STOCKTON COLLEGE
THE RICHARD STOCKTON COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY

Stockton Computer Science Majors to Engineer Custom Software for College Community

Class Assignments to Present Real Projects for Real Clients

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Galloway Township, NJ- Budding software engineers at The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey will develop original computer programs for members of the College community.

Dr. Vincent Cicirello, associate professor of computer science and information systems, will teach a course, Software Engineering, during the spring 2011 semester. Dr. Cicirello's teaching approach will include a semester-long project that will involve teams of students working with individuals from the College to develop custom software.

Dr. Cicirello explained, "In my course, I will utilize what some in the computer science education community have termed 'real projects for real clients.'"

Stockton faculty and staff members will be the real clients with a need for custom software, and Cicirello's students will be the software developers. In preparation for his spring course, Dr. Cicirello sent out a campus-wide e-mail seeking participation from faculty and staff. In his e-mail, he wrote, "I'm looking for real clients–specifically, members of the Stockton community who have a need for custom software that will help you in your everyday (or even occasional) tasks."

The response Dr. Cicirello received from his e-mail exceeded his expectations. The number of software requests that he received may need to be spread out over two semesters. Some of the requests may also be shared with instructors and students in similar courses.

"A couple of the requests that came in are for iPhone (or other smart phone) apps, and a couple of them have been for data visualization software," explained Dr. Cicirello.

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Dr. Mark Mallett, associate professor of theatre arts, responded to Dr. Cicirello's e-mail because he envisioned a digital repository for production related data, such as set designs and scripts. He would like software that will allow students and faculty involved in theatre productions to access production data for collaboration during the development of College performances. After the production is over, the digital repository will serve as an archive.

At the beginning of the semester, each team of students will meet with their client to identify software needs and to define the requirements of the everyday task that will be automated through the student-designed software.

By the middle of the semester, the students will have created operational prototypes. The students will incorporate their clients' feedback into their designs, and by the end of the semester, a fully functional software program will be ready for use.

In addition to learning software engineering, the students will gain experience in tailoring their designs to a client's needs. The students' work will go beyond the classroom, last longer than the semester and simplify tasks for members of the College community at no cost.

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