

The First Business Computer Degree Program in the World

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Abstract- In the year 1975, Prof. Dr. Choop Karnjanaprakorn, who was the President, and Prof. Dr. Srisakdi Charmonman, who was the Chairman of the Data Processing Department and President of the Faculty and Staff Association of NIDA, were working together there. In the year 1976, Prof. Choop became the President of ABAC and he appointed Prof. Srisakdi the Honorary Vice President for Planning and Development. Prof. Choop, Prof. Srisakdi and Khunying Kalaya Sophonpanich founded ABAC Department of Business Computer with Khunying Kalaya being the Chairperson. At that time, all education institutions in the world called their computer-related degree programs by other names such as Computer Science, Computer Engineering, Information Technology, and etc. but not Business Computer. Therefore, it may be said that ABAC offered the very first Business Computer degree program in the world. Later, other universities such as Hariri Canadian University established in 1999, Lebanese Canadian University established in 2003, Bangkok University, and etc. adopted the Business Computer name. Presented in this paper are related information about the work of the co-authors in the field of information technology such as at the Computer Association of Thailand, the

Intergovernmental Bureau for Informatics, and the Committee to Promote Thai Software Industry, the founding of the Business Computer degree program and a total of more than 25 IT-related degree programs at Assumption University. It may also be said that Assumption University offers more IT-related degree programs than at any other university in the world.

Keywords- Business Computer, ABAC, Sophonpanich, Charmonman.

1. INTRODUCTION

When the Organizing Committee of the International Conference on IT to Celebrate S. Charmonman's 72nd Birthday invited her to be the co-author of this keynote address, the Minister of Science and Technology was delighted to accept the invitation. She was further highly pleased to learn that H.E. Air Chief Marshal Kamthon Sindhvananda, the Privy Councilor, kindly accepted the invitation to be the Chairman of the Opening Ceremony. The Privy Councilor is also the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Chronicle of the Thai Junior Encyclopedia Project by the Royal Command of His Majesty the King, where the Minister of Science and Technology has been serving as the Secretary of the Executive Committee. The former Chairman of the Executive

Committee, Praya Sulvithanides, was the highly respected professor who taught calculus to Prof. Srisakdi when he was a student at the Faculty of Engineering at Chulalongkorn University. The Minister of Science and Technology and Prof. Srisakdi worked together to write articles for Volume 11 of the Chronicle of the Thai Junior Encyclopedia Project by the Royal Command of His Majesty the King, namely, computer development, computer applications, industrial robots, and computer software [1-4].

In the year 1973, at the age of 36, Prof. Srisakdi was the first Thai to be appointed a full professor in the United States and that was at the State University of New York. He came back to Thailand to visit his family. One of the important persons he visited was H.E. Malai Huvanandana, the Deputy Minister of Interior, who was a distance cousin of his wife, Khun Parasubhasri Subhajalasaya, a daughter of H.E. Laung Subhajalasaya, who was, in turn, a son-in-law of HRH Krom Luang Chumphon Khet Udomsak. H.E. Malai took him to see H.E. Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn, the Prime Minister at that time, and H.E. Field Marshal Prapas Charusathira, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior at that time. The Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister were planning to establish the computer center to store profiles of all important persons in Thailand. They invited Prof. Srisakdi to be the Director of the said computer center. Prof. Srisakdi did not want to return from the United States to Thailand to be the Director of the computer center. He replied to the invitation in what he thought was “saying yes to mean no”. He said he would love to accept the invitation but that his new position should not be lower than that in the US. His position as a full professor in the US was equivalent to the highest level in Thai Civil Service, i.e. “special class (ชั้นพิเศษ)”. According to the Thai law and regulations at that time, it was not possible to appoint anybody who was just entering civil service to be at that highest

