

# Ten Questions for Munir Mandviwalla

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This week's Ten Questions features Munir Mandviwalla, longtime AIS member and founder of the AIS Student Chapters program. The program, which began in 2009, has long been a source for Information Systems undergraduates to develop their careers and build networks beyond their home universities. In addition to the Student Chapters program, Munir has been instrumental in the work done on the IS Job Index, which is the only longitudinal assessment of placement, demographics, jobs, search, acceptance, geographical patterns, and knowledge of information systems (IS), management information systems (MIS), and computer information systems (CIS) graduates. Inaugurated in 2013 and published every 2 years, each report is based on several thousand recent graduates from more than 30 universities across the United States.

Munir is Professor of Management Information Systems, Milton F. Stauffer Senior Research Fellow, and Executive Director of the Institute for Business and Information Technology at the Fox School of Business, Temple University. His research focuses on how design can improve business and society on topics such as digital transformation, broadband, social media, and IT workforce.

## **1. You were instrumental in the formation of AIS Student Chapters. Please share a bit about that process and the timeline in creating that official program.**

In 2008, at the AMCIS conference in Toronto, a group of IS faculty agreed to form a task force to discuss the value of changing the AIS mission and charter to formally include students – undergraduate and master's students. A successful proposal was made to AIS council at the ICIS conference in Paris, in December 2008. The inaugural student chapter conference was held in April 2009 at Temple University and the chartering of the first AIS student chapters began in September 2009. The founding chapters were inducted into AIS at a special ceremony in December 2009, as part of ICIS Phoenix. In 2010, the second annual student chapter conference was held at Georgia State University, the AIS student chapter advisory board was formed, and we announced the first annual student chapter awards in December 2010 at ICIS St. Louis.

One simple way to understand the rationale for creating AIS student chapters is to understand why I got involved. I had realized in my role as department chair, that our home grown MIS student organization had reached a plateau. Our students were doing a great job and they were very successful in meeting their goals but unlike students in accounting and marketing and other disciplines, they were not eligible for any external awards. They did not have a way to network with students from other universities and learn best practices from each other, and perhaps most problematically they did not have any sense of belonging to a larger discipline. At the most

basic level then, AIS student chapters were started to provide a “home” for all IS students worldwide.

**2. You served as the first Vice President of Student Chapters on the AIS Council. What were some of the early goals of the program and was it challenging to get the support from leadership to buy into those goals?**

The mission, vision, and chartering/governance model for student chapters was established and associated documents for managing student chapters, conferences, awards, and recruitment were created. An award structure, criteria, rating and evaluation process, and prize schedule were created and a conference structure was created including governance, template for proposals, timelines and content management. Included in the conference structure was a model and committee for holding competitions. Competitions have become an integral part of AIS Student Chapters.

The support was very enthusiastic overall. Both from AIS and from colleagues around the country and in places around the globe. I am very grateful to the people who made a leap of faith to attend the first Temple student chapter conference back in 2009. We had early support from AIS Presidents Dennis Galletta, David Avison, Bernard Tan, Joey George, and Dov Te’eni, as well as the AIS staff to ensure early success of the program.

**3. There are currently 44 student chapters throughout the world. When AIS first introduced Student Chapters, did you ever envision it growing into such a large global program?**

When AIS first introduced Student Chapters, we had 75 chapters. Over the years that number has fluctuated quite a bit. I think AIS and the entire IS community can do more to capitalize on the successes of our field and build chapter numbers back to their early days.

For the schools that remained actively engaged such as ASU, BYU, UGA, Alabama, Utah, Indiana, FIU, Michigan-Dearborn, Arkansas, a few schools across the world, and of course Temple, student chapters provide an important resource, it has become their go to community. I am very grateful and appreciative of all the leaders who have sustained student chapters for so long and I am very happy to hear about the recent appointments of AVP’s for student chapters.

