College of Human and Environmental Sciences
http://www.ches.ua.edu

http://iit.ches.ua.edu

Faculty:

Anna C. McFadden, Ph.D.
    amcfadde@ches.ua.edu
Barrie Jo Price, Ed.D.
    bjprice@ches.ua.edu
Beverly Ray, Ph.D.
ray011@bama.ua.edu

John "Jay" Ketterer, Ed.D.
 jketterer@ches.ua.edu

William "Bill" Alvarez, Ed.D.
walvarez@ches.ua.edu

Juanita McMath, M.S.
jmcmath@ches.ua.edu

Michelle Hale, M.S.
mahale@crimson.ua.edu

Colleen Cornelius, M.S.
ccornelius@crimson.ua.edu

Departmental cell*:
 205-799-1567

*If no one answers, please leave a voice mail; it will be transcribed as a script and sent in email to all primary faculty members as well as recorded as an mp3 file and attached to the email notice to faculty. Each faculty uses a Blackberry to maintain consistent contact.

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA
HUMAN SCIENCES

Information Letter for Prospective Students - Masters Program, General HES, Specialization in Interactive Technology

"The illiterate of the twenty-first century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn."

                                    ----Alvin Toffler

Dear Prospective Student,

We are delighted that you are interested in our graduate program. As you know from perusal of the website, http://iit.ches.ua.edu, we are a somewhat unique program. The focus is on guiding students in understanding how organizations and individuals interact with technology. It is NOT educational tech; it is not Computer Science. It is a combination of fields of study and skill sets designed to be superimposed on an existing career field or applied to an anticipated career. Current and past students represent health-related careers, retail and marketing, real estate, financial planning, accounting, law-related fields, the military, education, family services, private businesses, non-governmental agencies, non-profits organizations, information science, technology management, library science, and higher education, to name a few. Graduates apply the knowledge and skills acquired in this degree as consultants, trainers, human resource specialists, managers, business owners, agency heads, recruiters, development specialists, and a myriad of other positions. Many develop their own virtual personas as consultants or as a means of enhancing their existing professions and/or organizations. Some do teach in their fields of expertise including teaching online, computer-mediated classes related to their disciplines.

One other thing making this program unique is its dedicated focus on teaching and modeling the use of computer-mediated technologies for communications and collaboration as preparation for graduates to provide leadership in the knowledge workplace of the future. Computer-mediated strategies are used extensively in the classes as well as begin taught as content.

All classes are online and asynchronous; we do not use the typical video lecture or the typical online strategies limited to written papers, forum postings and written lectures. Instead, each course has been developed specifically for asynchronous, online learning. Collaborative activities including peer reviews are significant parts of the courses. All or most of the classes do not require a textbook, preferring instead to use online resources, thus allowing students to invest in good equipment, fast access and other necessary tools. Students spend

approximately the equivalent amount of money on technology tools as would be spent on traditional textbooks.

Students enroll for classes for a period of one semester, as in traditional programs. Most students enroll two classes per term, especially if employed or otherwise busy, though some do take three classes per term. These are fairly time-consuming classes, requiring a great deal of time the computer, online. Students need to plan accordingly and have the needed equipment and tools at home, not relying solely on equipment available at work.

As mentioned earlier, students in the program come from a wide range of backgrounds. There are students who already have doctorates and other graduate degrees and students who did their undergraduate work many years earlier. Students come to the program with degrees in business, engineering, communications, education, health studies, and many other areas.   The basic requirements to be considered are these:

- Willingness to engage in self-directed learning.
- Proficiency as a typist, Internet user, and email user.
- Comfort level with technology and with learning new technologies through exploration.
- Clarity of goals once completing the degree.
- Understanding that this is an asynchronous program that requires the learner to be fully engaged, not just a passive observer of online media.
- Acceptance of the fact that alternative assessments, besides exams and traditional papers, play an important part in the degree.
- Recognition that peer review is a critical component in measuring proficiency.
- Awareness that the professors have cyber office hours using email, SKYPE, discussion tools and the departmental cell phones as computer-mediated support tools.

The FAQ on the IIT website has specific information that may help prospective students; the application process is detailed on the Application Information page.

Students often ask how much time is required for a course. This is difficult to answer; it is impacted by your reading rate, computer tools available and your daily planning. The general rule of thumb for a traditional, on-campus course is 2-2.5 hours for each hour in class. That would mean, for a 3 hour class, you should plan to spend 6-7.5 hours per week plus the 3 hours you would sit in class, meaning 9-10.5 hours for each traditional 3 hour course. Our program does not have specific data, but for planning purposes, students are told to anticipate that ratio of work. Some will find this estimate too high while others will argue that it is too low! By now you have a pretty good idea of how much time you have and can plan your schedule accordingly. Many students and professors work nights and weekends on the classes, and all faculty members are available either on email, IM, SKYPE or the departmental cell phone nights and weekends, unless they are at conferences or otherwise engaged.

Another question that sometimes arises has to do with equipment. There is information on the website on the particular equipment, but it is worth repeating

here that this is a PC program, not MAC. Students will have to have PC machines and the much-discussed cross-platform ability of MAC will not meet the needs of this program at the present. Saying that up front saves a lot of angst for potential students who are dedicated MAC users.

One final and important question has to do with graduation, and it is perfectly reasonable that you would be interested in graduation as a part of choosing an institution and program! The program has a strong graduation rate with an attrition rate that is significantly below the national average for online programs. The faculty in the program takes pride in helping prospective students make a good match in their program selection and, therefore, their pursuit of a degree. The selection process, beginning with this communication, is aimed at ensuring that students make a good choice.

Throughout the program, every effort is made to work with students to connect what they are studying in the classes with their career goals and/or current positions. Practical applications are featured in almost all of the courses, and projects include examining what is happening with technology in each discipline, with an eye to the future. New technologies are constantly emerging, meaning that the precise content for the courses changes each term to reflect what is new or coming on the horizon, all organized around the goal of making interactive technologies relevant to each student's field of work.

You will be expected to engage in some research and writing as students are required to submit articles and reports for publication as part of the requirements for some of the classes. Also reviews of current research are part of the learning activities so that students know what is happening in their chosen field in terms of the use of technology. However, these are considered skills within the program that will be incorporated into various classes. It is all part of learning how people and organizations interact with information via technology.

Thank you again for your interest in our program. If you have more questions beyond the FAQ or wish to speak to some of the students currently enrolled and/or recent graduates, please don't hesitate to contact iitinquiry@ches.ua.edu. Please review the Interactive Technology Specialization program to see if it is potentially a good match for your own career plans.

Sincerely,
THE IIT FACULTY
IITInquiry@ches.ua.edu   TWITTER: IITFaculty

Dr. Barrie Jo Price, Professor   Ms. Juanita McMath, Faculty
 bjprice@ches.ua.edu   jmcmath@ches.ua.edu
205-799-1567 UA cell*   205-799-1567 UA cell*
SKYPE: barrie.jo.price

"We cannot become what we need to be by remaining what we are."---- *Max De Pree*
"Conformity is the jailer of freedom and the enemy of growth." ----John F. Kennedy