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PhD Student Success

Many publications about higher education in the past few years have addressed the issue of PhD student success and completion. In fact, a troubling theme has emerged focusing on the crucial problem of non-completion.

Of the last 25 graduates of the PhD in Technology Management Program (since 2011), approximately 24% of these students graduated in 4 years, 24% of these students graduated in 5 years, and 52% of these students graduated in 6 years. This is remarkable for two reasons: first, most distance education programs of all types have approximately a 50% completion rate and, second, most PhD program completion rates vary between 49.3 % (humanities) and 63.6% (engineering).

Obviously, student success is benchmarked primarily by getting the degree. This is also a fundamental metric for institutions. This dual impact is also true when students fail to complete but the more substantial effect is on the student. Both the student and the institution invest time and money, however, it is the student who does not complete that also misses other opportunities while engaging in doctoral studies.

Although our PhD Program has a relative high completion rate, we must ask the question as to what might cause non-completion and, if possible, address that cause. For more than a decade, the Council of Graduate Schools has worked to understand the factors that influence PhD completion. Their work, however, has been focused on traditional, on-campus full-time PhD programs. The basic categories they have identified include: 1. Student selection and admissions, 2. Mentoring and advising, 3. Financial support, 4. Research mode (predominate methods used in the field), 5. Curricular and administrative processes and procedures, and, 6. Program environment.

These factors affecting student success are only loosely correlated to our situation. From an institutional perspective perhaps the most relevant are: 1. Student selection and admissions, 2. Mentoring and advising, 3. Curricular and administrative processes and procedures, and 4. Program environment. The factor of financial support is a powerful issue for our students (most are part-time, self-financed or reimbursed by employers) but due to the distance education model of our program, few students study full-time with on-campus support. Also, due to the emerging field of technology management, research methods vary slightly based on the nature of the student’s dissertation problem. There is no single “correct” research method to employ, or deter students. In fact, a few recent dissertations have employed a blended methodology to collect and analyze data.

Current procedures for student selection and admissions are based on the published criteria. Perhaps the most important aspect of the application process is the decision by the prospective student to apply. The review of grade point averages and test scores is very
straightforward. The criteria on test scores is described as applicants needing a “competitive score” which is translated to be at the 50th percentile. The matching of previous degrees to the list of Program specializations is also pretty straightforward. The classification of work experience related to the specialization is sometimes difficult due to the nature of job descriptions (especially those with military work experience). Our PhD Program currently has about a 60% acceptance rate. Those who are admitted tend to be prepared to succeed in the Program.

Frequent and accurate mentoring and advising by faculty, especially committee members, is very important. Due to the distance nature of our Program and the involvement of faculty at five universities, this may not be as positive as it should be. Efforts to improve this have been made and some progress has occurred. Interestingly, in a previous survey of our graduates, many students reported that they benefited from more than one faculty mentor in the Program. This is good, the more faculty invested in a student success.

The curricular and administrative processes are perhaps the most complex aspect of the categories of student success. The program of study includes an opportunity for students to choose elective courses or independent studies. These choices vary from student to student and require students and advisors to consider many variables. Few courses are sequenced so flexible scheduling is available. However, perhaps the most confusing aspect of the curriculum is the different course scheduling procedures at each university and the procedures of remaining “active” in that university in order to register. Consortium schools do cooperate on many levels, however, there remain some issues with financial aid approvals, international student status and human subject reviews (at the dissertation stage). Because these activities are regulated by the federal government, there have been few simple solutions. These final issues do impact student frustration from time to time, but they are navigable.

Program environment is defined primarily by the electronic medium through which classes are conducted and students/faculty communicates. A central task associated with this is the formation of student planning and dissertation committees, and of course interaction between the student and his/her advisor. Another element in defining the program environment is the role performed by the Program assistant who often brokers solutions to program problems for both students and faculty. This is a very critical element of our distance education PhD Program.

So, of the relevant categories of factors effecting student success: selection and admission, mentoring and advising, curricular and administrative processes and program environment, our PhD Program should re-emphasize our efforts to understand what and how these factors can be optimized to ensure even more student success. Granted that not all students who begin a PhD program will complete that Program, we want to do what we can to increase student success.