level. At the meeting of the Civil Service Commission, it was agreed to offer Prof. Srisakdi the position at the level of “first class (ชั้นเอก)” which is lower than the “Special Class”. Prof. Srisakdi replied that he could not accept being in the first class because he was already at the special class. At the other meeting of the Civil Service Commission, the Prime Minister who was the Chairman said that if Thailand wanted Prof. Srisakdi to return to the country, the rules and regulations had to be changed. So, the Civil Service Commission changed the rules and regulations to allow highly qualified person to enter Civil Service at the highest level without having to climb from the lower level. Prof. Vichit Srisaarn, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of University Affairs at that time (later Minister of Education) said that Thailand was very liberal to have such a rule and Prof. Srisakdi was the first to benefit from that rule. The offer arrived in Prof. Srisakdi’s office in the US at the beginning of October. He had to accept the offer because the Thai Government had done so much to make that offer. It turned out that the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister at that time were driven out of offices. So, rather than joining the Ministry of Interior, Prof. Srisakdi joined the National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA).

His Majesty the King graciously bestowed upon Prof. Srisakdi the civil servant position at the highest level, and later the full professor position. As a matter of fact, Prof. Srisakdi was the very first full professor appointed at NIDA, i.e. before Prof. Phaichitr Uathavikul and Prof. Boonserm Weesakul. After he retired from Civil Service at the age of 60 in the year 1997, Prof. Srisakdi became a Professor Emeritus of NIDA. He also retained his official position by changing from civil service branch to judicial branch by becoming an Associate Judge of the Central Intellectual Property and International Trade Court and elected President of the Associate Judge Club.

In the year 1975, Prof. Bunchana Atthakor kindly invited Prof. Srisakdi to teach the Management Information Systems course at Chulalongkorn University with him and served as research advisor to graduate students. One of Prof. Srisakdi's advisees for the Master's degree at Chulalongkorn University was Mr. Bannawit Boonyarat who was a computer executive at Bangkok Bank (BBL) who later moved to Siam Commercial Bank and eventually became a Senior Executive Vice President. Mr. Bannawit's Master's thesis was presented to Khun Boonchu Rojanastien, the BBL President at that time. However, the project was not implemented at BBL because Khun Boonchu moved from BBL to be the Deputy Prime Minister.

In the year 1976, Prof. Dr. Choop Karnjanaprakorn moved from NIDA to be the President of Assumption Business Administration College or ABAC which later changed the name to Assumption University. Prof. Choop kindly invited Prof. Srisakdi to be Honorary Vice President for Planning and Development. Prof. Choop, Prof. Srisakdi and Khunying Kalaya developed the first Business Computer curriculum in the world and that was at ABAC. The Ministry of University Affairs approved the Bachelor of Business Administration majoring in Business Computer in the year 1979. Khunying Kalaya became the first Chairperson of the ABAC Business Computer Department. Figure 1 shows Prof. Choop and Prof. Srisakdi at a computer exhibition.



Figure 1. Prof. Choop and Prof. Srisakdi.

In the year 1981, Khun Chai Sophonpanich who was in charge of computing activities at Bangkok Bank resigned from the Bank. Khunying Kalaya and her husband, Khun Chote Sophonpanich, who was the Senior Executive Vice President of Bangkok Bank, introduced Prof. Srisakdi to Khun Chatri Sophonpanich, the President of Bangkok Bank at that time. Khun Chatri appointed Prof. Srisakdi a fulltime Advisor to the President of Bangkok Bank. Shown in Figure 2, Khun Chatri witnessed the presentation by the editor from Hong Kong of the printing block to print the picture of Prof. Srisakdi on the front cover of the publication called "Computer-Asia", Issue Number 27, January 1981, with the story that he was voted Asian Computer Man of the year 1981.



Figure 2. Khun Chatri congratulated Prof. Srisakdi for being voted Asian Computer Man of the year.

