

The 2+2 Bachelor of Applied Science in Health Information Technology (BAS-HIT) – Continuation of the 2+2 BASIT Program

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ABSTRACT

The need for programs in Health Information Technology has led Southern Polytechnic State University Information Technology Department to start a Bachelor of Applied Science in Health Information Technology (BAS-HIT). The program will allow students who have earned an Associate of Applied Science degree in Health Information Technology from an accredited technical college to enroll at Southern Polytechnic State University and obtain a bachelor's qualification with two years of additional study and no loss of credit. Students who graduate from this program should contribute in assisting the Atlanta Metro Area as the hub of Health Information Technology. This paper introduces the program development of a Bachelor of Applied Science in Health Information Technology. This follows the successful established 2+2 Bachelor of Applied Science in Information Technology (BASIT) program format, creates the credit to transfer evaluation credit and creates a tailored curriculum for the BAS-HIT students.

Categories and Subject Descriptors

K.3.2. [Computers and Education]: Computer and Information Science Education

Keywords

Health Information Technology (HIT), IT curriculum, 2+2 programs, transfer of courses

1. INTRODUCTION

For many states, 2+2 programs are designed to accept students who have completed their first two years and earned an Associate Degree (AS), to transfer to four year institutions to complete their Bachelors Degree (BS) [2, 3, 7]. In the state of Georgia, there are two separate college/university systems – University System of Georgia (USG) and the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG). The TCSG comprises schools offering certificates, diplomas and Associate of Applied Technology (AAT) and Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degrees.

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SIGITE '13, October 10–12, 2013, Orlando, Florida, USA.

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1145/2512276.2512318>

Southern Polytechnic State University (SPSU) entered into an articulation agreement with the TCSG in 2008 to create a series of Bachelor of Applied Science degrees in several areas [7, 8]. The Information Technology department created a BAS in Information Technology (BASIT) that fully accepts the two year AAS and AAT degree credits earned in a computing field from any regional accredited TCSG schools. The students then complete the last two years at SPSU to receive their BASIT degree [4, 5].

As Health Information technology (HIT) professionals are in increasing demand, the Information Technology department at SPSU started an effort in health information technology in 2010 to design and implement a series of educational programs, including professional development courses, certificate programs, and degree courses [9]. As part of the effort in HIT, the IT department began exploring other ways to serve students who wanted to receive a bachelor's degree in HIT. By using the established articulation agreement between SPSU and TCSG, the department completed a new program – the BAS-HIT (Bachelor of Applied Science in Health Information Technology) for the students who wish to transfer from the two-year TCSG college to SPSU to complete their bachelor's degree.

2. TRANSFER OF CREDIT ISSUES AND ARTICULATION AGREEMENT

The American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO), the American Council on Education (ACE), and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) have published a joint statement on the transfer and award of credit [1]. The joint statement is intended to serve as a guide for institutions developing or reviewing policies dealing with transfer, acceptance and award of credit.

One of the ways to help ensure quality in the transfer of courses is to examine the curriculum from the transfer institution, along with faculty and other pertinent accreditation criteria, whereas another is to accept courses only from accredited institutions. The state of Georgia has made a joint effort on smooth credit transfer between public institutions [6]. At Southern Polytechnic State University (SPSU) in Marietta, GA, we have chosen to look at accepting transfer students from accredited institutions from the TCSG and established an articulation agreement with most of the institutions within the TCSG. We accept the complete AAS or AAT degree in a computing field.

By following the success of the BASIT program [5], the BAS in Health Information Technology (BAS-HIT) has been created. The

pathways from selected TCSG AAS/AAT degrees in HIT into related Bachelor's degrees will fully utilize the AAS courses that the students have taken at the TCSG by fully transferring them into the BAS programs.

3. COURSE OF STUDY

When creating our BASIT program a process was created whereby the general education course for transfer are evaluated by the Registrar's office and the major course would be sent to the BASIT coordinator for evaluation.

As in our established BASIT program, students transferring into the BAS-HIT program are required to complete their last two years – 60 semester hours, at SPSU. Students in the BAS-HIT program are required to obtain both breadth and depth of IT education as the students in the BASIT and our regular four year degree program BSIT. This is driven both by the demands of employers of our graduates, the ABET CAC accreditation standards in IT, and the IT model curriculum.

The specialized courses for the major of HIT are very different from the other computing majors that can transfer to the BASIT program. In order to process the transfer of courses into the new BAS-HIT program, we follow the established process for transfer evaluation. More importantly, we examined the HIT curriculum at TCSG institutions. The transfer of credit is not done on a course-by-course transfer, but, instead, a group of major HIT courses taken as part of the AAS degree are transferred as a "technical block". This allows for the maximum number of transfer courses from the AAS-HIT degree. The students also transfer in several general education courses they completed as part of their AAS degree. Most students will transfer in 52-58 semester hours from their AAS degree – with a maximum of 37 semester hours of major HIT courses in the technical block.

The HIT students transferring from TCSG schools obtain depth before they obtain breadth; therefore we needed to restructure the courses that make up the BAS-HIT program. For example, students from TCSG have taken a series of specialized occupational courses, such as medical terminology, pharmacotherapy, medical coding and classification, among others. These courses are more healthcare-related, rather than technology-related. In order for the students to obtain breadth in IT and HIT specifically, the students take 2 programming courses, 3 lower-level IT courses, 2 upper-level computing courses, 6 upper-level IT courses including HIT practicum, 2 specialized HIT courses, and the additional required general education courses.

The ability for students to begin at a two-year technical college and then transfer to a four-year university to complete a bachelor's degree has already proven very successful in our regular BASIT program. We currently have approximately 175 BASIT students. We believe that we will see tremendous growth in this new BAS-HIT program as well.

4. CONCLUSION

The BAS-HIT program was introduced relatively recently. It is the start of the collaboration with other HIT program at TCSG

schools. Many institutions from TCSG and USG offer healthcare-related programs, such as Nursing, Health Science, Public Health, Health Service Administration, Health Information Management, and Health Informatics, to name a few. From our interaction with the students from some of these programs, students showed their interest in knowing more about health informatics and health information technology to be better prepared for the increasing demand in the HIT field. Students who graduate from the newly created BAS-HIT program should support the efforts to establish the Atlanta Metro Area as the hub of Health Information Technology.

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