Every three years our Program conducts a follow-up survey with graduates. Some questions on this follow-up survey address factors that impact student success. Program faculty and administration consider this data carefully and try to implement improvements. As a current student however, we want to capture your impressions of how the PhD in Technology Management Program can improve student success. Please email me using the subject title of “Improving Student Success” and I will compile this information and integrate it into faculty and administrator dialogue. Thank you.

George Maughan

Source:

Council of Graduate Schools. www.cgsnet.org/cgs-occasional-paper-series
RECOGNITIONS

Blake Wentz – Technology Management Graduate receives research grants and awards

Dr Blake Wentz is an associate professor and construction management program director in the Milwaukee School of Engineering. He graduated from the Technology Management PhD program in Summer 2013. Dr Blake specialized in Construction Management at Indiana State University where he successfully defended his dissertation on “Life Stressors of Mechanical Contracting Supervisory Personnel”.

For the second year in a row, Dr Blake Wentz, received the Mechanical Contractors Association of America’s (MCAA) Educator of the Year Award. Dr Wentz is also the MCAA Student Chapter advisor at MSOE, and guided the team to a first place finish in the MCAA Student Chapter Competition. The committee chose Dr Wentz for his mentoring ability, industry knowledge and involvement, and active participation in Student Chapter Program activities. Dr Wentz’s outstanding abilities are revealed in the success of the MCAA Student Chapter at MSOE, which won the 2011 and 2013 MCAA Student Chapter Competitions and was a finalist in 2012.

The following is the list of other research grants and awards Dr Wentz received:

Research Grants:
- Recipient of the Milwaukee School of Engineering (MSOE) Faculty Development Grant 2013 - $10,000 (with Dr. Chris Raebel)
- Recipient of the Mechanical Contractors Association of America (MCAA) Chapter of Excellence Grant - $7,500

Awards:
- MCAA National Educator of the Year - March 22nd, 2013
- AGC of Wisconsin Associate of the Year - May 3rd, 2013

Source: [http://www.msoe.edu/community/about-msoe/social-newsroom/blog/2013/06/07/blake-wentz-is-mcaa-educator-of-the-year](http://www.msoe.edu/community/about-msoe/social-newsroom/blog/2013/06/07/blake-wentz-is-mcaa-educator-of-the-year)
OUR GRADUATES


Dr. Mark Thomas specialized in Digital Communication at his home institution of Indiana State University. He successfully defended his dissertation, “Identifying Effective Strategies to Providing Technical Support to One-to-One Programs in K-12 Schools” in May 2013 and graduated in Summer 2013.


Dr. James McKirahan specialized in Manufacturing Systems at his home institution of Indiana State University. He successfully defended his dissertation, “Determination of Mechanical Properties Enhancements to PolyHydroxyAlkenoates using a Polymer Clay Nano-composite” in June 2013 and graduated in Summer 2013.


UPDATES IN SPECIALIZATION

Construction Management

Based on a recent Accenture Construction Industry report, there are seven trends that are transforming the construction marketplace. There is an accelerated rate of globalization: Global Construction 2020 research shows emerging markets will double in size over the next decade to a projected $6.7 trillion with developed countries growing by 36%. Urbanization or the emergence of the megacity is where it is projected that 23 megacities will emerge in 2015 with a population of an estimated 10 million people. This will boost construction globally and opportunities for strategic integration across traditional infrastructure silos will be introduced to one another. There will be challenges for the need of capital, which will require strong private financing and will drive growth globally. Capital investors will look for profitable operations with minimum risks and limited leverage. Opportunities will increase for strategic alliance with banks and funds as well as diversification in the upstream value chain. Talent will be the markets challenge for those hiring and keeping skilled resources. So, developing countries will immediately be challenged but the changing demographics in developed countries will experience an aging workforce issue. The upcoming crisis will be the need for energy. Consumption of renewable energy will grow faster than primary energy. The need will increase by 30% by 2030. New technologies will drive innovation with the reinvention of buildings and infrastructures. There will be an increased use of pre-manufactured modules. There will be higher standards of sustainable living, which will mean that increased populations will require increased responsibility with a growth in demand for good water and waste management. Smart mobility will be need for intelligent cities.


