

## Education IT

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# Georgia Tech, Microsoft bring tabletop robots to CS program

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One day, in the not too distant future, students may be conducting experiments with robots for lab partners. To that end, Georgia Tech and other universities have teamed up with Microsoft's Institute for Personal Robots in Education (IPRE) to provide tabletop robots, hoping to encourage and promote computer science programs in their schools, reports Industry Week.

In a press release statement, Craig Mundie, chief research and strategy officer at Microsoft, spoke of the importance of attracting new students to the field of computer science to encourage innovation.

"We want to use the power of robotics to capture the imagination of tomorrow's computer scientists. By introducing exciting new technologies into the computer-science curriculum, we believe that we'll greatly increase its appeal — especially to students who may not have considered majoring in this field."

Tucker Balch, associate professor and initiative director at Georgia Tech, said the curriculum emphasis is changing from theoretical concepts to practical applications. New students taking the mandatory introductory computer science course are learning about computers by programming their individually assigned table-top robot.

By emphasizing practical applications Georgia Tech hopes to both reduce student failure rates and motivate greater interest in studying computer technology.

IPRE is hoping to expand into hundreds of universities. Currently, Microsoft is also working with Bryn Mawr College and Carnegie Mellon University.

"The time is right to transform computer science education, and creativity and contextualization are the key drivers," said Richard A. DeMillo, dean of the College of Computing at Georgia Tech.

"We are committed to expanding the horizons of our students by incorporating cutting-edge and engaging courses — such as robotics — as core components of the curriculum. This effort, led by associate professor Tucker Balch, serves as yet another unconventional approach to education at the College of Computing at Georgia Tech."



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