Once when Prof. Srisakdi was fulltime Advisor to the President of Bangkok Bank, Khun Chatri got an invitation from the Democrat Party to be the Chairman of the Economic Advisory Board. Khun Chatri sent his Advisor and H.E. Pichai Ratanakul, the Leader of the Democrat Party, appointed Prof. Srisakdi the Chairman with members being the key personnels from the Party such as H.E. Tarin Nimmanhemmin and H.E. Khunying Supatra Masdit. Prof. Srisakdi was asked to join the Democrat Party but he refused by saying that his father, H.E. Praya Nitisatra Baisalya, told him not to become a politician. His father said that if Prof. Srisakdi became a Minister of Cabinet, he would be glorified for about three months.

After that, he would be attacked constantly. If he remains a Professor, all concerned would pay respect to him, especially when their children and relatives were his students.

During the years 1983-1985, H.E. Dumrong Lathapipat, the Minister of Science, Technology and Energy appointed Khunying Kalaya and Prof. Srisakdi Advisors to the Minister. The Minister and Advisors planned publicity for the Ministry almost on a daily basis. Everyday, they discussed how to tape a video clip about the Minister and let messengers took copies of the video clip to all TV stations to be broadcasted with the aim and result of making the Ministry of Science and Technology more well known to the public.

2. THE COMPUTER ASSOCIATION OF THAILAND

In the year 1975, Khunying Kalaya became a member and Prof. Srisakdi the Reception Secretary of the Computer Association of Thailand (CAT). Later in the year 1979, Khunying Kalaya was elected a Director and Prof. Srisakdi the Secretary General of CAT. Then, during the term 2002-2004, Khunying Kalaya was elected the First Vice President and Prof. Srisakdi the President of CAT.

On behalf of the Computer Association of Thailand under the Royal Patronage of His Majesty the King, H.E. Bunchana Atthakor requested and got approval for the Chinese Government to sponsor a delegation of Thai computer experts from CAT to visit Chinese computer organizations. Khunying Kalaya was selected as a member of the delegation with Prof. Srisakdi the Liaison Officer and other important Thai computer experts such as Prof. Taksina Savanananda who is, in 2009, an Advisor to the CEO of the College Internet Distance Education, and Prof. Prasit Prapinmongkolkarn who is, in 2009, a member of the National Telecommunications Commission of Thailand. Later, Prof. Srisakdi was invited by UNESCO to give a short course on

Management Information Systems at Beijing University where he was granted an audience with HRH Princess Galyani Vadhana Krom Luang Naradhiwas Rajanagarindra who asked Prof. Srisakdi whether he was a student but he reported to her that he was a Professor.

As shown in Figure 3, Prof. Srisakdi, in his capacity as the Secretary General of CAT, led the Thai delegation to form the South East Asia Regional Computer Confederation at the Conference in Singapore September 6-7, 1976. Later, in the year 2007, Prof. Srisakdi was elected the President of SEARCC and chaired the South East Asia Regional Computer Conference at Impact Muang Thong Thani, November 18-19, 2007.



Figure 3. Prof. Srisakdi at the meeting to form SEARCC.

In the year 1982, the Ministry of Science, Technology and Energy asked the Computer Association of Thailand under the Royal Patronage of His Majesty the King and other learned societies to organize a conference and exhibition on "Computer in Ratanakosin Era". Prof. Srisakdi was appointed Chairman of the Organizing Committee. HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn graciously presided over the Opening Ceremony as shown in Figure 4 when HRH the princess graciously granted an meeting to Prof. Srisakdi and to the Minister of Science. Figure 5 shows HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn graciously presided over a tea party at the Conference.



Figure 4. HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn graciously presided over the Opening Ceremony of “Computer in Ratanakosin Era”.



Figure 5. HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn at “Computer in Ratanakosin Era” Conference.

In addition to CAT, the learned society supporting “Computer in Ratanakosin Era” Conference and Exhibition was TFIPS (Thai Federation for Information Processing Society) which was established by Prof. Srisakdi as the President and Khunying Kulaya as the Vice President.

