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Symposium Helps NPS Students Take a Fresh Look at Innovation

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U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Brian H. Abel

Symposium Helps NPS Students Take a Fresh Look at Innovation

By MC3 Brian H. Abel

NPS Department of Computer Science Chair Dr. Peter Denning, right, and Graduate School of Business and Public Policy Associate Professor Dr. Nick Dew, left, review topics during an Innovation, Emergence and Communication Symposium in Watkins Hall, March 22. The symposium provided university students and faculty with an opportunity to brainstorm solutions that will raise the innovation success rate in the DOD.

"I think we have a lot of blindness around the part of how you produce it, and that's why we have such a high failure rate," said Denning. "Right now, the failure rate is 96 percent, so just four percent of innovation projects actually succeed in their objectives, and another few percent have partial success.

"The first part of this conversation is what do we mean by innovation, because we are always trying to produce it," Denning continued, adding that even in the symposium's small group discussion, different definitions of innovation emerge. By the end of the symposium, however, they would all concur on one matter.

"The conclusion that we're going to reach is that innovation is not about producing ideas, it's about producing new practices," said Denning. "The Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of the Navy have both declared major innovation initiatives, and that is what they're after."

Feedback from attending students was overall very positive, added Denning. "The students there told us afterwards that they had their minds opened to a new way of looking at innovation that shows them how to be much more successful at it," he said.

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