Digital Communication

Data Communications and Digital communication systems are continuing to approach and set milestones at this time in our history. Telecommunication systems have taken giant steps over the last decade. With the total elimination of analog television signals to the introduction of the Apple iPhone (smartphones) in 2007/2008, which is, in essence, a miniature digital computer system with telephone (3G/4G) capabilities.

The emergence of 3G and 4G technology has for the first time brought voice, video and data together on the same hand held consumer device, the smartphone, with speed and memory capabilities that was not imagined 10 or 15 years ago.

During his COT710 residency orientation seminar at Indiana State University in September 2013, Dr. Maughan stated that technological innovations are irreversible. After pondering that statement for a few weeks, the decision was made to put it to a test with a couple of Digital communication system examples. How could we discuss digital communications without mentioning the many, many positives of the smartphone technologies that has been growing exponentially in the new millennium? We know that Facebook, Twitter and a few others organizations would not be multi-million companies with the exponential growth of smartphones. We could venture to say that the Apple Company would not be the richest company in the world without the advent of 3G and 4G technology and all of the apps which has been created for smartphones. This is the technology that has virtually eliminated the hard-wired home phone that was the only lifeline in the majority of the American households 20 years ago.
Human Resource Development & Industrial Training

Companies allocate significant resources in the design, development and implementation of training programs to equip their employees with the necessary skills, knowledge and abilities to perform their job duties. T&D programs enable companies to align their work processes with the skills acquired in order to guarantee a successful after training transfer.

According to an article recently published in SHRM Magazine about training transfer, “In most cases, training isn’t just a skill issue, but also a process issue”. When implementing T&D programs, it is crucial for companies to build the skills but also influence their work processes accordingly, enabling training programs to achieve a guaranteed success. David Basarab, a T&D expert, suggests a solution that T&D practitioners are advised to use to assist them with their training programs learning transfer, this tool is called the Learning Performance Methodology, which is a system based on interconnected steps. The particularity of this method is its ability to emphasize on aligning and redesigning work processes with the training content, allowing therefore companies to achieve a higher training transfer, a n increased employee productivity and performance, the use the trainees’ skills and abilities as an input to identify the alignment possibilities between the work processes and the content, and the integration of work processes in the training.

The Redesign-Integration process involves 4 major steps:

**Step 1:** Identify potential processes for redesign during needs analysis.

**Step 2:** Process mapping.

**Step 3:** Incorporate the newly designed work processes to fit the training needs.

**Step 4:** Test and implement the work processes.

T&D practitioners could ensure a more successful training transfer with these simple steps that meticulously coordinate the work processes redesign.


Manufacturing systems

The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) has taken a step that may contribute to a richer and more affordable future for robotic manufacturing systems. In this year’s DARPA Robotics Challenge, teams were tasked to develop advanced robots that can assist humans in mitigating and recovering from natural and man-made disasters. The initial phase of the competition involved the design and manipulation of such a robot in a virtual environment, and the environment chosen was Gazebo, an open source robotics simulation software package. DARPA has funded the expansion and further development of this software, and they are making the enhanced Gazebo package available to the public through a GNU General Public License.

Using the Gazebo package, users can create a simulated manufacturing environment and then design a virtual robot that can operate effectively in that environment. It allows users to model and determine everything from the performance of sensors to the failure point of joints under load. One of Gazebo's most powerful features is the ability to output the algorithms that you design in the simulator directly into its real-life counterpart using ROS, the open source Robot Operating System. In other words, if you've determined how to make a robot assemble a motor housing in the simulator, you can plug that code into the physical system, and watch it go.

More information on Gazebo can be found at http://www.gazebosim.org.
**Quality System Specialization**

Quality Systems have evolved tremendously becoming central part of key business processes across any activity in public or private sectors. Defined as combination of tools and processes, quality management can be powerful instrument in data collection, organization and handling. In today’s dynamic environments data is shifting to the center of the decision making process. Good data, Big Data, if handled properly create positive business impact with lasting results. Data have to be relevant, accurate, complete, show integrity and consistent across sources. Control must be applied to the way data is entered, organized, used, stored and managed. Data must survive the scrutiny of repeatable and measurable quality control processes. The ability to reason in real time makes data analytics key business differentiator in decision-making. It permits executives identify biggest opportunities or threats first and drive actions to handle them.

