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Program Title

Programming Our Future: A Community Collaboration Workshop Featuring Computer Information Systems at Buffalo State

Executive Summary

SUNY Buffalo State College's Computer Information Systems (CIS) department provides critical educational services in technology, producing engaged and well-rounded graduates. The CIS curriculum is grounded in practical skills including programming, hardware/software, and networking. Buffalo State is seeking funds and professional support in contribution to a two-day conference technology event held on Buffalo State's campus. The purpose of this conference is to connect Buffalo State students with Western New York technology businesses while developing key skills in interview techniques, tech skills, portfolio creation, and other essential competencies required in a competitive tech market. SUNY Buffalo State is the only urban SUNY campus and the only public college in Western New York offering a 4-year degree in CIS and an accelerated 4+1 bachelor and master's program in Data and Analytics. Buffalo State is experiencing an increase in CIS enrollment from African American students, women, and other historically underrepresented groups in technology. The college is seeking support to continue the engagement of students from diverse backgrounds while preparing them for successful technology careers. This conference event seeks to accomplish this goal while solidifying Buffalo State's position as a technology leader in education.

Needs Statement

About 682,800 new computer and information technology jobs will be added within the next 10 years, an increase of 15% (US Dept. of Labor, 2022). Locally, Buffalo is home to nearly 9,000 tech businesses and growing. In 2021, only 4.73% of Buffalo State students earned a Bachelor of Science in CIS. Enrollment in the Data Science and Analytics - Master of Science program has dropped significantly within the past 10 years from 51 students in 2012 to 0 students in 2021. This proposed workshop series will assist Buffalo State in its efforts to close the gap between the high demand for workers skilled in CIS and the college's low program enrollment and graduation rates. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, colleges and universities worldwide are experiencing historic lows in enrollment. Interactive and unique programming that benefits young people's personal and career development is needed to reengage students.

Request Description

Buffalo State is seeking a funder or partner organization to cosponsor this conference event for at least one year, with the hope of continued engagement for future conference events. The partner or funder is a nonprofit or private company that will assist in the planning and sponsorship of the event and leverage its existing networks to locate speakers and cross-promotional opportunities. This cosponsoring funder/partner will allocate internal support staff to assist with project planning, implementation, and execution. The funding partner will assist with financial needs by utilizing staff time to secure community donations or through their own funds. Buffalo State will provide a venue and allocate additional staff and student support. A nonprofit partner will benefit from a joint fundraising event with the support of Buffalo State's available resources and a corporate partner is provided the opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to STEM education. The funding partner will benefit from cobranding opportunities and utilization of the university's internal resources (students, student workers, facility, and more).

Organizational Background

The History of Buffalo State and the CIS Department

In the fall of 1871, Buffalo State College (then known as The Buffalo Normal School) welcomed its first class to campus. The institution served as a two-year teaching college to prepare students to enter a rapidly growing Buffalo public school system. The college expanded to become a four-year university in 1919, adding Science and Art departments. CIS became available in 1976 as Information Systems Management (ISM), a major within the technology department. It was dubbed, "a unique program that blends computer programming, management, and the liberal arts," and by 1990, the major had grown into the Computer Information Systems (CIS) department. A notable contribution was the creation of the first electronic student records system in 1992. This new Student Audit System proved popular among colleges that before this technology held all student records in 'audit sheets.'

Buffalo State Today

As of Fall 2022, Buffalo State is composed of approximately 6,147 undergraduate and 1,026 graduate students. The college offers more than 170 undergraduate programs and sixty graduate programs, ranging from art and design to engineering and STEM subjects. Demographically, the student population is 47.5% White, 29.7% Black or African American, 12.8% Hispanic or Latino, 4.58% Asian, 3.65% Two or More Races, 0.492% American Indian or Alaska Native, and 0.06% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. Although Buffalo State maintains a minority-majority student body, the college is not currently designated as an official Minority Serving Institution (MSI) by the US Department of the Interior. Dr. Katherine Conway-Turner has served as Buffalo State's president since 2014. The CIS department is composed of seventeen faculty and staff members, with Dr. Neal M. Mazur serving as the current department chair. Dr. Ramona Santa-Maria is a professor and the current CIS department internship coordinator.

