



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH FLORIDA

Department of Information Systems & Decision Sciences

MIS Undergraduate Best Practices

Best Practice [best practices] : Activity, strategy, or approach that produces outstanding results

Mentoring / Advising:

- Your success is important to our department! Our undergraduate mentor, Barb Warner, is available to help you craft and meet your educational and career goals. She can be reached at bwerner@coba.usf.edu or in person at CIS2008 with any questions or concerns.
- Please contact COBA Advising for any questions with course registration, requirements for graduation, etc. You can get more information on COBA Advising at <http://coba.usf.edu/services/ugrad/index.html>. Walk-ins are welcome at BSN2102 to meet with a COBA Undergraduate Advisor.

Classes:

- Think hard about your grades and goals. Ask yourself if you aim for an "A," will earning a "B" be acceptable? A "C" may pass the course, but will it be good enough for the job you want? After all, would you want to be seen by a doctor who makes a good diagnosis just 70% of the time? Do you believe a potential employer will hire someone who understands 70% of the material?
- Work to understand the concepts in your general business courses. As a MIS/IT professional, you will not be working in a vacuum, where you only need to understand technology. Instead, you will be using technology to help other functional areas of

business. It's vital to understand all areas of business.

- Realistic expectations are key to any undergraduate's success. In general, you should expect to spend three hours of time out of class for every hour you spend in the classroom. Of course, some weeks will be lighter, some heavier. Frequently students are shocked at this expectation.
- Be sure you understand the academic integrity/plagiarism policies for your courses. Technology makes it easier to use inappropriate sources and easy for these accidental or deliberate violations to be detected. Penalties are typically very severe for honor code violations.

Experience/Jobs:

- The MIS department has an advisory board made up of senior IT executives from the Tampa Bay area. The following comments were made at a recent advisory board meeting:
 - *Need to dispel the idea that "the sky is falling" for careers in IS*
 - *Build awareness that the number of jobs has exceeded its highest peak*
 - *Business Analyst skills are necessary and primary*
 - *Students need to understand the functions of a Program/Project Manager*
 - *Students need to link technology and process*
- Working at an IS/IT-related job/internship offers many benefits:

- Increases skills / adds to business knowledge
- Incorporates course learning with 'real life' experiences
- Creates more marketable graduates
- Allows students to develop business mentors / contacts
- Increases confidence
- Offers the opportunity to learn specific career-related skills
- Often leads to a higher starting salary for graduates
- The MIS department maintains a job/internship website and listserv using email to contact students when new positions are posted. To be added to the listserv, send your email address to bwarnar@coba.usf.edu.
- **Students are strongly encouraged to get an internship experience in IT/IS prior to graduation.** Companies often provide full time employment to interns working for them.
- There are many student services available at the COBA Career including a full career center, career calendar of events, and an email listserv of all business-related job and internship opportunities. Check out these services at <http://coba.usf.edu/services/career/index.html>
- Build a project portfolio - screenshots, ERDs, UMLs, project reports, etc. that you can take to interviews. A candidate for a senior position at Moffitt IT used that approach and

brought a portfolio of the projects she led in her previous job - and these were mainly in the form of screenshots. She got the job.

- A graduate of the MIS program went into an interview with his laptop and when it was appropriate, took it out and demonstrated software he had written. The interviewers confessed that he didn't have the particular experience they were looking for, but they were so impressed that they offered him a job in another area. In fact, they have contacted our department and requested a clone!

Organizations:

- Join the MIS Society. The MIS Society at <http://miss.coba.usf.edu>. The MIS Society is a great way to network, as well as hear guest speakers, and get trained on new technology.
- Join one of the business fraternities or business organizations on campus. All offer an opportunity to develop contacts as well as hone interview and business skills. There are links to their websites at www.coba.usf.edu (under Student Organizations).
- After graduation, a MIS student commented that one of the things he would recommend is joining a business fraternity. He felt he was too busy to join a business organization, but regretted that he didn't make time for it, as he realized later, the difference it made in job contacts when he graduated.

Questions? Contact Barb Warner at bwarnar@coba.usf.edu

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