The business expert in Quality Systems can find great matches in Big Data and Information Security initiatives across many industries. Big Data and Information Security programs increase value when guided by strong quality methodology to solidify trust in the analysis of large pools of data.

Information Security has embraced industry wide standards such as ISO 27001, Six Sigma and CMM models focusing on consistent methods for information security management. Quality Systems as an approach to business can be a powerful catalyst between *data* and *context* driving trusted innovative results.
**Bowling Green State University**

BG24 News relates the BGSU’s College of Technology, Architecture, and Applied Engineering has the ability to redefine the VCT’s scope of instructional design. The Visual Communication Technology department at BGSU received a $1 million grant for this state-of-the-art packaging lab. VCT evolves to provide practical knowledge that prepares graduate students to succeed. Madeline Fening relates the story VCT’s Unique Packaging Lab.

**East Carolina University**

**Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Girls Conference**

The fourth annual STEM Girls conference was held at ECU in October 4, 2013. The conference is dedicated to middle school female students who aspire to learn about Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. The conference goal is to engage females in fun, hands-on learning experience allowing them to potentially envision themselves in STEM careers. The conference attendees rotated through a wide variety of activities using simple examples. For instance, they used counted goldfish crackers to learn about the supply chain management system. They also learned how to code and decode an encrypted message using mathematics. A student in the mechanical engineering program displayed the use of rapid prototype printers, also referred to as 3D printer.

Dr Evelyn Brown, professor of engineering at ECU and member of the STEM Girls Advisory Board stated “it is our hope that this one day conference can build excitement, enthusiasm, and confidence in the young ladies who attend”.

**Indiana State University**

**Indiana State receives STARS Silver rating for sustainability**

The Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) has recognized Indiana State University with a STARS Silver Rating. STARS (The Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System) is a new program that measures and encourages sustainability in all aspects of higher education.

Indiana State University is considered to be a leading institution in recycling since 2007 when it signed on to the American College and University President's Climate Commitment, a coordinated national pledge to reduce stress to the environment and achieve climate neutrality by 2050. In addition, ISU was recognized by the Princeton Review as one of 322 green colleges in the US and Canada where it was a finalist for the fourth annual Second Nature Climate Leadership Awards.

**PhD in Technology Management Celebrates its 15th anniversary and 100th graduate**

The PhD in Technology Management is celebrating its 15th anniversary since its initiation in 1998. For 15 years, the program has been preparing students for positions of leadership in the public and private sectors of society. The program faculty and staff have devoted time and effort to ensure the graduates develop skills in technology management specializations, research procedures, acquire expertise in instructional processes, and are able to provide service to the industrial and educational community. In addition, the program is celebrating its 100th graduate in Fall 2013.

**North Carolina A&T State University**

The North Carolina A&T State University School of Technology is building a racing team for students. Motorsports professional Greg Davis will work with the school to develop a competitive team. “The goal is to turn out industry ready graduates and the best way to do that is to take them racing,” Davis said. Davis pitched the idea to the university in 2012. Dr. Ben Obinero Uwakweh, dean in the School of Technology, worked with Davis and other university professionals to incorporate the racing team into the Motorsports curriculum.

The Motorsports program that began in 2010 is home to roughly 60 students. Students that study motorsports at A&T receive technical and managerial training that allows them to fulfill the human resource needs of corporate sponsors, team owners, track facilities and product or service support suppliers.

The program’s objective is to teach students the basic knowledge and skills necessary to perform pit crew activities in a real world
application. Motorsports students are taught NASCAR rules and regulations, motorsports demographics, and the interdisciplinary involvement of technology, engineering, management, marketing, communications, and graphic design in motorsports. The Motorsports Technology program is a technical, management course of study to develop motorsports professionals to fulfill the human resource needs of corporate sponsors, team owners, track facilities, product/service support suppliers.

High performance physiology is taught to enhance the student’s mental and physical capabilities and endurance that are necessary in the fast lane of motorsports. Vehicle dynamics and system controls are taught to acquaint the students with the cause and effect of system changes.

