several textbooks for the two courses; one member was responsible for drafting the unit

objectives and topics; two members were responsible for locating the learning resources and two members responsible for designing learning activities for each unit in the two courses.

Course Development Process

After the planning phase was over, the two new sub-teams worked in parallel for developing the content units for the two courses as well as making joint decisions for unified unit format, tools, and IDE in the two courses. For example, the two sub-teams decided to use Viewlet Builder for creating animated flash tutorials. Those tutorials can guide the viewers step-by-step in performing specific tasks with using software. They can also be used to illustrate difficult concepts in ways that cannot be accomplished on paper. When the two sub-teams discussed about how to use Viewlet Builder, one team member pointed out that our development should comply with Section 508. Section 508 consisted of federal law and standards enacted to eliminate barriers in information technology, to make available new opportunities for disabled people, and to encourage development of technologies that will help achieve these goals (Section508.gov, 2007). We used Viewlet Builder to create animated tutorials showing how to install and use Java IDE, programming concepts illustrations. We included narrated text and voice in the tutorials. We worked on the development of the content for about six to seven months and all the units in the two courses were completed and submitted to the project leader for conversion into the web content. In the process, the project leader and the team members felt the need to develop an Instructor Guide detailing the purpose of the course, the units in the course and how to teach the course online.

The successful completion of the two course developments created a model that the consortium adopted with modifications in the current course development.

Currently, when we need to develop a course, the Operating Board will discuss the course objectives and content for the course. Then the Operating Board will invite faculty members from the participating institutions to bid for the course development by filling out a standard application. The standard application had already included the course objectives and topics suggested by the Operating Board. The bidder will fill out the course goal, program outcomes, recommended textbooks as well as the bidder's expertise in the subject matter, his/her experience in online teaching. The successful bidder is also asked to develop the instructor guide for the course and he/she will develop the content and submit those contents to the consortium web developer who will convert the content for the online course. The successful bidder is also asked to teach the course the first time offer.

V. THE ADMINISTRATION AND FUNDING FOR THE WEBSIT PROGRAM

As the statewide demand for IT professionals continued to rise in Georgia, the Board of Regents (BOR) of the University System of Georgia suggested the creation of an accessible, non-traditional degree program in Information Technology. Administrators at the BOR viewed collaboration among regional institutions as the most effective way to

achieve a high quality B.S. IT program offered online. To assist with the facilitation of the new program the Advanced Learning Technologies unit (ALT) invited representatives of five USG institutions to an initial planning meeting in May of 2002. As an indication of support for this new program, ALT assigned an instructional technologist to the Online BSIT Collaborative to provide project – planning assistance.

In addition to providing an instructional technologist, the BOR, through ALT, provided the seed money for initial course development and the first three years of the Web BSIT program until such time that the program could become self sustainable as projected by the fiscal plan. The money covered costs for such things as course development, content review, delivery and communication tools, training, other additional administrative and production costs, hiring of an Executive Director, and marketing costs.

Each of the five participating institutions contributed to the start-up of the WebBSIT by agreeing to a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which makes each of the five institutions responsible for the administrative and academic components. Each institution provides in-kind support specifically with administrative oversight with the creation of the governing board and advisory board. Institutions also agreed to provide a campus coordinator who acts as the WebBSIT advisor on their campus.

As the initial phase of the project was developed, all five institutions settled on a differentiated tuition cost per credit hour. Since tuition at the institutions varied, a consistent tuition and fee schedule for students enrolled in the program was essential. One of the five institutions serves as the fiscal agent for the program so all funds for the programs flows to that fiscal agent. As the fully developed courses are rolled out, faculty members from each of the participating institutions agree to provide faculty members to teach the courses. While a faculty stipend is paid to the institution, any remaining costs associated with the salary are an in-kind contribution from the faculty members' home institution. Typically, teaching a course for the WebBSIT is a part of the normal teaching load for full-time faculty member at one of the five institutions.

