Master of Science in Business Continuity Management

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Events such as 9/11 and Katrina have brought business continuity management (BCM) into mainstream corporate practice. Businesses that had plans for continuity of service to customers during a business disruption survived those events, whereas those without plans often failed. As a result, organizations both large and small are implementing BCM systems. Once relegated to the margins of corporate practice as an aspect of information technology or corporate security, BCM has become recognized as a fundamental aspect of sound business practice.

The growth of continuity management has been further fueled by regulations requiring continuity programs in industries such as healthcare and finance. Insurance companies are also starting to require continuity programs as a condition of coverage. Moreover, with eighty-five percent of the nation’s critical infrastructure, and nearly one hundred percent of the economic infrastructure, in private hands, BCM is a national security priority. Recognizing the importance of securing the nation’s economic infrastructure for national security, President Clinton issued Presidential Decision Directive Order 63 <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/pdd/pdd-63.htm> in 1998 to address critical infrastructure protection. The federal government has extended this effort to support private sector BCM programs. In August 2007, the federal government passed the Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007,<http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=h110-1> which mandates the Department of Homeland Security to actively encourage the development of continuity programs in the United States.

Continuity of operations is as much needed in the public sphere as the private, as public sector agencies must have programs to ensure their own continuity of service during an emergency. In recognition of the public sector need for continuity programs, in May 2007 President Bush signed National Security and Homeland Security Presidential Directive 51,<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/05/20070509-12.html> requiring continuity programs to “be incorporated into daily operations of all executive departments and agencies.”

The growth in BCM programs has fueled tremendous demand for professionals that understand risk management in the context of business operations. As a result, the number of business continuity professionals has exploded in recent years. CNN named Business Continuity Director one of the “Seven Trendy New Jobs” in 2006 <http://money.cnn.com/2006/04/20/pf/new_jobs/index.htm> and membership in professional organizations in the field is growing rapidly.

Under the leadership of Program Director Dr John Orlando and with the support of the MSIA team, Norwich University has developed an online Master of Science in Business Continuity Management degree<http://www.graduate.norwich.edu/business-continuity/program_overview.php> to serve the education needs of private and public sector business continuity professionals. Housed within the School of Graduate Studies,<http://grad.norwich.edu/> the program is the first master’s degree in the United States focused solely on business continuity.

The master’s degree will provide practitioners with the credentials to advance into upper level positions within their organization and will distinguish them within the field. The MSBC degree provides a comprehensive, in-depth, and practical understanding of all aspects of business
continuity management. The topics. <http://www.graduate.norwich.edu/business-continuity/curriculum_overview.php> include plan development, emergency response, crisis management and communications, risk management, organizational resiliency, IT continuity, testing, implementation, and regulatory issues

Because continuity of operations is as much needed in the public sphere as the private, the MSBC program is appropriate for both public-sector and private-sector continuity directors.

Students meld theory and practice by applying their learning to their own place of business through the unique case-study system that has worked well in the MSIA program that started in 2002. By analyzing and improving the systems of their employer in the MSBC Individual Consultancy Project, <http://www.graduate.norwich.edu/business-continuity/consultancy_project.php> students gain an understanding of the practical application of theoretical concepts, while their employers realize an immediate return on their investment of time and (for many students) tuition reimbursement.

Students join cohorts of like-minded, experienced professionals in highly interactive classrooms to share experiences, challenges, and solutions. Much of the learning comes through constant, lively discussion with distinguished faculty and enthusiastic fellow students, and networking with professionals across the field.

Classes will begin December 2008. Full information can be found on the University Web pages.<http://www.graduate.norwich.edu/business-continuity/>

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