

The first time is always cause for anxiety. Dressed in business attire, students get that rush of adrenaline as they present their findings and recommendations to business executives and leaders of non-profit organizations. The second time is easier and the next time easier still.

For the past 10 years, the Information Technology Practice Center (ITPC) at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside has helped students gain project-based experience and get comfortable in front of the businesspeople and organizations of southeastern Wisconsin. Part of the Ralph Jaeschke Solutions for Economic Growth Center in the School of Business and Technology, ITPC assigns business and computer-science students, backed by their faculty, to real world projects.



UW-Parkside Dean Fred Ebeid addresses business advisory board members during the recent ITPC 10th anniversary celebration.

ITPC CELEBRATES A DECADE OF HELPING STUDENTS, BUSINESS

“Students like the idea of working on a real project for a real company and they like to see that their efforts pay off for a company. It’s a proud moment for them when they are able to present their findings; the company embraces them, and adopts them,” said Fred Ebeid, dean of Parkside’s School of Business and Technology. “That’s a very proud moment for them as students and it’s a wonderful experience.”



“Nonprofits and small businesses are looking for somebody to help them out because they don’t have a big budget and we’re a resource for the community fulfilling our mission as a UW System school,” ITPC Director and Associate Dean Dirk Baldwin said. “Bigger companies come to us for a variety of reasons. Sometimes it’s to tap into the faculty knowledge in an area and sometimes it’s because they have a project or two that have been on the back burner and they haven’t been able to designate enough people resources to the project.”

Whatever the reason, ITPC projects provide valuable experience. Baldwin uses the systems analysis and design class as an example.

“Many universities teach that by book problems and case studies. But it’s a whole different thing to have to go out and interview the clients, dig through their current system or current documents, and try to figure out the requirements of the system and what kind of system they should propose to meet those requirements,” Baldwin said.

To top off the experience, students in the class build or implement some part of the

system they propose. And, along with hands-on experience, ITPC projects help students polish their “soft skills” in teamwork, leadership, communication, and presentation.

Started in 1998, the ITPC was originally a collaboration between UW-Parkside, Harley-Davidson, Johnson Professional, and Snap-on Tools. Over the years, a strong relationship has formed with the Small Business Development Center and the Center for Advanced Technology and Innovation (CATI) – ITPC students designed CATI’s computer network. The partnership now includes JohnsonDiversey, Snap-on, and Twin Disc. The Center also works closely with Modine Manufacturing.

In addition to student projects, the ITPC meets monthly with its partners to review the university’s information technology curriculum, share experiences related to IT, discuss IT issues and opportunities, and to help faculty stay current with what IT practitioners are thinking.

The ITPC continues to grow in popularity with faculty and students and with companies and nonprofits.

“The first year or two, we did two projects a year in the IT Practice Center. Now it's a regular part of the curriculum. We're up to 15 projects a semester and virtually all of UW-Parkside's IT-related professors, at some point, do these kinds of projects with their students,” Baldwin said.

Baldwin points with particular pride to an ITPC project completed for Modine in which Professor Suresh Chalasani and a team of mostly graduate students developed web-based decision support tools to speed product design. Along with projects done for Harley and current ITPC partners JohnsonDiversey, Snap-on, and Twin Disc, the Center has worked with SC Johnson, Dremel Corporation, many smaller businesses and nonprofits and on university-related research projects.

Baldwin notes that most ITPC projects are handled by undergraduate students, which makes UW-Parkside unique among universities with IT centers. Such facilities are usually staffed with graduate students and they tend to emphasize research.



Using the ITPC as a model, UW-Parkside has already created a practice center for marketing. Ebeid envisions similar centers for accounting, lean manufacturing, supply chain management, finance, and others as the university continues to adapt to the market's changing needs.

“As business evolves and the needs of business change,” Ebeid said, “we'll change with it to provide what they need.”

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“I said, Paul, I'm here not for Kenosha but for the school.”

In order for the bill to pass, nine votes were needed in the State Senate and most of those votes would have to come from the northern portion of the state. Covelli remembers Alfonsi approaching him before the senate vote.

“He poked me in the chest ... 'You got your nine votes,’” Covelli said.

Forty years later, and with a lifetime of community involvement on his résumé, Covelli looks at the university he helped create and he sees good things.

“We got a school,” he said. “And kids don't have to worry about paying room and board to go to a university because they have one right here.”

Alumni Awards

Distinguished Alumni Achievement Award

Keith Olsen ('83) has found success by helping others find success. As a guidance counselor at Westosha Central High School in Salem, Wis., Olsen has helped more than 4,000 students prepare for their futures during his 23 years at the school.



In addition, Olsen has worked behind the scenes to secure the facilities current and future students need.

His work has also gained the approval of national organizations. Donna Weldin of the National Youth Leadership Forum in Washington, D.C., said “As an educator, you have touched your students in many ways – through your mentorship as well as through your dedication to their education.”

Olsen also found time help students stay physically fit. As an assistant wrestling coach and as head cross country and track coach, he has helped students excel inside and outside the classroom.

As one nominator put it: “He is the most dedicated individual I have ever met for helping students succeed.”

Distinguished Alumni Service Award

No matter how far away **Herbert Roehrich** ('87) travels, southeastern Wisconsin always calls him home. After he graduated from Trinity College in Illinois, and attended Trinity Evangelical Divinity School for a year, he was first called to return.



“He decided he could better serve society as a medical practitioner than as a minister,” said nominator Anna Maria Williams. “He chose the new and growing premedical program at UW-Parkside for his preparation.”

After attending UW-Parkside, Roehrich was off to Madison for his doctorate and to Virginia, Michigan, and New Jersey for post-doctoral training. In 1987, while serving as the director of the National Cocaine Hotline, he visited UW-Parkside and local physicians convinced him to return home again.

Roehrich consults for the Public Defender offices in Racine and Kenosha counties, doing much of that work pro bono. Using the same pro-bono arrangement, he consulted on UW-Parkside Professor Helen Rosenberg's research on geriatric alcohol abuse.

Williams said Roehrich has “made a significant difference in the Racine and Kenosha communities with his expert and dedicated practice of psychiatry.”