New Programs in HCI at ISU

Management information system (MIS) faculty from the Iowa State University College of Business in Ames have teamed up with faculty from the university’s colleges of agriculture, design, education, engineering, and liberal arts and sciences to launch masters and doctoral programs in Human Computer Interaction (HCI).

The programs, which begin this spring, will place Iowa State with Carnegie Mellon and Georgia Tech as the only universities offering graduate degrees in this discipline, say school representatives. Students who enroll in the interdisciplinary Ph.D. program will be the first doctoral candidates to matriculate through the ISU College of Business.

HCI refers to the way electronic technologies affect and shape people’s daily lives. Students and faculty in the program will explore areas such as the design of user interfaces on Web sites and in software, the use of computer operating systems, the implementation of electronic voting machines and online libraries, and voice control of computers.

“Iowa State’s new graduate studies programs will train researchers and practitioners to meet the challenges faced by the rapid emergence of human computer interaction and its ultimate impact on nearly every facet of business and everyday life,” says Anthony Hendrickson, the College’s associate dean for academic programs and a member of the HCI graduate program faculty.

The College of Business will work especially closely with the College of Engineering to apply technology to business functions, says Anthony Townsend, associate professor of MIS. “They’re creating marvelous things in the College of Engineering, but they need an understanding of the business user’s requirements in the corporate environment,” he emphasizes. “Engineering has a deeper focus on the technology, but we can see needs and help work on projects that are significant to the business world.”

Participating faculty members emphasize that HCI technologies can be applied to fields as diverse as database management, psychology, and architecture. One likely area of research will examine how businesses can make better decisions by improving their capability to gather and analyze data collected electronically at points of sale.