EXPERIENCE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION OF US STUDENTS AT THE BRANCH OF THE DESIGN OF INFORMATION COMPUTER SYSTEMS DEPARTMENT

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Abstract. The report includes information about distance learning in specialty «Programmable mobile systems» in the branch office of Department of Information and Computer Systems Design, created on the basis of Computer Systems Institute (USA, Chicago), its current state and the prospects for educational services export.

On April 22, 2013, during the visit of the BSUIR delegation to Chicago (USA), an agreement was signed on mutual cooperation in the field of providing integrated educational services to US residents with the focus on Bachelor, Specialist, and Magister degrees.

Within the framework of this agreement, the branch of the Information Systems Development Department of BSUIR was opened at Computer Systems Institute (CSI) branch in Skokie, Illinois. The new program «Programmable mobile systems» was introduced to the residents of the United States. The program utilized CSI training and laboratory facilities and was taught in English. At the same time, similar program was introduced at BSUIR to Belarus residents. This is a 4-year program that leads to a Bachelor degree.

A significant work was done in 2013 in the U.S. to make sure that the "Programmable mobile systems" program met the requirements of the Illinois Department of Education.

The branch of the PIKS department had the following major educational requirements:
– the curriculum must comply with the educational standard of the Republic of Belarus, meet the US educational standards and the requirements of the Illinois Department of Education;
– the curriculum should suit both sides in terms of the relevance and needs of companies and organizations of both the US and the Republic of Belarus.

On October 7, 2013, the distance learning of BSUIR has begun a new phase – a teleconference Minsk-Chicago was held at the Center for Video Conferencing of the Belarusian State University of Information Technologies (BSUIR), which started the training sessions at the branch of the PIKS department in Illinois, USA.

BSUIR has assigned teachers who are fluent in English for each discipline of the program. They prepared electronic resources for the academic disciplines (ERUD) in English for distance learning of American students. For prompt communication with students, all teachers were given tablets. The student comes in contact with the teacher (by e-mail or Skype), gets a full ERUD and works actively, studying the materials of the discipline, having the opportunity to regularly consult with the teacher.

The curriculum for the «Programmable Mobile Systems» program includes 4 training modules: General Education (11 disciplines), CS Foundation (9 disciplines), CS Essential (11 disciplines) and CS Expert (13 disciplines). Modules take place in order of increasing the complexity of the material and increasing the requirements for practical skills of students. In total, the curriculum includes 44 disciplines, of which:
4 – mathematical preparation and algorithms in programming;
8 – theory of designing computer, including mobile systems;
6 – theoretical aspects of programming;
11 (25 %) – are dedicated to the design and practical development of software, focusing on creating applications for the Android operating system.

The classic set of materials that is part of the ERUD contains:
– a program of discipline (syllabus);
– lesson plans;
– a summary of lectures (or links to specific sections/chapters of educational literature);
– presentations for conducting lectures;
– questions for testing theoretical knowledge (quizzes);
– tasks for testing the practical skills of the student (exercises).

Formed ERUs are located in the Distance Learning System of the BSUIR (Share-Point LMS), which is actively used by students of distance education, access to which have both, teachers and students. Teachers can monitor how often students turn to ERU, record and analyze test results, therefore the learning process is fully monitored.

Disciplines are studied consistently one after another. The duration of each discipline takes an average of 3-4 weeks. The students' attestation is carried out remotely by means of videoconferencing. Based on the results of studying each discipline, students receive certificates of a standard pattern.

After successful completion of studies, American students will receive BSUIR diplomas. Currently, a group of US students are completing the CS Expert module. This means that in Q2-Q3 2018 they will work on their diploma projects. And in the Q3-Q4 2018, they with work on their diploma projects.

At present, the BSUIR is actively working on the preparation of requirements for the content and design of the diploma projects for US students. These requirements should integrate both BSUIR and CSI experiences. Themes of the diploma projects are mobile applications for the Android operating system, as well as various web services.

Of the problematic moments, it can be noted a small number of American students currently enrolled in the program. Our American partner runs a limited advertising campaign and career guidance work (only among CSI students), citing the fact that the best advertising will be getting diplomas by the first graduates of the branch.