The Keynote Address at Computer in Ratanakosin Era was given by H.E. Anand Panyarachun (later became the Prime Minister of Thailand), Prof. Srisakdi and Khunying Kalaya [5].

3. INTERGOVERNMENTAL BUREAU FOR INFORMATICS

In the year 1984, H.E. Dumrong sent two Advisors to the Minister, namely, Khunying Kalaya and Prof. Srisakdi, to represent the Thai Government at the

Intergovernmental Bureau for Informatics (IBI) Second World Conference in Rome, Italy, as shown in Figure 6.

It turned out that each country was asked to present a country report but the representatives from Thailand were not given advanced notice to present the report. However, Prof. Srisakdi presented the Thai country report ad lib without any advance preparation. The representative from the UN was impressed and gave Prof. Srisakdi a grant of about one million bath to carry out a research on Transborder Data Flow in Thailand.



Figure 6. Prof. Srisakdi at IBI.

The result of the research was presented at the International Conference on Transborder Data Flow held at Assumption University with H.E. Pichai Ratanakul, the Deputy Prime Minister at that time, chairing the Opening Ceremony as shown in Figures 7 and 8. H.E. Pichai Ratakul, Rev. Bro. Prathip Martin Komolmas, Prof. Srisakdi and other dignitaries are shown at the head table, with the backdrop showing the sponsors including the International Development Research Center of Canada, the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations, and the Intergovernmental Bureau for Informatics [6,7].

There are many other articles written by Khunying Kalaya and Prof. Srisakdi such as on Computer Application in Finance Companies, Computer Feasibility Study,

Computer Personnel, Computer Crime, and Two-way Television [8-12].



Figure 7. Joint Thai, IDRC, UNCTC, and IBI ASEAN Regional Seminar, 14-16 November 1986.



Figure 8. H.E. Pichai Ratakul, Rev. Bro. Prathip Martin Komolmas, and Prof. Srisakdi Charmonman.

4. THE COMMITTEE TO PROMOTE THAI SOFTWARE INDUSTRY

By the Order of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Energy No. 11/2527 dated 30 March 1984 signed by H.E. Dumrong, based on the Cabinet resolution dated 18 March 1984 for the Ministry to support software industry, a committee was appointed with Prof. Srisakdi as the Chairperson, Khunying Kulaya as the Deputy Chairperson, with 17 other experts including Mr. Manoo Ordeedolchest who later became the President of SIPA (The Software Industry Promotion Agency). The Committee carried out many activities including software competition with Prof. Srisakdi as the Chairman of the Subcommittee as shown in Figure 9.



Figure 9. Prof. Srisakdi and Students at Software Competition at the Ministry of Science.

5. THE FIRST BUSINESS COMPUTER DEGREE PROGRAM IN THE WORLD

When Prof. Choop drafted the law to establish the Ministry of Science, Technology and Energy, he was the President of ABAC. Many parts of the draft were done at Assumption University over the weekends and the persons helping him were Dr. Sanga Subhasri, Prof. Srisakdi, and Dr. Chavalit Meennuch. As a matter of fact, when the Prime Minister made a telephone call to invite Prof. Choop to be the Minister of Science and Technology, Prof. Srisakdi was the one who answered the telephone call and passed it to Prof. Choop. At one point, Prof. Choop wanted Prof. Srisakdi to be the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Science but political forces were very strong to appointed another person to be the Permanent Secretary. Prof. Choop then asked Prof. Srisakdi to be a Deputy Permanent Secretary. Prof. Srisakdi declined the offer of the Deputy Permanent Secretary position because that was at the C-10 level which is below the C-11 level which he got at King Monkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang and remained in the C-11 position for 10 years until he retired.

There was no "Business Computer Degree Program" anywhere in the world in the year 1979. The curriculum was generally called by other names such as Computer Science, Computer Engineering, Information Technology, and etc.

