Introduction
INF, the Institute of Informatics at UFRGS – Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul - is one of the top Computer Science and Engineering institutions in Brazil and Latin America. Although it was officially founded in 1989, its expertise in education and research dates back to the 70’s. Today, INF is recognized by its academic excellence, innovation, and social responsibility.

The Institute of Informatics is located in the city of Porto Alegre, the capital city of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. INF has a research and education infrastructure that is comparable to that of top universities, including full wireless network coverage. With a total built area of 7,500 m², it offers very well qualified teaching and research labs, a small convention center, various lecture halls, all of them equipped with multimedia infrastructure, and a specialized library with over 23,000 volumes.

The Institute has 73 faculty members, which makes it one of the largest Computer Science and Computer Engineering groups in Brazil, unique for its breadth of research areas, covering software, hardware, and theory in an extremely integrated way. The Institute also includes a team of technical and administrative staff to provide support for a community of over 700 undergraduate and 250 graduate students.

Undergraduate Program
INF runs two BSc programs: Computer Science and Computer Engineering (the latter is offered jointly with the School of Engineering). Both programs rank among the best in the country, according to the Brazilian Ministry of Education and independent evaluations. Each year, 100 Computer Science and 60 Computer Engineering students start their BSc degrees, receiving a very solid education, which also offers many possibilities for internships in top foreign universities, also including double degree agreements.

Graduate Program
PPGC – the Graduate Program in Computer Science, is one of the top five graduate programs in the area in Brazil rated as world-class by the official ranking of the Brazilian Ministry of Education. The faculty maintains active collaborations with the industry, and other universities in Brazil and worldwide in projects with large scientific and technological impact. The IT industry in the state of Rio Grande do Sul was born out of the PPGC labs in the 70’s and 80’s.

INF faculty members are also members in two other graduate programs at UFRGS: PGMICRO – Graduate Program in Microelectronics and PGIE – Graduate Program in Education in Informatics, the only interdisciplinary programs in these areas in the country.

Besides MSc and PhD degrees, INF also offers continuing education to professionals on state-of-the-art technologies, both open and in-company courses.

Research
Research and innovation are top priorities in the Institute. Currently, the following 14 research groups investigate and cover most of the fundamentals areas of Computing:
- Artificial Intelligence
- Bioinformatics
- Computational Tools for the Design of Integrated Circuits and Systems
- Computer Graphics and Image Processing
- Computer Networks
- Computing Fundamentals and Formal Methods
- Design of Integrated Circuits
- Digital TV
- Embedded Systems
- Fault Tolerance
- Information Systems, Software Engineering and Data Bases
- Intelligent Robotics and Artificial Vision
- Parallel and Distributed Processing
- Test and Design for Testability for Hardware Systems

Fostering Entrepreneurship
CEI – the Center for Entrepreneurship in Informatics, created in 1996, acts as an industrial incubator, offering facilities and support for start-up companies that develop innovative projects in the ICT sector. More than 40 companies have been or are being incubated at CEI.

CEI is an agent of the Brazilian Agency for the Promotion of Excellence in Software (Softex) and was the first technology incubator in South Brazil. It is considered as a model by SEBRAE, a Brazilian institution for fostering the development of small and medium-size enterprises. CEI also acts as an operational agency for FINEP, the innovation agency of the Brazilian Ministry of Science and Technology (MCT), having supported 96 start-up companies from all areas in the first phase. CEI is accredited by CATI, the committee of MCT for the IT area, thus allowing incubated companies to receive incentives from the Informatics Law for R&D activities.

Interaction with Society
INF had a essential role in the creation of the IT industry cluster in the State of Rio Grande do Sul and is still the major center in R&D in the area in the South of Brazil. Besides the incubated companies, INF has agreements and develops joint technology transfer projects with a large number of national and international companies.

INF develops technologies for the benefit of the society. Among them, it is worth mentioning a telemedicine system that has been developed together with the IT public company of the Porto Alegre city hall and with the technology center of the Federation of Industries of Rio Grande do Sul, which allows patients from poor neighborhoods to receive remote health care and has received both national and international awards for innovation and social responsibility.

As another example, the COMUNICA project uses speech processing technology to allow disabled persons to access computing resources. Finally, the NETRA project, developed together by INF and MIT’s Media Lab researchers, has also received international recognition and awards for allowing various eyes’ clinical exams by means of very inexpensive devices (less than US$ 2) attached to a cell phone.

INF has a permanent interaction with all associations that represent the IT sector in Brazil and in the State, such as ABINEE (electronics industry), ASSESPRO (software industry), SUCESU (IT users’ association), SOFTSUL (software development agency), and FIERGS (Federation of Industries), by means of formal participation of faculty members in the boards of these associations or by strategic partnerships and agreements.
International Insertion

In the international scenario, INF is one of the most important Latin-American academic institution in Computer Science and Engineering, due to its highly qualified faculty. Most of the professors have their PhD degrees from top institutions in Europe and North America, and develop a large number of international cooperation projects. INF has a strong participation in various scientific international forums, such as journal editorial boards, program committees of international conferences, and boards and working groups of various scientific societies. Continuously, a large number of graduate students develop part of their studies in top foreign universities and research centers. UFRGS and foreign professors jointly advise many MSc and PhD theses, and in many cases students receive double degrees. Dozens of undergraduate students participate in exchange programs, for periods ranging up to one year or even more, mainly in universities in France and Germany that have special agreements with UFRGS. INF also receives many foreign students and, since 2007, awards double degrees together with Grenoble INF (France). In 2011, a double degree agreement started with the Technical University of Berlin.

Recognition

Graduate Program in Computer Science
• Level 6 in the last (2009) triennial evaluation of the Ministry of Education (international level)

Undergraduate Program in Computer Science
• Best ranked program in Brazil, according to the last (2010) triennial evaluation of the Ministry of Education
• Five stars in the Students Guide of the prestigious Brazilian Abril media group
• Special recognition from InfoExame magazine, specialized in the IT sector

Undergraduate Program in Computer Engineering
• Best ranked program in Brazil, according to the last (2010) triennial evaluation of the Ministry of Education
• Five stars in the Students Guide of the prestigious Brazilian Abril media group