The School of Business Administration is setting up a new technology lab this year. The lab will serve as a sort of Information Technology (IT) boot camp for majors in the Information Systems (IS) program.

“This lab will help students hone their IT skills in computer building and repair, basic electronics, computer networking and server infrastructure,” explains Armand Poblete, instructor of information systems. “It’s also a good introduction to software development and management.”

Classes in this lab will include IT Hardware and Software, Business Programming, and Networking.
IT is a subcategory of Information Systems (IS), and it focuses on support with technological problems. IS is more generally concerned with integrating technology strategically into an organization to better accomplish its goals; IT considers how to manage and store data, and determine who has access to it. It helps enterprises gain an edge over others competitively.

“So in order for our IS students to become experts in managing organization or enterprise level technologies,” added Poblete, “they must learn the basics of IT.”

The lab’s creation will provide these students with information on the fundamentals.

“Currently our fundamental course is taught in a hallway in Chan Shun and due to the hands-on nature of the IT Hardware and Software course we can only accommodate a maximum of eight students,” Poblete admits.

Additionally, three offices have been appropriated for business programming, networking, certification support and project management, each of which can only hold six students legally. Once the new labs are done Poblete hopes they can support up to 15–20 students per class.

“In terms of the professional workforce outlook, the lab itself is not a singular system that provides students with all the IS skills and knowledge for the workforce,” remarks Poblete, “but it is an effective complementing component which is part of a larger collective pool of resources.”

These resources include system analysis and design, project management and other core business courses. One of Poblete’s goals for this year is to implement cloud-based technologies into the curriculum, such as Microsoft Azure, 365 business and Amazon Web Services. Financial backing is the current obstacle to accomplishing this goal.

“I feel by adding these technologies we will be able to rapidly adapt our in-classroom materials to meet current industry level standards,” he explains.

Poblete states that IS is predicted to be one of the fastest growing fields in coming years, according to the U.S. Department of Labor—reportedly 15 percent faster than the average.

“The cool thing about IS is that you can work in any industry you like,” Poblete added. “It’s a program that gives you flexibility in job options and it does not box you into a specific industry.”

Poblete also stated that other programs across the country concentrate on the business core while focusing less on technology. Andrews, on the other hand, combines business concepts with a technologically-oriented core.

“We believe that in order to support a business or organization our students must be able to be technically savvy as well as understand the language of business,” said Poblete. “So
with this amalgamation of business and technology we produce a well-rounded IS graduate ready to hit the workforce running."

Alumni find employment in various occupations, including security specialists, database administrators, systems developers, systems engineers, systems analysts and systems administrators.

“The lab will also help currently enrolled IS students with employment while still here at Andrews," Poblete comments. "Most of our students who have taken the basic IT courses work in ITS as customer support specialists, in the School of Business Administration as junior IT specialists and as web development/administrator contractors for local companies and through the School of Business Administration."

Regardless of the students’ career paths, the new lab will aid all students in preparation for their occupational futures.

For more information about IT and IS programs at Andrews, or to find out how you can support the program, visit the departmental website, email computing@andrews.edu or call 269-471-3420.

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