Prof. Srisakdi, Khunying Kalaya and Prof. Choop unanimously agreed to call the first computer-related degree program at ABAC as “Business Computer” in order to signify that it was the computer-related degree program at the educational institution which was “the best business school in town”.

Khunying Kalaya and Prof. Srisakdi drafted the Business Computer curriculum by using the recommendations from the Association for Computing Machinery or ACM and the Computer Society of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE). Prof. Srisakdi has been a member of ACM since 1961 when he also became a founding member of the University Computer Center Special Interest Group and later the Founding President of Thailand Chapter of the ACM as well as the Founding President of the Computer Society of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), both of which are located at Srisakdi Charmonman IT Center.

Khunying Kalaya kindly accepted the offer from Prof. Choop and Prof. Srisakdi for her to become the first Chairperson of the Business Computer Department at ABAC offering the first Business Computer degree program in the world.

Prof. Srisakdi hand-carried the Radio Shack TRS 80 microcomputer from the US to Thailand. It was only 50,000 baht but had the memory of 64K which was much more than 16K of the first mainframe computer at the National Computer Center. Prof. Srisakdi then asked Khunying Kalaya and Khun Chote to carry two more TRS 80 from the US. The three microcomputers were then used as the first computer laboratory for the Business Computer degree program. Later, Assumption University, such as at Srisakdi Charmonman IT Center, has much larger computer and Internet facilities such as thousands of microcomputers, 40 terabytes of memory, 200 megabytes of Internet bandwidth, and etc.

The proposed Business Computer curriculum was submitted to the Board of Trustees of ABAC for approval in the year 1979. As a matter of fact, Prof. Srisakdi has been a member of the AU Board of Trustees since the year 1979, and Khunying Kalaya from the year 1987 until 1999.

The curriculum was sent to the Ministry of University Affairs for approval. Since Prof. Srisakdi was the highest ranking professor of IT in Thailand, he was appointed Chairman of the Committee to approve computer acquisitions at government universities and Chairman of the Committees to approve IT-related degree programs at both government universities and private universities for more than 20 years.

At the committee meeting to consider the Business Computer program from ABAC, Prof. Srisakdi skillfully directed the committee members to question the representatives of the university and suggest revisions to the program. After the meeting, Prof. Srisakdi had all the required revisions. So, he prepared the revisions before the letter from the Ministry of University Affairs arrived at ABAC. When the letter arrived, ABAC could send the reply right away. When the revised proposal was submitted to the Committee, Prof. Srisakdi as the Chairman could easily show to the Committee members that the revisions were made according to the Committee’s recommendations. So, the Committee could approve the revised proposal. It was jokingly said that Prof. Srisakdi approved the Business Computer curriculum at ABAC with his left hand and approved it again at the Ministry of University Affairs with his right hand.

Khunying Kalaya had been highly effective in performing her job as the Head of the Business Computer Department at ABAC. Khunying Kalaya and Prof. Srisakdi also taught courses in the Business Computer Program.

6. OTHER IT-RELATED DEGREE PROGRAMS AT ASSUMPTION UNIVERSITY.

In the year 1987, Prof. Srisakdi complained to Rev. Bro. Martin that he proposed an MS program in IT at King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang and could not get it approved because so many organizations were fighting to run the program. The Engineering Faculty, the Science Faculty, the Education Faculty, the Computer Center, etc. all wanted the program. Rev. Bro. Martin suggested that Prof. Srisakdi proposed it to ABAC. He did and got it approved easily. The program was approved by the Ministry of University Affairs in the year 1988 was called "Master of Science in Computer Information Systems (MSCIS)" under the responsibility of the Graduate School of Computer Information Systems (GSCIS) with Prof. Srisakdi as the Chairman of the Board of GSCIS. Up to the year 2009, there have been 1,633 graduates of MSCIS.