Buffalo State in the Community

The college maintains a service-orientated ethos. One example of Buffalo State's commitment to community engagement is CIS 388: Service Learning in Computing. This class allows students to engage in service-learning activities, including student-led coding/programming workshops for middle and high schoolers in Buffalo Public Schools. Another significant community impact is the CIS internship program. Third and fourth-year students can engage in 150 hours of direct experience with local companies; participating in coding, helpdesk support, networking, and other CIS/IT roles. The university maintains partnerships with prominent Western New York businesses including Blue Cross Blue Shield of WNY, Sodexo, and M&T Tech. In 2021, CIS faculty Sarbani Banerjee received $118,927 provided by Google Grants to hold GenCyber 2022, a workshop series designed to educate high school teachers on cybersecurity topics.

The campus is situated in one of Buffalo's primary commercial and historic areas, the Elmwood Village. Its community visibility solidifies the college's standing as an important institution within the city. Buffalo State provides students with top-notch academics while developing their sense of service and citizenship. Assisting Buffalo State in its efforts benefits the larger community.

Summary of Events

This two-day workshop held on Buffalo State's campus will include presentations by technology community leaders and the CIS department, interactive breakout sessions, networking events, Q&A sessions, and a career fair. This workshop series is centered on workplace readiness and the needed skills to enter a technology career. An estimated 150 total participants/attendees are expected for the first year of the conference. Interactive sessions will be included for practical skills, such as technical interviewing, remote presentation techniques, and code portfolio building. Featured talks will focus on the future of tech and the skills needed to stay competitive in an ever-changing industry.

The Q&A and networking sessions represent additional opportunities to engage directly with employers, and the conference will conclude with a career fair and a 'speed interviewing' event. While contributing speakers will be volunteers, they will be gifted by the conference an incentive of a free vendor booth to represent their business at the career fair. These vendor tickets will also be sold separately and marketed to local tech companies at a rate of $500 per booth. WNY technology leaders will be the primary target group of corporate participants. There will be an estimated four speakers total, one in the morning and one in the afternoon on each day, and four workshop leaders, these individuals will lead Q&A or interactive breakout sessions. This proposal demonstrates longevity for future iterations of this conference through its commitment to obtain vendor booth sales.

The workshop will be free to staff and students of Buffalo State and the funding partner's participating staff. In the case of a corporate primary partner, all proceeds of the event are to be donated to Buffalo State's CIS department and are tax deductible. If the Partner organization is a nonprofit, all monetary proceeds are to be split between the nonprofit organization and Buffalo State.

Goals and Objectives

Objectives

1. To provide invaluable knowledge and skills to current and prospective CIS students seeking careers in programming and technology to support future employment and/or education.
   a. By utilizing consistent feedback from students and community participants, the effectiveness of this project hopes to be maximized for all stakeholders.
2. To increase the number of attendants and participants for this conference event by at least 5% by year five.
3. To improve CIS enrollment and graduation rates by 5% within five years of conference implementation.

Goals

1. For Buffalo State to be positioned as the preferred institution for CIS education within New York State.
2. Foster new community partnerships and strengthen existing relationships with local technology industry leaders through their participation in this conference.
   a. To create a mutually beneficial relationship, where students and employers can share information and create valuable career connections.
3. For Buffalo State CIS graduates to be preferred candidates for employment by technology leaders, locally and nationally.

Proposed Staff, Roles, and Timeline

Below is a list of key personnel required for the implementation of this event. The proposed timeline is divided into phases of completion. Some important tasks have deadlines to ensure all components of the event are completed timely. Tasks without deadlines must be completed within the specified weekly range for that phase.

