Education Meeting Minutes  
Friday, September 7, 2007

The meeting was convened by Larry Davis at 2:05pm. Opening comments included the following:

- Carl Kingsford, the newest Assistant Professor, was welcomed to the department. Carl began his appointment in July but this was the first gathering of faculty members since he began.

- Larry reminded everyone that the dinner in honor of Vic Basili and Marv Zelkowitz will be held on Friday, October 5. If you have plans to attend, please register by September 14. We must provide a headcount and have foundation checks cut to cover expenses.

- The Symposium on Software Engineering will be held on Saturday, October 6. Please encourage your graduate students to attend and register by September 21. There is now a link from the department’s web site listed under “Announcements”. The agenda is posted and registration is free but needed so that we know who will be attending and can plan accordingly.

- The Graduate Office has finally completed the TA assignments for the fall semester. It was a bit difficult this year due to late changes from TA to GRA positions. Samir and Jenny were able to accommodate most of the requests but faculty are asked to be more aware of the deadlines for such changes. Too much time was spent too late in the process trying to cover all of the classes and this isn’t good for the course instructor or TAs involved. Once beyond the deadline, the graduate office has the right to refuse to make last minute changes to be prepared in the future should you make such a request late in the process.

- Faculty recruitment will consist of the CBCB Asst Professor position that was not filled this past year; the Minker Professorship; and an Asst Professor for Natural Language Processing. This last position will initially replace Bonnie Dorr who will be taking a director’s position at the Center for Excellence, a government funded agency.

Larry then turned the meeting over to Jim Purtilo who presented the first three topics:

Assign regular course number for “Bits and bytes” course, a 1-credit orientation for CS majors. This has been previously taught as CMSC 298B, and the proposal is for the course to be listed as CMSC 100. The description can be found at: http://doubletap.cs.umd.edu/100desc.pdf The course is meant to help improve student retention and acclimate students to campus and department opportunities. Programs such as honors courses and the gemstone program are covered. A vote was taken to change the course number as proposed. There was unanimous agreement by the members.
Assign regular course number for “Introduction to computer programming via the web”, a Javascript course for non-majors. Previously taught as CMSC 198N, and the proposal is for the course to be listed as CMSC 122. The generic syllabus can be found at: http://doubletap.cs.umd.edu/122syl.pdf This course has been taught chiefly as a service course for campus. Now that the department has fewer majors, it can fulfill such requests from the administration to teach such courses. A vote was taken to change the course number as proposed. There was unanimous agreement by the members.

Update CMSC 102 description plus submit for CORE approval. Modified syllabus plus CORE description can be found at: http://doubletap.cs.umd.edu/102syl.pdf and http://doubletap.cs.umd.edu/102prop.pdf. Although this was listed as only a discussion topic, it was decided that a vote could be taken so that field committees would not need to be contacted in the future. Jim clarified that the course was primarily for non-majors. Without CORE approval, the course will be less valuable for students since it would not count towards their core requirements. The course provides practical information on how this subject matter can be applied/used in the students’ majors. A vote was taken and approved to update the course description and submit it for CORE approval.

The next three topics were presented by Samir Khuller:

4. Ph.D. course distribution (refer to the attached document for details of two proposed plans) Both of the proposed plans are only a stop-gap temporary fix to adjust program requirements to allow credit for CompBio Courses. Currently, graduate students must take 7 courses in at least 5 different areas with an upper bound of 2 courses in an area. Since CompBio courses have been offered as either AI or Theory, this has created a problem for AI and Theory students since they can not use the CompBio class to satisfy requirements if they have already taken 2 courses in those areas. Two plans were proposed. Although neither plan was considered to be an ideal fix, a straw poll of the members showed that more were willing to live with Plan A vs. Plan B. Plan A was seen as a more uniform approach to solving the immediate problem; however, it was also noted that it negated course “breathe”. A vote was taken and the majority of members were in favor of adopting Plan A.

The M.S. program was the next topic to be discussed. Samir asked for feedback on masters students, how they were doing, could faculty tell the difference in their classes between the M.S. and Ph.D. students, did faculty want the M.S. program to continue and should it grow. There was general discussion among the members. It was felt to be too early to evaluate the program and it was suggested that this be discussed during the graduate student review day in the spring. More information needs to be gathered by the graduate office and students in the program should be surveyed. Samir emphasized that admissions standards for the M.S. students were lower than the Ph.D. students. M.S. students can not automatically switch to the Ph.D. program.
Hanan made a suggestion that during the fall orientation M.S. and Ph.D students should be made known to faculty so that they will know who their audience is and this will help in presenting information.

5. The last topic was one whose discussion goes back to the last retreat. A revised proposal regarding graduate program requirements was presented (see attached document for details of the proposal). The campus and the college dean are very concerned about the average ‘time to degree’. There are few CS students who finish their Ph.D. program in or under 6 years. On average, most students are taking 7 years to graduate. One possibility is to establish an expectation of when students should be able to advance to candidacy. Princeton uses 2.5 years and Hopkins 3 years as their limits.

The first part of the proposal outlines an expectation that students by the end of their 3\textsuperscript{rd} year must pass a reading list exam. It further describes the committee’s composition, the process for scheduling the exam, and the selection of the papers that will be reviewed. It was pointed out that the term ‘sub-areas’ requires definition and some members questioned if 30 papers were too many to expect a student to cover for the exam.

Larry proposed the following modification:

- Field committees should establish area reading lists (depending on the committee more than one list might be appropriate) which are not specific to a particular student. The lists could include both ‘classic’ and more current topical papers. The graduate program chair should select the committee members vs. having students do so. The student’s advisor may or may not be present during the exam. The Reading List exam committee would not necessarily be the same members as those for the dissertation committee. There were a lot of questions and discussion flowed.

The second portion of the proposal had to do with specific course requirements…which courses could be taken from what areas, and the number of A’s that students must achieve in designated areas. The proposal could be refined to read that students must take 7 courses and receive at least 4 A’s . The proposal will be presented for a vote at the November meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:40pm.