Assessment of the Enterprise Program at Michigan Tech

In 1998 we received funding from the National Science Foundation through the Action Agenda program to assist us in a major overhaul of our engineering curricula. One of the key features of our successful grant application was the implementation of a program we called the Enterprise. Students elect to join an Enterprise at the beginning of their sophomore year and continue to participate within the organization through graduation. As they work in the Enterprise, they take on increasing responsibility for its operation and management. It is our intent that by the time students are seniors, they will be the enterprise leaders--directing, managing, encouraging, and supervising the sophomores and juniors on the team. In our initial planning, we estimated that each Enterprise on campus would consist of approximately 30 students more or less evenly distributed between sophomores, juniors, and seniors. We also projected that there would be about 30 such enterprises on campus in the steady-state. Students from outside of engineering, e.g., business, technical communication, computer science, would also be able to participate on an Enterprise. The Enterprise curriculum consists of several 1-credit modules of instruction as well as credit for design project work. Students are able to take these modules to complete either a minor or a concenration in Enterprise and participation in the program does not extend their time to graduation. It is anticipated that students will work on several "real-life" design projects over the course of their three-year involvement in an Enterprise. This paper describes the overall program and highlights some assessment data obtained over the first four years of operation.