

Education Meeting Minutes Friday, February 1, 2013

The meeting was convened at 2:05pm.

Jeff Foster addressed the first topic, "Should the fall research seminar series be continued, and, if so, should it be required for all graduate students in the future?" Jeff summarized the course content this past fall which included 12 faculty talks, 5 from Distinguished Lecturers and 7 CS professors who presented talks on their research. Jeff had asked students to perform tasks with one example being to send him one idea which might be good for a student's research. They were also asked to complete a course evaluation. Tasks were not onerous. The course was listed as CMSC 798E.

Overall course evaluations showed:

2/3rds of the students said they learned a lot
1/3rd said the course was not intellectually challenging

Students named their favorite talk, all of which varied. No one indicated that there was a bad talk but some indicated their least favorite talks.

Personally, Jeff does not believe the course should be required; however, the course should be recommended. Suggest changes by the students include the following:

1. Slides should be provide in advance of the course session
2. Talks should be provided by CS professors and not Distinguished Lecturers since students will attend those talks if interested.
3. Each session should have reserved time for questions towards the end of the talk.
4. Record talks so that if a session is missed, the talk can be viewed on a student's own time.
5. The course should not have assignments
6. Only students who do not know what area they want to go into should attend the course.

There was general discussion about the above information. Some faculty members felt the course should be required and all Ph.D. students should attend each fall semester. Other faculty mentioned some potential difficulties in covering the course should it be required. There is no way to force student to listen/pay attention during course sessions, so what value is there to "require" that all students attend. A suggestion was made to tract certain data points and review the issue of "optional" vs. "mandatory" in the future.

The students who dropped the course should be asked why they did so. Initially, 34 students were registered. There was also a suggestion to combine this course and "how to conduct research. Jeff said that the courses are very different based on content and objective. All Ph.D. students are required to take the how to conduct research course.

It was agreed that the topic would be revisited in fall 2013.

Alan Sussman then began the discussion on “Undergraduate Course Prerequisites”. He announced that should faculty check on-line course prerequisites, faculty should be aware that the Registrar’s Office had incorrectly listed the information.

The issue that Alan raised was that some students were requesting to take 400 level courses when they had not yet passed 300 level courses. If CS advisors were not granting students permission, the students would go to the Dean’s Office and obtain an exemption. There have been some changes in the Dean’s Office personnel and the situation is better than a year or so ago. Alan asked professors to look at the 400 level classes that they might teach and determine if they are comfortable with the correct listed prerequisites. Alan would appreciate letting him know if they see problems.

A student pointed-out that if a student failed CMSC 330 and/or 351, there might not be any further courses that one could register for if permission was not given to take 400 level courses. This would then put a student at least one year behind for graduation.

A suggestion was made to limit the number of 400 level classes that a student could take if the student had not passed CMNS 330 and 351. There could be some 400 level courses which could be taken successfully without the knowledge imparted in 330 and 351.

A second suggestion was made that CMSC 451 have only CMSC 351 as a prerequisite, and CMSC 433 have only CMSC 330 as a prerequisite with all other 400 level courses having both CMSC 351 and 330 as prerequisites.

A suggestion was made to ask the undergraduate office to make recommendations by fall 2013 reference this problem and present the recommendations at a fall 2013 meeting. It would be important to collect data on the type and frequency of problems. Alan agreed to review options and discuss this next fall.

Because Aravind Srinivasan could not attend this meeting, the third topic, “Amrita University Proposal” was not discussed.

The meeting was adjourned at 3pm.