Dr Steven Miller is a man on a mission. He is forging an IT curriculum for the Singapore Management University (SMU) that will see its 380 IT undergraduates infused with business sense when they enter the job market.

As an example, Dr Miller, who joined SMU after spending several years in industry, cited its processing modelling and solution blue-printing course.

“‘There is no course like this anywhere else.’ It is different because SMU works with key tools from vendors and teaches its students how to apply them to real-world scenarios.

“We have to figure out how to engage the students with the material, put them through a problem-solving exercise and critique. We’re experimenting all the time. Not to do so would be to fail.”

Dr Miller said: “We have to figure out how to engage the students with the material, put them through a problem-solving exercise and critique. We’re experimenting all the time. Not to do so would be to fail.”

Our faculty has to figure out how to take their experiences from industry as teaching material. They have to create new readings, even create their own text book and look for supplementary material.”

Besides, we are a management university, we must incorporate the business and management elements into our IT courses.

This is an eclectic mix of technology and business. Is it difficult to hire the right lecturers to do the job?

It is difficult to find people who philosophically fit us. We have computer science people who are interested in working with companies and industry and who are passionate about using technology in innovative ways.

Do you have plans to introduce a PhD programme?

We thought about a Doctor of Information Systems which would be more industry-focused. But we are going with the conventional PhD programme. We are putting up a proposal early next year for the university’s approval. We want to focus on business intelligence, advanced data management, e-commerce and supply chains, information systems resource and security and trust.

We hope that our doctoral graduates will be able to work in industry. In the social sciences most PhDs become academics, but in the best engineering schools in the world, most PhDs go to industry. So we want to see our postgraduates working in industry, solving real-world problems.

chngkeg@spf.com.sg