

SAP Curriculum Congress '05

Preparing the Next Generation of Business Leaders



CEO Jim Dallas of Georgia-Pacific speaks on the importance of business and IT working together to deliver value.

“Today’s students are better prepared than ever” was the sentiment echoed recently at the SAP Curriculum Congress in Atlanta, United States. To keep this momentum going with innovative ideas, educators from around the world gathered at the congress to discuss concepts for integrating SAP software into their course curricula – thereby giving students hands-on experience and preparing a new generation of business leaders.

Over 230 faculty members from 100 member schools in SAP’s University Alliances program in 12 countries met March 5-7, 2005 at the Georgia Tech Conference Center in Atlanta, United States, for the eighth annual SAP Curriculum Congress. SAP’s University Alliances program held the event as an opportunity for educators to share ideas for integrating SAP solutions into the curriculum at their universities to prepare students for careers by equipping them with the right skills for the today’s workplace. As Heather Czech Matthews, director of University Alliances in the United States, explained, “The goal [of the event] is to pull faculties together to introduce them to the latest releases of SAP software and to provide examples of innovative curriculum that other faculties have developed.”

Faculty members who attended the event use SAP software in their course curriculum to reinforce the concepts they teach in the classroom and to provide real-life examples for students to learn from. Through the University Alliances program, they receive hosted access to SAP solutions, as well as teaching materials and SAP training.

At the congress, educators were also keen to hear about SAP’s future business goals and discuss building relationships with the business community. Presentations from representatives of the business community such as Americas’ SAP User Group (ASUG), IBM Consulting (the largest implementation partner of SAP), and CIO Jim Dallas of Georgia-Pacific gave educators critical insights about what skills are needed by employers today and how to prepare their students. Bill Wohl of SAP

AG underscored SAP’s commitment to its partnership with educators through its University Alliances program in his keynote address: “I know the next wave of business leaders is sitting in your classrooms around the world. And it is SAP’s honor to help prepare these leaders.”

The format for the event consisted largely of workshops and discussion groups that ran concurrently in subject-oriented tracks. Sessions covered topics such as integrating SAP NetWeaver into a course curriculum, Sarbanes-Oxley and SAP solutions, biometric security and SAP R/3, and business process integration. This year over 35 sessions were offered, most led by faculties. Doug Pebbles, director of University Alliances in Canada, explained how the educator-to-educator knowledge transfer model benefits the program: “We found in the past that the customers wanted to know how to use the software and the faculties were more interested in why, so the requirements for the knowledge transfer are different. It works very well for us to have the faculty members deliver the workshops and lead the discussion groups.”

In one such session, for example, a professor demonstrated how he uses SAP solutions in the classroom to teach his students enterprise resource planning (ERP) concepts and configuration by integrating these lessons into a supply chain simulation game, in which students run a business using a real ERP system from SAP. This “learning-by-doing” approach lets students learn business concepts in a modern and integrated environment, as well as how to configure an ERP system based on realistic business requirements. At the end of the semester, students are evaluated based on their ability to work with the ERP system quickly and adeptly, the feedback received from their customers and suppliers, and profitability.

In addition to sessions about integrating SAP software in the classroom, there were also practical sessions such as developing relationships with the business community and an orientation for new member schools. Amelia Maurizio, director of Educational Alliances, SAP AG, noted that students benefit tremendously from the career preparation they receive through their school’s participation in SAP’s University Alliances program: “They will be recruited more heavily and we know anecdotally that they have received higher salaries.”

Katrin Diesing, who took time out of her work as a consultant to attend the event, is one such student who got a boost entering the job market after graduation based on experience she gained through her school’s participation in SAP’s University Alliances Program. Diesing started as a student employee at the SAP University Competence Center (UCC) at the University of Magdeburg in Germany, where she worked on the help desk and taught courses to her fellow students. Through an exchange program with the UCC, she went to Brisbane, Australia, to work in the UCC at a university there. While in Australia, she broadened her knowledge of SAP solutions and got exposure as a student consultant, which gave her the opportunity to work on real-world customer projects. Diesing is very positive about the opportunities that opened up to her through her university’s membership in SAP’s University Alliances program: “If I hadn’t worked on this project at the UCC in Magdeburg and Brisbane, I wouldn’t have gotten this experience and I wouldn’t be where I am now. It definitely benefited me.”

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