

Experiences of Female Students and Alumni of Northern Illinois University in Operations and Information Management

Independent Study Proposal
OMIS 604/605 - Summer 2019
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Abstract

Operations and information management are currently male dominated fields. As we make large strides to close this gap, it is important to recognize the experiences that can make closing the gap difficult. I am a double major in Marketing and OMIS at Northern Illinois University, so I have had the pleasure to be a part of both of these very different departments. One challenge the OMIS department has to face regularly particularly interests me, and begs this question; How does the NIU OMIS department prepare women for careers in a male dominated field? I aim to learn the answer to this question by completing this independent study.

The first part of the study will be to conduct research on the operations and information management field to understand how they became male dominated industries, and to evaluate the current situation on a societal level. This research will go deeper into the psychological reasons that cause women to feel uncomfortable and leave male dominated fields. After this research, a survey will be sent out to all students identifying as female in the NIU OMIS department. During the time that the survey is live, interviews will be conducted with female NIU alumni at various stages of their careers. This will provide more in-depth information on the positive and negative experiences of NIU OMIS alumni. After the data is collected and analyzed, it will be evaluated and aid in providing the NIU OMIS department with recommendations on how to better prepare women for their career.

This information is incredibly important to make sure NIU is providing female students with the experiences they need to be successful in operations and information management. By performing this evaluation, I will be able to identify trends that positively and negatively affect students and provide answers on how to improve as a department and a college as a whole.

Questions:

Why is OMIS a male dominated field?

What is it like to be a woman in OMIS? Opinions, general feelings, etc.

What situations cause women to want to leave OMIS?

What can be done to increase the number of women going into OMIS related fields?

Tasks:

- Research on why the field is male dominated → By June 28th
 - History
 - Current situation
 - Get down to the psychological reasoning behind the issue
 - What situations cause women to shy away from this field?
 - Any examples of industries/fields that have or have not become more diverse relating to gender, what can we learn from this?
 - Research in general women in STEM
- Conduct a survey of women in the OMIS program to gain understanding of opinions and experiences. Qualtrics → Survey live starting July 1st through July 26th
 - Survey will be taken by at least 100 women
 - use information from the research task to find out if the things that make women not want to go into OMIS are happening in the OMIS department
 - Will quantify frequency of situations that discourage female students from succeeding in OMIS field
 - Questions about university faculty
 - Questions about group work
 - Questions about culture (socially, how do the students in the department interact?)
 - Knowledge of what OMIS is?
 - When were you first exposed to the OMIS career field?
 - Favorite topics (relate to courses they have taken)
 - Career plans
 - Did your career plans change at all while you were at NIU?
- Interview women in OM&IS alumni for qualitative responses → July 1st through July 26th
 - Dive into their career path to OMIS
 - What roadblocks did you face?
 - What did you wish was different?

- What did you experience at NIU that prepared you for a male dominated career field?
- What did you experience at NIU that may have negatively impacted you/your career?
- How long did it take to your current position, and is that average for your experience level?
- Is there anything you wish was in place either now or when you were attending NIU that may help some of these issues?
- Opinions on diversity efforts
- Women will range in age and career position
- Have interviews conducted remotely
- Ask for recommendations of women that would be willing to participate
- Cindy

Deliverable: August 9th

- Report of trends from survey
- Highlights from Alumni interviews
- Evaluation of current efforts
- recommendations

<https://hbr.org/2019/02/research-based-advice-for-women-working-in-male-dominated-fields>

<https://hbr.org/2018/11/the-subtle-stressors-making-women-want-to-leave-engineering>

^^ good survey

<https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2017/03/06/chart-the-percentage-women-and-men-each-profession/GBX22YsWI0XaeHghwXfE4H/story.html>