In the year 1990, the Ministry of University Affairs approved the Master of Science in Computer and Engineering Management. The MSCEM curriculum was drafted by a committee headed by Prof. Srisakdi. It was under the responsibility of the Graduate School of Computer and Engineering Management (GSCEM) with Prof. Srisakdi as the Chairman of the Board. Up to the year 2009, there have been 1,466 graduates of MSCEM.

In the year 2000, the Ministry of University Affairs approved the Master of Science in Internet and eCommerce Technology. The MSIEC curriculum was drafted by Prof. Srisakdi based on the curriculum at Carnegie Mellon University. It was under the responsibility of the Graduate School of Internet and eCommerce (GSIEC) with Prof. Srisakdi as the Chairman of the Board. Up to the year 2009, there have been 913 graduates of MSIEC.

From the year 1988 to 2009, Assumption University has produced 4,012

graduates of Master's Degree in CIS, CEM, and IEC.

In the year 1991, the Ministry of University Affairs approved the Ph.D. in Computer Information Systems program (Ph.D. CIS) and Ph.D. in Computer and Engineering Management (Ph.D. CEM). The IT-related Ph.D. programs at ABAC were offered before IT-related Ph.D. program at any other university in Thailand. Prof. Srisakdi chaired the Committee to draft the programs based on the programs he was familiar with as the Director of Graduate Studies at the University of Missouri from 1968 to 1973. Prof. Srisakdi was the Chairman of the Board of both the Ph.D. CIS and Ph.D. CEM programs. Up to the year 2009, there have been 24 graduates of Ph.D. CIS and Ph.D. CEM.

In the year 2006, the Ministry of University Affairs approved the Ph.D. in eLearning Methodology at Assumption University. The curriculum was drafted by a committee headed by Prof. Srisakdi. It was under the responsibility of the School of eLearning Science of the College of Internet Distance Education with Prof. Srisakdi as the Chairman of the Board and CEO. This Ph.D. in eLearning Methodology is the first and the only such program in the world. There have been applicants from 30 countries and the first graduate in the year 2009 is from Iran.

In addition to Ph.D. (CIS), Ph.D. (CEM), and Ph.D. (eLearning), Assumption University offers Ph.D. in Computer Science, Ph.D. in Information Technology, and Ph.D. in Telecommunications, altogether 6 Ph.D. programs.

At the Master's Degree level, Assumption University offered 16 degree programs, namely, MS in Computer Information Systems, MS in Computer and Engineering Management, MS in Internet and eCommerce Technology, MS in ICT, MS in Computer Science, MS in IT, MS in Telecommunications Science, MS in Data Analysis and Management, MS in Technology Management, MS in Internet

and Multimedia Engineering, and MS in Information System Management.

At the Bachelor's Degree level, Assumption University offers 8 degree programs, namely, BBA in Business Computer and Business Information System, BS in Business Data Analysis, BS in Computer Science, BS in Information Technology, BS in Telecommunications Science, B.Eng. in Computer and Network Engineering, B.Eng. in Electrical and Electronics Engineering, B.Eng. in Telecommunications and Electronics Engineering.

With 6 Ph.D. programs, 16 MS programs, and 8 Bachelor programs, Assumption University offers 30 IT-related degree programs. Up to the year 2009, more than 8,000 graduates have been produced. The number of 30 degree programs makes Assumption University the university offering more IT-related degree programs than at any other university in the world.

7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Assumption University may be said to be the first in many aspects of IT-related degree programs. For examples, Assumption University offers the first Business Computer degree program in the world, the first IT-related Ph.D. program in Thailand, and the first and only Ph.D. in eLearning Methodology in the world. Up to the year 2009, altogether more than 8,000 IT-related graduates have been produced, including 26 Ph.D. level, and more than 4,000 Master level. All the IT-related degree programs at Assumption University have been initiated or inspired by Prof. Srisakdi.

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