

# **This We Believe About Electronic Business in Business Education**

## **Policy Statement 66**

Although the basic underpinnings of modern business have existed since the eleventh century, digital technology, including the Internet, is today changing the way we do business. “New technologies are dramatically changing the way we live, the way we learn and the way we work” (First Annual Report of the U.S. Government’s Working Group on Electronic Commerce). Businesses that engage in electronic business (e-business) practices have experienced tremendous productivity changes in a relatively short span of time. E-business has also impacted the way, for example, that people make airline and hotel reservations, conduct stock transactions, transfer funds, deliver training, and interact with customers.

E-business involves the exchange of business information by digital transmission. E-commerce is often confused with e-business. For our purposes, e-commerce is considered a component of e-business and refers to activities that involve the exchange of products and services, from business to business, from business to consumer, or within a business, through digital technology.

Using computer programming, database management, web design, and middleware (computer hardware and software that connect various platforms), workers develop the infrastructure that enables e-business to occur. E-business influences activities in accounting, marketing, human resources, purchasing and supply, and customer service as essential business systems are transformed. However, success in an e-business work environment increasingly depends on how employees can effectively communicate, work in teams, take initiative, and make decisions.

**We Believe That** business educators must address the emergence of e-business in the global economy. Business education curricula must encourage students to accept the challenges and opportunities in this dynamic environment. Important e-business issues include ethics, security, database principles and management, web site design, customer relations management, leadership, and the interdisciplinary nature of e-business.

### **Ethics**

In a global economy, e-business is not bound by a single code of ethics as defined by national borders. Different societies have various answers to the question of how e-business can be ethically conducted. However, without an inherent “trust” in the systems that honest transactions will occur, the integrity of e-business is jeopardized.

**We Believe That** business educators must continue to promulgate standards of ethical conduct in business. Given the speed and immediacy of transactions in the electronic environment, students, more than ever before, must have a solid foundation on which to base their ethical decisions. (Refer to PCBEE Statement 51 “This We Believe About Teaching Ethics for Business.”)

### **Security**

Security of transactions as well as business and personal information will continue to influence participation in e-business. The integrity of information must be maintained as it flows through the input, process, and output components of e-business systems. The openness of the Internet creates a heightened need for security. Consumers and businesses must be protected from misuse of information. Consumer and business privacy of information is a vital concern. **We Believe That** students must be knowledgeable about the most current security measures for protecting the integrity of data in an e-business environment.

### **Database Principles and Management**

Employers have a clear need for workers who can manage ever-increasing amounts of data to serve their users effectively. Databases must be planned, designed, and organized so clients can query the data, retrieve information, and intelligently use this information for problem solving and decision making. **We Believe That** in-depth instruction in and use of database management systems must be an integral component of e-business curricula.

### **Web Site Design**

Effective web site design in e-business is dependent on a thorough understanding of the client, the business, the data, and how information is used. Students must know how to establish a web site that is easy to use and employs the enormous scope of the Internet. **We Believe That** business education curricula must include the fundamentals of effective web site design as it relates to productive operations of e-business.

### **Customer Relations Management**

Successful customer relations imply that customer (e.g. consumers, businesses and internal users) needs are being met before, during, and after an interaction. In e-business, this interaction refers to developing a positive relationship and providing the customer with timely and accurate information, a quality product or service, and personal attention to follow-up inquiries. It is crucial that e-business transactions are user

friendly and provide a non-threatening, welcoming environment where customers prefer to come. **We Believe That** business educators must teach students how to use information to attract, retain, and serve customers.

### **Leadership**

The dynamic environment of e-business demands rethinking the concepts of time, distance, methods, and approaches used in all business processes and systems. Advances in this environment have been and will continue to be dependent upon inspired leaders – those willing to take risks, embrace change, meet challenges, seize opportunities, and empower workers. **We Believe That** Business education creates an environment where e-business students can be visionaries, change agents, risk takers, leaders, and good citizens.

### **Interdisciplinary Nature of E-Business**

E-business is an emerging field with challenging occupations that require skill sets delivered by multiple disciplines. Business education is the major provider of information technology, marketing, management, law, finance, economics, and international business knowledge and skills needed for e-business. **We Believe That** students benefit from collaboration between business education and other disciplines in delivering e-business curricula.

Furthermore, **We Believe That** business educators must take the lead in describing, designing, and developing courses and programs that meet the needs of students at all educational levels, to engage in e-business. Business educators must continue to encourage more cooperation and collaboration. **We Believe That** planning and collaboration across disciplines must be a priority in the delivery of the e-business curriculum and that appropriate resources must be allocated to achieve this initiative.