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## ATiB students solve real-world problems

By **Jeff Samoray**, *OU Web Writer*

Oakland University's **Applied Technology in Business (ATiB)** students are enrolled in one of the most innovative educational programs in the country. The business minor allows students to use information technologies to solve business problems in real-world corporate settings.

"It's innovate in that students, faculty and industry are brought together to solve real problems," said Mohan Tanniru, professor of MIS and ATiB program director. "ATiB has been developed by taking the best of many different programs. Its combination of the co-op and internship-like opportunities with full corporate financial support is unique to universities in the United States."

The program, founded in 1997, admits undergraduate business majors who learn to apply IT to a variety of business settings. Every student admitted into the program has a corporate sponsor, where they work in teams on challenging, yet manageable, projects for an 18-month period. Students have four semesters to complete their projects, and the last semester is a half-time, in-residence internship at the corporate site. Faculty also work with the students to coordinate the projects. Companies such as Comerica, DaimlerChrysler, EDS, Eaton Corporation, General Motors and Lear are among the sponsors.

"The objective is to train students to learn IT applications to real problems through projects defined by the corporate sponsors while the students are in school taking courses," Tanniru said. "In the first semester of the program, the students have classwork to complete. Then in the final three semesters they work on projects with three or four companies, moving from one project to another each semester."

The skills the students learn in the program are invaluable to their future careers, Tanniru said. In fact, the corporate sponsors offer jobs to many of the students after their final semester in the program.

"Students gain experience in developing presentation skills," Tanniru said. "They must juggle their work schedule with school, so they learn time management skills. They have to write weekly status reports and in doing so learn project management skills. ATiB provides real-world exposure to the dynamics of business. At the same time, it's reciprocal. The companies are gaining some valuable technology exposure from the students before they make an investment in that technology. The sponsors actually hire about 50 percent of the students in the program."

On Friday, Dec. 7, ATiB students will demonstrate their team-developed workplace solutions during the ATiB Fall Project Presentations. Seniors will present their project work with their corporate sponsors, while the juniors will present their class project – financial planning for Coe Drug, a pharmacy. The presentations take place at 2:30 p.m. in 242 Elliott Hall (the School of Business Auditorium) and are open to all interested in learning more about ATiB and the work students perform for the sponsoring companies.

The projects being presented represent a wide variety of IT applications.

"Separate projects with General Motors and Kelly Services deal with managing Web content," Tanniru said. "Another with Eaton Corporation involves the development of Web-based reporting tools. Another with DaimlerChrysler involved the construction of a database on price forecasting. Another with EDS involved creating Web database interfaces. We also had a group work with Katke-Cousins Golf Course on creating a database for managing golf membership data.

"The bottom line of the whole ATiB concept is that the students gain a wider exposure to business projects and technology applications, while the companies gain valuable long-term help from students."

For more information, see the **ATiB Program** Web site, or contact the ATiB office, 337 Elliott Hall, at (248) 370-3284 or [tanniru@oakland.edu](mailto:tanniru@oakland.edu).

### SUMMARY

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