

UAA's Computer Information and Office Systems Program Responding to Changing Needs of Alaska Business and Industry

The Computer Information and Office Systems (CIOS) department at UAA recognizes the importance of being responsive to the changing needs of Alaska business and industry.

The department, which provides students with basic technological skills to gain employment as administrative assistants, executive assistants, technical assistants, payroll assistants and front office assistants, is currently in the process of evaluating and revising its program offerings to better meet these needs.

"We're in the business of educating Alaska's workforce and community. We need to understand their needs in order to provide a skill-based program that produces work-ready graduates," says Darlene Gill, CIOS assistant professor.

The effort began last summer, when the department distributed an 18-question survey to administrative professionals and their supervisors throughout the city. Approximately 200 responses were collected, and the department is in the process of reviewing the results.

"To validate our program and determine any gaps, we needed to know what tasks administrative professionals are currently performing, from both their perspective and their supervisors' perspectives," Gill says.

An initial review of the survey found that many administrative professionals do not have a degree or certificate, and many of them are doing tasks the CIOS department does not currently provide training for. Gill says the survey results also provided

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insights on how people heard about course offerings, how national certifications were viewed, how employment testing is used, and why applicants are eliminated from consideration for a job.

These survey results, along with curriculum development information from another college and input from the CIOS advisory board, will be used to streamline and update the degree and certificates offered by the department. Currently, the CIOS program offers an associate of applied science degree, a certificate, occupational endorsement certificates, and several non-transcripted certificates of completion.

"This process will tell us whether to keep doing what we're doing, or to add or remove something from our program," Gill says. "This spring, we began collaborating with the extended campuses and our advisory committee to outline a program that will respond to business and industry needs."

Gill says she expects the new curriculum to be in place in fall 2008.

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