The first meeting of the academic year was held on Friday, September 5, 2003 in room 4185. The meeting was convened by Larry Davis at 12:10pm. The first order of business was the introduction of the council members. Ben Bederson then gave an overview of the new Undergraduate Introductory sequence which has been known as CMSC 106, 114, and 214 which will now be replaced by 131, 132, and 212. The first two of these courses will be based on Java and will provide an introduction to lower level programming concepts. Ben summarized the rationale for the changes:

1. This will keep the curriculum current with developing technology.
2. We hope that students will find the course sequence more exciting and attractive.
3. A greater number of professorial faculty will be teaching at the lower levels so that students will meet them early in their academic careers.
4. This change will encourage the department to move in new directions and be more creative in course offerings.

The professorial faculty who will be teaching this new sequence are Bill Pugh, Jeff Hollingsworth, and Ben Bederson. They, along with Gwen Kaye and Nelson Padua-Perez, have been working on a committee to define course content and have selected the text book that will be used in the spring 2004 when the courses are offered. The book is a commercial text, very different from the usual academic text book that has been used in the past. Anyone interested in the schedule of classes should refer to the Department's UG website.

There are two remaining strategic questions regarding this change in teaching:

1. How can the Department ensure the long-term commitment of its professorial faculty to teach and continue the interest in this approach to introductory courses?
2. How much time can professorial faculty devote to this process?

Larry responded saying that some of the time issues will be reduced due to the decrease in student enrollment. He will need to see how this develops and what is reasonable within the Department given time and financial constraints.

The first time these courses are offered the plan is to have large classes of up to 100 students. The Department will need to develop a specialize evaluation form which the students can complete to provide feedback on the course structure.

The second topic of discussion was the report produced by the External Review Committee which was submitted to the Dean sometime in July. Larry has sent a draft response to Dr. Halperin that incorporated input from faculty members who attend discussion meetings on two previous days.

Larry presented a summary of the report and divided up the topics into several different categories.
The first group of topics will be considered for more thorough review during the Faculty Retreat to be held on January 21 and 22, 2004.

1. Upper Division Courses (300 - 400 level) are often not taught by professorial faculty. This needs to change and the content of these courses needs to be reviewed. Currently there might be too many choices for students. The Department could consider streamlining its offerings or have multiple tracks for students depending on their area of specialty.

2. The need for the Department to have a Strategic Plan: The Department does have a plan developed and approved by the Dean in 2001. However, it may be time for faculty to review and update it based on the future direction of the Department. Larry feels that it would be important to determine the goal of a new plan, how it will be used so that it does not result in useless effort. It would be helpful to discuss this with faculty at other academic institutions to determine if their Departments have such a plan and whether it has been helpful in setting the direction of the departments in which they belong.

3. Recruitment of women and minorities: The Department meets the national average for the recruitment of women and minorities in the U.S. The question still remains as to what we can do to improve these recruitment figures and properly mentor students and faculty members? Larry mentioned that he attended a conference during the summer that discussed different methods that seemed to work regarding this issue. Further work needs to be done on our part so that the Department substantially improves its position regarding women and minorities.

4. University service courses/IT: Currently the Department does not provide many such service to the University but there is reason to do so given our campus standing.

All of the above information will also be presented at the Education Committee Meeting to be held later in the day. Committees will then be formed to gather pertinent information for discussion at the Faculty Retreat.

The second group of topics covered by the External Committee's report cover actions that the Department was already involved in and will be further developed during this academic year.

1. Professorial faculty will be teaching this year, along with Instructors, UG introductory courses as well as other courses on the 100 - 300 level.

2. The report emphasized the need to increase contact among UG and Graduate students and faculty. A series of lunches will be offered to small groups of graduate students so that they can informally meet faculty and discuss research projects. A workshop for UG students who are interested in going to graduate school will be offered this fall semester. There will also be a gathering of women faculty members, graduate and UG students so that they can meet one another and begin to develop some contacts within the group.

3. There will be a review of graduate students with the intent of ensuring that they are making progress in the movement towards their
PhD degrees. The committee (Arbaugh, Bhattacharjee, and Tseng) will define the process and conduct an evaluation and then notify the Department as to what seems to work and if this procedure should be incorporated into the graduate program.

