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YSU NEWS

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YSU introduces new web communications program

Adam Palcich of Howland just couldn't seem to make up his mind.

When he entered Youngstown State University two years ago, he took up English as his major and quickly switched to journalism. Last fall, he changed gears again, this time to computer information systems.

"I wasn't sure what to do," said Palcich, a 2001 graduate of Howland High School.

Then along came Bob Hogue, associate professor of computer science and information systems at YSU.

Hogue told Palcich about a new academic program at YSU designed specifically for students who love tinkering with computers and also love to write.

"It really seems like a healthy mix of everything I've wanted to do," Palcich said.

Hogue and Julia Gergits, interim chair of the YSU English department, have spearheaded the drive to create an individualized curriculum program, or ICP, in web communications.

The new course of study is aimed at students interested in becoming proficient in both the writing and technology aspects of website construction and maintenance.

"The two fields are starting to complement each other," Hogue said. "It's not enough anymore to just know the technical aspects of website development. Now, you have to know how to write for the web."

"We're meeting in the middle," Gergits said.

ICPs allow students to combine courses and create a major course of study that is not currently offered at YSU. For instance, journalism was an ICP for many years before it became a full-fledged academic major.

Hogue said he thinks there is enough interest in the web communications curriculum that it could follow the same path and one day become a major. Gergits estimated that as many as 60 students could sign on to the new program.

"This program will really allow a person to become a web communications specialist," Hogue said. "I think we already have a number of students who want to do this."

The new program, which is available immediately, includes 24 semester hours of courses in English, including classes in professional writing and editing and journalism, plus 22 to 25 hours in computer technology courses. An internship also is required. Hogue said no additional courses will need to be created.

Gergits said many students in the English department's professional writing and editing program minor in desktop publishing or some other information technology area.

"So a great many of our students are already taking these courses," she said. "They find them very, very useful."

Palcich met with Hogue in the spring, and he liked what he heard. He said he thinks the new program will give him a perfect combination of skills that will make him attractive to potential employers.

"It will give me an advantage leaving college because not only will I have the technical skills, but I also will have the so-called soft skills like writing and organization that will help," he said. "It will broaden my experience."

For more information on the new web communications program, call Hogue at 330-941-1775 or Gergits at 330-941-3419. Information also is available at http://www.cis.ysu.edu.

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