November 18, 2005

**Department Council Meeting Minutes**

The meeting was convened at 12:10pm by Larry Davis on Friday, November 18, 2005. Vic Basili, Lise Getoor, and Nick Roussopoulos could not attend. All other members were present.

Larry announced that we had just received permission from campus for the establishment of an UG minor which has been under review for sometime.

He then began discussion of the meeting’s agenda - the review of topic areas which will be covered at the spring faculty retreat and the need to identify a third topic for the meeting. There have been two committees formed to begin a review of the upper level undergraduate program (Mike Hicks – committee chair) and a similar review of the graduate program (Alan Sussman – committee chair). Mike could not attend the meeting but Alan was present for discussion of the graduate program topic.

The Sussman committee will consider:

1. Graduate requirements (should there be a core curriculum for the graduate program?)
2. Field Committee structure – as the Department has grown so have the number of field committee members; some committees represent several different specialty areas whose grouping might no longer make sense given teaching and course distribution requirements.
3. Consideration of an M.S. degree program – no TA positions; separate admissions process; office space and other support issues should be covered. Samir has suggested starting such a program, and the committee will meet with him to obtain his views.

The question was then raised as to what the Department was doing regarding the decrease in Computer Science UG students. Larry said that this is a nation-wide problem and not one that this Department can resolve. Currently, we have approximately 80 CS freshmen entering the program each year with another 20-30 transfer students. Approximately 2/3rds of these students will reach our junior level courses. This has at least two impacts:

1. It lowers the demand for seats in 400 level courses. There has already been a drop over the past several years from nearly 30 sections of 400 courses each semester to less than 20 next Fall. More sections could be offered if class sizes were further reduced. While a class size of 20 plus students may be acceptable, we cannot drop to a 10/15 student level size course. Thus, we will probably not be able to sustain the number of upper level UG course offerings unless we make some dramatic changes in our undergraduate degree offerings. One step in this
direction is the formation of the minor, which could increase demand for 400 level seats. It was felt that it will be important to discuss these numbers/statistics at the retreat. Mike will be asked to incorporate such information into his committee’s presentation.

2. It reduces the need for TA’s, which in turn reduces the number of graduate students the Department can admit each year with aid. This decrease in the graduate student pipeline will have a gradual effect on our graduate program with a decrease in the number of students pursuing a Ph.D. Professors will not have a sufficient number of students to assist them with their research programs. Professors have been reluctant to hire inexperienced graduate students. The UMD Engineering Department admits a large number of students without funding support guarantees. This is a possible option for CS to explore but there are problems inherent following such an option.

The Middle States Evaluation will be conducted next year on a campus-wide basis. This was mentioned as a possible third retreat topic. It was pointed out that although CS does not want to apply for formal accreditation since the ABET process is onerous, it is reasonable for the Department to define “what it wants to achieve through its UG teaching program”. Currently, there is no evaluation process in place. Thus, the UG Committee should be asked to identify educational goals and an evaluation process. Vic Basili’s wife has some expertise in evaluation methods and she will be asked to provide information to the UG retreat committee.

Larry mentioned that a Letter of Intent to propose for NSF funding has just been submitted. The proposal will discuss the development of new UG minor degrees which will reflect the critical role of computation emerging in other disciplines. A small set of generic CS minors could be created in conjunction with partner campus departments. If the campus allows us to submit this proposal (there is a limit of one per institution), then this is a topic that would need to be discussed by the entire department, probably at the retreat.

The need for developing an Alumni network for UG students was also raised. The Council felt that there would be sufficient discussion of these issues at the retreat to fill a day long faculty meeting.

Larry adjourned the meeting at 1pm.