Proposal Manager: the author and manager of this proposal.
Technical Writing Certificate Students: The curriculum for this certificate includes the creation of marketing materials. Student participants will design/redesign the marketing materials needed for this conference (brochures, fliers/posters, thank you emails, etc.)
Graphic Design Students: DES 378 Web Design 1 instructs students to create web designs. A proposed assignment is for a new website splash page for the workshop series for the Buffalo State website (with cross-promotional opportunities for Partner Organization).
Student Workers: These would be current Buffalo State work-study-eligible students who are allocated for this specific project or contribute as part of a larger work-study position. Student workers can help with both preparation and 'day-of' event staffing. There may also be opportunities for them to assist with fundraising efforts, potentially lowering the time and cost spent by professional development/fundraising staff.

Buffalo State Primary Contact: The designated personnel from the CIS department responsible for overall event delivery.
Grantor/ Partner Organization: This is an allocated staff member(s) from the funding partner that would be a key planning partner and organizational point of contact.
Facilities and Maintenance: Refers to Buffalo State's building support and janitorial staff.
Development and Fundraising: Refers to Buffalo State's staff in the development office and/or staff from the funding partner.

Proposed Timeline (Fall or Spring Semester)

Phase and Task	Roles/ Staff						
Phase 1: **Preparation** **Semester Weeks 1-3**	Proposal Manager	Tech Writing/Design Students	Student Workers	Buffalo State Primary Contact	Grantor/ Partner Organization	Facilities and Maintenance	Development and Fundraising
Review and submit the proposal to the primary partner organization	X			X			
Develop a list of target businesses/ speakers				X	X		
Involve tech writing and design professors, prompt given to students (Week 2)		X		X			
Contact participating work-study programs			X	X			
Confirm the date of the event (Week 3)				X	X		X
Phase 2: **Planning** **Semester Weeks 3- 12**							
Select student workers			X	X	X		
Book & prepare the venue (seating, A/V, security, ticketing booths)						X	
Digital and written content due (Week 7)		X					
Invitations sent (vendor, speaker, and student) (Week 8)				X	X		
Confirm attendance of speakers and students (Weeks 8-10)				X	X		
Confirm the program of events (Week 9)				X	X		
Seek in-kind donations/order catering and print materials			X				X
Phase 3: Execution & Wrap-up **Semester Weeks 13-15**							

Event venue staff: (ticketing, security, janitorial)			X			X	
Event logistical staff (speaker/corporate)				X	X		X
Student worker post-event evaluation (Week 14)			X	X	X		
Thank you cards/emails submission deadline (Week 13), delivery (Week 14).		X		X	X		
Venue cleanup/teardown			X			X	
Conduct and report on participant surveys (Week 14-15).	X			X	X		

Budget Chart

Line Items	Requested	Applicant Share	Volunteering	Total Budget
Professional Personnel	2,160	2,519		4,679
Volunteer Speakers			4,000	4,000
Student Workers		1,489		1,489
Print Materials	477			477
Swag/promotional	3,200			3,200
Food/catering	1,783.50			1,784
TOTALS	11,621	4,008	4,000	**15,628**

Budget Narrative

Some indirect costs that are not included in this budget are chairs, tables, booths, A/V equipment, speaker podiums, technical writing and design student work, and institutional operating costs.

Personnel

Rates are calculated at a $71,990 per annum rate, which is the median salary for college administrators. This salary range was chosen because the scope of work involved in planning this event relates most to university programming administration. The estimated time to complete all tasks assigned to these roles is approximately 40 total project hours per program administrator. At a calculated rate of $36 an hour, the total cost for professional services is approximately $4,320.

The facilities and maintenance staff that may assist with venue set-up or custodial services is calculated based on an annual rate of $37,298, which is the national average for this work. This cost has been calculated as 20 total hours at a rate of $17.93, a total of $358.60. Three student workers will assist with this conference, with an estimated time of 40 hours per student. With an average hourly rate of $12.41, this total cost amounts to $1,489.