**4. A key component of the AIS Student Chapter program is the Student Chapter Leadership Conference and its corresponding competitions. How have those competitions changed over the years (previously hack-a-thons) and how do you think the competitions need to evolve to keep students engaged?**

The conference and competition have always been very important and very well run. The Temple students always come back glowing from each conference. I am only observing from a distance now so don’t know much about the details. However, it would be nice to have an outlet for more technical students. For example, a prototyping competition.

**5. The IS Job Index was first created in 2013 and has served as an invaluable resource to undergraduates for more than 10 years. What was your role in the creation of the Job Index and its partnership AIS?**

The IS Job Index covers both undergraduates and masters’ students. The 2022 report featured 1800+ graduates from 36 universities across the U.S. In 2022, about 10,000 postcards and

5000 print reports were distributed to deans, industry executives, and academics. All the major AIS conferences feature the report with banners and participating school logos. To date, isjobindex.com has received more than 60,000 unique views, and the full report has been downloaded more than 20,000 times.

Back in 2011, I was concerned that as a field, we knew little about who our graduates are, what they know, how they perform in the job market, and what kinds of jobs they end up doing. Established fields such as Accounting and Computer Science were far ahead of us in understanding their students and graduates. Solving this problem piecemeal university by university did not make sense, it had to be a field level effort. I pitched the idea to Pete Tinsley, Executive Director at AIS at the time, to form a partnership with Temple, who would take the lead in forming a coalition of universities. The initial team at Temple included Paul Pavlou and Crystal Harold who designed the survey.

## **6. How do you see the IS Job Index changing as IS continues to evolve and the market changes?**

The IS Job Index basic survey instrument has stood the test of time remarkably well. The basics of our field have not changed. New developments such as analytics and now AI are relatively easily added on as job types. Moreover, the AIS staff and several prior presidents such as Jane Fedorowicz, Joey George, and Matti Rossi have been very supportive. Matt Nelson, AIS Associate Executive Director has been the biggest cheerleader. These folks have been critical to sustaining the effort for more than a decade. At Temple, the corporate partners and advisory board of the Institute for Business and Information Technology have also been critical to the success.

For the future, I would like to see more schools participate in the US to make this valuable resource even richer and we need to expand globally. Global expansion is the most important goal for the resource to be useful to the entire field.

## **7. What would you tell students looking into a future career in IS? What area of study should they focus on and how can AIS further support undergraduate students with their professional goals?**

Career prospects for IS are excellent and will continue in the foreseeable future. Only a small percentage of businesses worldwide have been digitally transformed. They will need help. IS students are best qualified to do so. The basics of IS such as programming and data will always be 'hot.'

AIS should and must do a better job focusing on undergraduate students. There is much more that could be done in curriculum, engagement with industry, jobs, and so on. When I started talking about students, colleagues thought I was talking about doctoral students...

## **8. Who have been major influencers not just in your career, but also in your volunteer service with AIS and why?**

Lorne Olfman (my advisor), Paul Gray (who was one of the founders of AIS), Rick Watson (former president and still the broadest thinking person I know even though he uses a MAC), and many others.

On AIS, I am especially grateful to Blake Ives (ISWorld founder), Joey George, Jane Fedorowicz, Matti Rossi, Pete Tinsley, and Matt Nelson who were always willing to listen to my crazy ideas. I still recall with gratitude how David Avison, Matti Rossi, and Jason Thatcher, all AIS presidents, trusted me enough to fly in for the inaugural student chapter conference.

AIS staff such as Tmitri Owens, Aretha Wright, Tenez Quarles, and Brook Pritchett have always been key supporters.

**9. What are some of the most important research areas with the potential for lasting global impact that IS researchers should focus on more?**

There is still much more to do in digitally transforming firms and in digital innovation.

**10. What is the one trend you are most excited about for the future of IS?**

Digital transformation is about IS and this trend will last far beyond digital enablers such as analytics, AI, and [insert current hot topic].