January 27, 2006

**Education Meeting**

The first meeting of the spring 2006 academic semester was held on Friday, January 27 beginning at 2pm. Larry Davis opened the meeting by reviewing the agenda and introducing Vibha Sazawal, the Department’s newest Assistant Professor. Larry also mentioned the outcome of the vote for a Department Logo and indicated next steps still need to be defined. Few votes were cast for the infinity loop. There was a close vote between the design that looked like the University’s logo and the third option. Several people had suggested modifications to these designs with others suggesting that none of the designs were appropriate and that a graphic artist should be hired to design a Department logo acceptable to all. Larry also gave a “plug” for the Staff Awards Program encouraging participation via nominations. The intent is to provide recognition to staff members for a specific accomplishment vs. commenting on their overall performance which is determined by supervisors and handled through the University’s PRD process. Staff members like the program and appreciate the acknowledgement that they often “go beyond the call of duty” to assist faculty members or visitors in some manner. The program will only continue if more faculty take this seriously by submitting nominations to Howard Elman, the Chair of the Staff Awards Program. Nominations may be submitted at any time and are reviewed by a committee on a quarterly basis.

Larry then called on Jan Plane to present the first agenda topic, “Middle States Evaluation Criteria” for the CS Department. Jan had been working on the CMPS committee since spring 2005. She explained that the University is required to go through the process, even thought it is a very time consuming and labor intensive review. (This is for university accreditation vs. department accreditation). There were four assessment plans presented, one for each degree awarded by the Department:

1. An UG CS Degree
2. An UG CS Minor
3. A Masters Degree in CS
4. A Ph.D. Degree in CS

Jan explained that the draft plans are a result of input from a variety of faculty members. Her intent was to define reasonable “student learning outcomes” (i.e. what should students learn from specific classes based on the degrees awarded). Three to five outcomes were defined for each degree offered. The criteria must be student centered and testable. An 80% success rate for graduates of each degree was listed in the criteria based on information received from other campus departments as well as other U.S. institutions.

The Middle States review will occur during the spring of 2007. The Department will need to demonstrate that it is following the established evaluation criteria. What is new about this process from prior experience with the Middle States’ evaluation board is that
they are reaching down into individual departments for student information vs. collecting information from the University as a whole.

There was general discussion among faculty members with the criteria accepted as presented. Should the Department not do as well as expected during the evaluation, most likely a report will be submitted to campus officials explaining the reasons for the outcomes.

Francois Guimbretiere presented the second agenda topic, a proposal for a new course, CMSC 634 “Empirical Research Methods for Computer Science”. The proposal had been presented at a previous meeting where revisions had been suggested before an official faculty vote was taken. A version of the course focusing on HCI was offered in the past and was well received by students and faculty members. Francois noted that the course will to be offered not only to CS graduate students but also to graduate students in CLIS, Engineering, and Business with it being eligible as an MS qualifying course as well as a Ph.D. core course.

The course was designed as a graduate introductory course on empirical research methods. Its goal is to introduce students to experimental techniques for the evaluation of software systems and processes, as well as human performance in the use of interfaces, programming environments, and software engineering methods (please refer to the attached course proposal). The goal of the course is to provide an overview of the material so that it will be useable by graduate students in empirical research, particularly as part of their dissertation research.

Given the variety of graduate students who might wish to take this course, particularly those from other disciplines, a suggestion was made to change the wording of the course’s pre-requisite to read, “CMSC 434 or 435 or related to students’ course of study”. It was felt that this statement was more specific and clearer than saying, “…or related area of study”. A motion to change the wording was made and seconded with all those attending the meeting in favor of the revision.

Larry adjourned the meeting at 2:40pm and he reminded faculty members that a reception would follow in room 3450 with a demo of the room’s technical capabilities.