**University of Central Missouri**

**Dr. Doug Koch New Chair of the UCMO School of Technology**

Dr. Koch received his PhD in Technology Education (Curriculum and Instruction) from Virginia Tech. He teaches in the areas of Industrial Management and Computer Aided Design and Drafting. His published works and funding efforts are in the STEM fields and related to problem solving, visualization, and design with his more recent focus on innovative education strategies and student retention. He currently serves as on the Executive Board for the Association of Technology, Management, and Applied Engineering. Koch enjoys relating his practical, industrial experience to students in the classroom.

**UCM News**

The UCM School of Technology conducted a follow-up study on graduates from 2006 through 2012. This includes a total of 76 Industrial Management and 73 Industrial Technology and Technology. After multiple communications twenty-five percent of these responded. All individuals either rated their overall education experience at UCM as Excellent (71.4%) or Good (28.6%). Our graduates continue to rate our programs as better than most of comparable size and stature. CampusExplorer.com rates our programs as very large, moderately selective and 4.5 on a 5 star scale with five stars being excellent.

The Ph.D. in Technology Management is celebrating its 15 year anniversary as a consortium PhD with 5 campuses and boosts over 150 active students. UCM has graduated 13 students since 2000 and serves as home University for 9 to 11. Our program currently employs two Doctoral fellows.

Our Graduate Certificates in Lean Six Sigma includes 15 graduate credit hours which are rolled-out over a one year interval. All five courses are offered online and the first graduates finished in the fall of 2012. Network Security is in the implementation phase and is being rolled out to students. Four courses are offered on campus and 1 is offered online.

Twenty two industry professionals and 64 UCM students, faculty and staff registered for the 5th annual UCM Quality Management Conference, held on September 19, 2013 in the Elliot Student Union, room 236. The conference theme this year was “Lean Six Sigma & Quality Support for Strategic Planning and Deployment”. Two panels of four quality professionals headed discussions, one in the morning and the other in the afternoon. The conference topics were “Lean Six Sigma Tools and Customer-Focused Organization”. The panels yielded an abundance of information for conference participants.
Dr. W. Tad Foster is currently a Professor in the Department of Human Resource Development and Performance Technology at Indiana State University. From 1998 to 2009, he served as ISU’s Dean of the College of Technology. He has been an educator for over thirty years and has taught at the secondary, technical institute, community college, and university levels.

Dr. Foster earned his Doctor of Education degree from the University of Illinois in Technology Education with secondary emphasis in Counseling Psychology. His research and writing are in the areas of organizational and personal change, educational technology from a cognitive psychology perspective, instructional design, and total quality management.

Dr. Foster has numerous publications and is a regular presenter at state, national, and international conferences. In addition, he is a reviewer for the Human Resource Development Review, the Human Resource Development Quarterly, the Journal for Technology Education, and is an Assistant Editor for the Journal of Industrial Teacher Education.

In addition to his academic pursuits, Dr. Foster consults regularly in business and industry. Clients have included TRW Automotive (Training Master Trainers), Moore Medical (Strategic Planning), Lacey Corporation (Train the Trainer), Radiall Corporation (Train the Trainer), Locknetics Security Engineering (needs analysis and quality), IPC Information Systems (supervision & project management), EIS Brake Parts (needs analysis, team building), and Imperial Spring (training materials), Caterpillar's Large Engine Center, Illinois Power, Fourslide, FFR Research, University of Illinois and others. He provides consultation in all aspects of human resource development, as well as total quality management (e.g., six sigma and lean), statistical process control, supervisory skills, and project management.

As Eli Aba turned the corner at Indiana State University's Community Garden House, a range of emotions filled him. "I was surprised, humbled and disappointed, not disappointed that they did it for me, but I just thought that being the student worker in the Community Garden and for the job I did, I didn't deserve something like that or something in that nature. Because when you have any type of work we do, we don't see a lot of parties like that for someone," said Aba, now a part-time lecturer at Indiana State.

Around 20 community gardeners and faculty members from Indiana State surprised Aba with an engagement party. Patti Weaver and other faculty and staff members hosted the event to show their appreciation for Aba.

As a student, Aba worked for four years at the Community Garden. He started as the technology management student before being hired as
the gardener. Stephanie Krull, ISU’s landscape and grounds manager, said Aba gave 100 percent in his job when she first hired him to design the garden’s webpage.