The fiscal plan for the WebBSIT is constantly reviewed by the Executive Director and presented to members of the governing board. The governing board has the authority to make changes, when needed, on behalf of each of the five institutions with respect to salaries, development costs, marketing resources, and other administrative details. Recommendations regarding tuition and fees must follow the same process from traditional campuses and must be approved by the USG BOR.

VI. LESSONS LEARNED AND CONCLUSION

In developing a unique bachelor's program such as the Web BSIT many challenges have been overcome and other challenges present themselves as the program is developed and students progress toward completion. The program design was created partially based on the experience with the University System of Georgia online e-Core and Web MBA programs.

One of the most surprising lessons that we learned was the sheer amount of administrative details that have to be addressed. Even though all five participating institutions are part of the University System of Georgia, there were often five different ways of handling administrative tasks associated with academic programs. Examples include differences in academic calendars, differences attendance is verified for financial aid purposes, differences in policies in student support offices such as registrars, financial aid, admissions and others.

Many of the issues were resolved with little problem, others require manual fixes, including the use of BANNER, a student information database, which does not allow multi-institutional course listings, even though all institutions use the BANNER system. This facilitated the need for a faculty member on each campus to be designated as the instructor of record at that campus and was responsible for recording grades, verifying student attendance, and other administrative tasks based on the information received from the actual instructor of the course.

It is also clear that, if the WebBSIT is to be a success, it is necessary to design repeatable processes to facilitate the various administrative tasks, and the selection of appropriate tools to implement these processes. It is fair to say that the design of these processes was not without its hiccups but that the processes now in place have resolved most of the administrative issues.

Academic collaboratives build on the intellectual capital of multiple universities. The University System of Georgia's (USG) WebBSIT collaborative offers a bachelor of science in information technology entirely online. The collaborating institutions are geographically dispersed. The job of coordinating, developing and managing the program is difficult since team membership evolves over time and members rarely meet face to face. Particularly relevant, as universities struggle with the paradigm of teaching and learning online, is the evolution of knowledge management (McElroy, 2003). The successful demonstration of using knowledge management techniques in a virtual environment to develop and maintain an online program would provide a model for universities and others as virtual teaming becomes "one of the building blocks of successful organizations" (Powell, Piccoli, & Ives, 2004, p. 6).

Groove Virtual Office Version 3.0f organizes groups of people in workspaces, a kind of virtual office or collaboration area. A sidebar indicates workspace members who are online and/or in the workspace. The WebBSIT uses the workspace metaphor to organize workgroups around both functional and cross-functional boundaries. Governing and administrative bodies are organized in workgroups. Workgroups were created for special projects or tasks. Groove workspaces contain tools that allow people to interact, collaborate, and generate work product: discussion tool, file tool, instant messaging, chat, whiteboard. Tools used most frequently by members of WebBSIT workspaces were the discussion tool, file tool, and instant messaging.

Virtual teams are becoming more prevalent as the internet and other technologies allow business and education to compete globally and respond quickly to changing environments (Powell, et al., 2004). The constructs of knowledge management and knowledge creation should be applicable to many virtual team environments. There is interest in the virtual team concept, but also hesitation since less is known about virtual teams than traditional teams. It is likely that virtual teams operate differently. When are virtual teams appropriate? How can their performance be maximized? There are many interesting questions to be answered.

The WebBSIT degree program is rigorous and a quality academic program built with the collaboration between five institutions in the University System of Georgia. It attracts different types of students into the program. The following types of people are the potential students that we are attracting into our program: People who already had a degree and a job, and want to sharpen their skill in IT; military personnel who are serving in the military and deployed overseas; people who want to change their careers; women who are raising children that would like to pursue a degree while staying at home; working adults that do not have a degree and would like to earn a degree.

The WebBSIT is still in the final developments stages, the course development schedule was developed with the end in mind and to reduce the amount of financial outlay was needed in the beginning terms of the program. Additionally the development process has been beneficial for the participating departments. Not only has each department has been able to open up the on campus programs to each other, but provided team members to work together to create a unique program that is similar, but not the same as any of the five traditional programs.

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