4. Design a TA Training Program to be introduced by Fall 2004. This involves contacting other Departments to determine what they do and if there are training materials that can be used by us.

5. Develop a database that captures the names and general information on any of our successful graduates (UG and Graduate). Jack Minker has volunteered to work on this effort.

6. Develop a Research Advisory Board that will cover both CS and UMIACS. Joseph JaJa, Larry, and Ashok Agrawala will be working to do so.

7. There is a need to revise our teaching evaluations including the process which should include all Instructors, Professors, and TAs who teach in any given semester. Dave Mount and Clyde Kruskal are working on outlining a process. There are a larger number of people who were appointed to the Teaching Evaluation Committee this year so that this larger group of people to be evaluated can be accomplished. There is a need for a more methodical review with information being supplied to the Department Chair. This does not currently occur.

The third group of items identified by the External Review Committee fall under a category entitled 'Action Items'.

1. It was recommended that the Department go on a fact finding mission. The committee felt that there is a need to compare the Maryland CS Department with other CS departments across the country in a number of different areas. They also recommended that CS compare itself to other science/technology departments within the University.

2. There is a need to improve the professional relationship between professorial faculty and instructional faculty as well as staff relationships with both groups of faculty members. There is hope that with the mixture of teaching on the UG level and extending an invitation to Instructors to attend the Friday FFL will help improve the collegial relationship among faculty members. We will also try to increase the number of functions that will be open to all faculty and staff members so that they get to know one another on an informal basis.

3. There is a need to build a stronger community of women in CS. There will be a lunch given in the near future open to all UG and Graduate female students, and faculty members.

The fourth category of topics mentioned in the External Report were:

1. Mentoring of Associate Professors - Larry feels that this is not needed. Providing advice and feedback is important and that is being done. However, a formal mentoring program should not be necessary for faculty members at that level.
2. The External Committee recommended a review of the Department's graduate course based system. The faculty has discussed this topic for a number of years and there does not seem to be a need to further review this approach. Checking with other highly ranked CS departments showed that most had a similar system. So, there does not seem to be a desire on the part of the majority of faculty to rehash this topic.

The third agenda topic was a summary presented by Larry on the Department's Budget position for FY'04.

We reduced the budget by approximately $500K through staff reductions; movement of some of the computer staff from state funds to research funds (CALF Acct.); fewer Instructors (by 3 positions) and TAs; and a reduction of the Department's operating budget.

The budget is now balanced. It helped that the Provost gave us some one time funds to help with costs. We are required to spread these funds over the next 2-3 years.

The fourth agenda topic covered Faculty Recruitment:

1. The Luce Professorship: The Department has received funds from the Claire Booth Luce Foundation to help with the support of a junior female faculty member. Although we can not legally advertise for this position, we will be trying to recruit a top junior faculty member to begin next year.

2. We will be recruiting to replace Iftode, a Systems Faculty member.

3. We will also be recruiting a faculty member who specializes in 'Perceptual Interfaces'. Funding will primarily be provided by UMIACS for this position.

The fifth agenda item was discussion of the Department's Library. Its current function, cost of operation, and space usage were discussed. The overall opinion of those present at the meeting was to support the continued operation of the Library although some changes might be made for the future. A committee will be formed to look into this matter. Graduate students had been asked for their opinion on the library and the general response was that they would prefer to have it then a graduate student lounge. Some of the points that they mentioned were:

1. Helpful for book reviews
2. Journals, reference books are useful that do not exist anywhere else
3. Jordan's expertise
4. Not all information can be accessed online
5. What would happen to the existing library collection
6. Students use it as a gathering place
7. Having the library is thought to be a good thing for the Department

Larry said that UMIACS was not in support of maintaining the costs of the library and that faculty should make their wishes known on this subject at the next UMIACS steering committee meeting. If UMIACS decides not to continue its support, then CS will need to determine what can be done within our current budget limitations. Larry also suggested that it might be possible for P.I.s to donate funds from their grants and contracts to help with the support of the library's operation. The one group of faculty who do not use the library are
the Systems Faculty. They do not support the use of Department resources for its continuation given other Department needs and priorities.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:30pm.