"He finished it and he said ‘Gosh, I really want to keep working.' We told him we do have an opening at the community center. Since it was outdoors he never thought he would be interested, as soon as he came over and looked at it, he just immediately took to it and he felt like he was home, because his mom gardened a lot back at home," said Krull.

Aba said he enjoys being out in the garden working and helping the other gardeners. He would help water lots, plant or open the shed for them. "He was never bored, he was out talking and helping people with their gardens and doing whatever he could," said Krull.

Throughout his years as the gardener and for his hard work, the gardeners would occasionally give Aba gifts such as gift cards to Wal-Mart, Subway and other places around Terre Haute. "Some days when I was going home I would stop at Subway and I wouldn't have to use my money," said Aba. "We are all sad to see Eli go he is a quite friendly person and just sets the mood and theme for everything here," said Jim Speer, professor of geography and geology and executive director of the Institute for Community Sustainability, which houses its office at the Community Garden.

After completing his dissertation during the summer, Aba now teaches classes at Indiana State, but the start of his journey began back in Ghana. And he plans for his journey to eventually lead him home.

"When I was in high school I didn't have a good chemistry teacher. We had to learn everything on our own, but it was an easy subject for me," said Aba.

He received his bachelor’s in biochemistry in Ghana and wanted to do something with industrial biochemistry. In 2006, he worked in a hospital as a biochemist for one year and then worked as a quality assurance officer. After a few years of working, he started applying to schools in America. Someone suggested applying to Indiana State University. He graduated in 2013 with his doctorate in philosophy in technology management specializing in quality systems.

"I wanted to specialize in packaging technology so we can get a better quality of produce over the next five to ten years in Ghana," said Aba.

This semester Aba teaches three classes at Indiana State, two technology courses and one packaging course. He is a secondary instructor in a machine class and also sits in on two engineering classes to gain better knowledge in that field. "I have always had a passion for teaching and about sticking to the truth and acquiring knowledge," he said. "You have to seek truth to acquire knowledge by a scientific process."

Aba has been in the United States for four and a half years. His fiancée, Mary Exi Dzakpasu, who still lived in Ghana, wanted to earn her masters at Indiana State. They married in Ghana before she came over, but Aba, did not attend their wedding. Instead, one of his best friends stood in as a proxy. "It was just like a full-fledged African wedding with all the fancy finery and all the color. From the pictures it looked like everyone acted like Eli was there, but he wasn't," said Krull. Aba and his bride plan to have an American wedding this year.

Within the next few years he would like to move back to Ghana and be a part-time professor while starting a company that processes foods such as mangos, pineapples and such to make juice. "I will put my goals on hold, I have to establish myself and get some experience and expertise to establish a business,” said Aba.

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

The consortium program is offered in cooperation with Bowling Green State University, East Carolina University, Indiana State University, North Carolina A&T State University, and the University of Central Missouri. The doctoral program meets the needs of today’s technical professionals. An academically rigorous program of study, the Doctor of Philosophy Program in Technology Management offers research and scholarship experiences and in-depth study in a specialization selected from the areas of:

- Construction Management
- Digital Communication System
- Human Resource Development and Industrial Training
- Manufacturing Systems
- Quality Systems

For Additional information about the PhD in Technology Management, visit our website at [http://technology.indstate.edu/consortphd/](http://technology.indstate.edu/consortphd/). You may also contact Dr. Maughan at (812) 237-3368.

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Writer: Melvin Hayes, PhD Student  
Writer: Randy Robertson, PhD Student

**Profiles**

*Dr. Maughan* is Director of the PhD Program Consortium.  
*Siham Lekchiri* was admitted to the PhD program in Fall 2013. She specializes in Human Resource Development & Industrial Training.  
*Bradley Venable* was admitted to the PhD program in Fall 2012. He specializes in Manufacturing Systems.  
*Fernando De Almeida* was admitted to the PhD program in Fall 2013. He specializes in Human Resource Development & Industrial Training.  
*Frank Kohler* was admitted to the PhD program in Fall 2013. He specializes in Human Resource Development & Industrial Training.  
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