Volunteer Speakers

The overall speaker/talent cost is an average in-kind donation of $4,000 ($500 X 8 speakers). Overlap between the speakers and session leaders may result in an overall reduction of in-kind costs. Not included in this

summary is the expected presentation provided by Buffalo State's CIS department and the primary partner organization, this time has been considered in the professional services personnel budget.

Other than personnel services (OTPS)

Catering

This rate is calculated based on Buffalo State's standard catering rate for a boxed sandwich of $11.89 per person. The catering will either be sponsored by the primary partner organization and provided by the college's dining services or obtained as an in-kind donation from a local restaurant.

Print materials

Invitations and thank-you letters will be sent by email to reduce printing/postage costs. Estimated costs have been generated using Staples.com's pricing structure. Signage includes three 18X24 posters on posterboard ($81), and one 3X8 banner ($81). Event programs and tickets/nametags are priced at $250 and $65 respectively.

Swag Bags

Conference attendees will receive a 'swag bag' of items. The swag items should represent the event and provide utility to the participants, for example, microfiber towels for electronics, business card holders, cable clips, and battery banks. If each item is approximately $2 - $8 each, with an average of four swag items per bag, the cost for 160 bags (providing 10 extra) is an average of $3,200.

Evaluation

The goals of this conference will be evaluated based on post-attendance surveying and data collection. Student participants will be instructed to complete a post-attendance survey to determine the effectiveness of the conference programming with an opportunity to suggest future topics or sessions. The CIS department staff will gauge annual CIS undergraduate and graduate enrollment and completion rates post-conference implementation to determine adherence to Objective 3. Attendance and vendor participation in the conference will also be monitored to satisfy Objective 2. Current students participating in CIS and UNC (a program providing classes for first-year students in college readiness and academic success) will receive class credit for attending this conference as an extra credit assignment for any CIS or UNC class in which they are currently enrolled. This incentive will help to ensure student participation.

Speakers and vendors will also be sent surveys to obtain feedback on their overall experience and student engagement with their business. An additional later survey will be sent to these participating vendors to see if they hired or interviewed any student candidates. If students were interviewed, the survey will include questions about student candidate preparedness and professionalism. All information when reported will be kept entirely anonymous to protect the privacy of both students and businesses.

Students and student workers

Technical writing and design students will need to hold an 'A' grade in their participating class. Students will submit their work for approval to event administrators before its implementation. The deadlines for final submissions are indicated in the proposed timeline. Students will have the opportunity to adjust their work to fit the requirements of this conference with the help of their professors before the deadline. The best student work will be selected as the final print and web designs.

Student workers will have the opportunity to sign up or be referred to participate in this conference. They will need to demonstrate an interest in event planning or fundraising and will be required to present a letter of recommendation from their work-study manager to be considered for participation. Student workers will then be evaluated on their performance after the conference, and that information will be provided to their work-study manager.

Conclusion

Thank you for considering this strategic partnership in developing an important conference. Buffalo State's commitment to this conference is demonstrated by its significant contribution of resources through in-kind staffing and venue support. The primary partner can assist directly with any of the funding needs for this project, or the organization can provide an in-kind donation of staff time and expertise to develop these funds. Although the college has evolved significantly since 1871, its commitment to community service and academic distinction has remained the same, "Buffalo State is a diverse and inclusive college committed to the intellectual, personal, and professional growth of its students, faculty, staff, and alumni. Our mission is to empower students to succeed and to inspire a lifelong passion for learning. Buffalo State is dedicated to excellence in teaching, research, service, scholarship, creative activity, and cultural enrichment." Buffalo State provides students with top-notch academics while developing their sense of service and citizenship. Assisting the CIS department in its efforts benefits the larger community as it empowers students from diverse backgrounds toward meaningful careers in technology.

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