Bemidji State University

By Swartz Communications, Inc.

Nestled in north central Minnesota, 300 miles north of Minneapolis and St. Paul, Bemidji State University is a liberal arts college with about 5,000 students. Not long ago, the university started a Computer Information Systems (CIS) program, focused on meeting the information needs of businesses. Its CIS program is shared and taught jointly by the business school and CIS department.

As a part of its curriculum, students learn data and process modeling, as well as software implementation. At the core of departmental courses is Visible Analyst Workbench (VAW), a graphical analysis and modeling tool for client/server application development from Visible Systems Corporation.

"Visible Analyst Workbench is easy-to-learn and use, and has depth and power," said Maureen Thommes, Professor of Business Administration and Computer Information Systems program coordinator.

"Also, Visible Systems offers friendly assistance and support in helping faculty network with other universities across the country, which is helpful."

In the Systems Analysis and Design course, students master functional decomposition diagramming and process composition diagramming using VAW, with emphasis on process modeling and repository. In Database Management, students use VAW for entity relationship diagramming, connected to a data repository, as rules analysis.

The Applied Software Development Project challenges students to apply what they've learned in their CIS coursework to a real-life problem, including teamwork and choosing the right tool for a particular task. Students use VAW for analysis and design of an application and generate the code, whether COBOL or C++, that best fits the solution.

"We switched from VAW's Student Edition to the Corporate Edition because it offers code generation capabilities," said Thommes. VAW is a good learning tool and easy-to-use. After mastering data and process modeling, students can transfer this knowledge to the real world," Thommes concluded.

Maurine Thommes, Professor Business Administration and CIS