Department Council Minutes  
Friday, April 9, 2010  

The meeting was convened by Larry Davis at 12:15pm. Larry began by discussing a new initiative on Cyber Security which is gaining momentum on campus. Whether a center or new institute is formed will be determined by campus administration. A joint proposal between CS/UMIACS and ECE/ISR will be submitted shortly and the Deans of both colleges are supporting the initiative. There is a chance that Federal funds might be made available to support this initiative, so its size and scope is yet to be determined. The intent is that it will have both research and educational components with UG and Graduate course development, workshops focused on industry needs, short courses, TA positions, fellowship funding etc which will help to generate additional income that could be used to off-set some professorial salaries and TA expenses.

Larry has asked several professors to recommend people who might be asked to visit next fall, meet with faculty and give talks as part of a special colloquium series on cyber security. These visitors might also be considered for the Director’s position of the center/institute.

The department has asked for funds, as part of our reallocation plan, to support two new professors in cyber security and would like additional funding provided to cover TA positions and fellowships in this specialty area.

The department is preparing for a 2% hard cut and a 2% soft cut to its budget for next fiscal year. Total dollars (4%) equate to approximately $233.5K. We have lowered costs on the state budget primarily through lay-offs and retirements of staff members but we can not continue to do so and still have work completed. Thus far, the educational area has not been touched since this is the last type of cut one would want to make but Larry will be forming a committee to look at the educational component of the department with the thought that future budget cuts are still possible next fiscal year. The following areas to be discussed are:

1. The number of TAs and UG TAs and how they are used  
2. Review the number of lecturer positions in light of additional professorial hires  
3. Consider holding larger course lectures with additional discussion groups offered.

Larry has also asked Howard to generate a draft plan to increase the number of M.S. students that enter the program with the objective of generating additional tuition revenue, some of which should be returned to the department. ECE has an agreement with campus that does generate additional income for the department and CS would want to model a new program along those lines. It may be possible to get a return of $70K to $120K on such an M.S. program. An assumption would be that the students would need to have sufficiently strong backgrounds so that they could take courses along with Ph.D. students.
Another area to be reviewed for cost savings is computer support and the CALF system. The system costs approximately $90K to operate (admin staff person’s salary and benefits). The funds paid by the department to the CALF system, the director’s salary paid on the state budget, and additional funds to cover recent deficits amounts to approx $260K with research and discretionary funds from professors generating approx $324K.

There are 3 computer support staff members and 1 admin staff member covered on CALF (salaries and benefits). Paper/toner, licenses, software purchases, maintenance agreements are also charged to CALF but the account has not, in recent years, been generating sufficient income to cover replacement equipment costs. The department has also been paying for required equipment purchases/upgrades. Thus, the following ideas should be considered during a review:

1. Merge the CS and UMIACS computer staffs. However, CS would still need to contribute some funds towards a laboratory manager’s salary/admin expenses. It may be more cost effective not to merge the staffs.
2. Consider the need for fewer regular computer staff positions which might be supplemented by UG student hourly employees.
3. Consider dropping the CALF system and the need for an administrative support position

The department has increasingly been asked to justify the CALF system during the past year and there is some concern that it might not be approved under audit which would have a very negative impact on the department.

It is also possible that the department should focus more on generating funds, one possibility being, the teaching of more summer courses. A point was made that the rate paid to GRAs for teaching a summer course is lower than what the department pays GRAs during the summer or what they can make during a summer internship. The department can try to get the rate increased by Summer Programs which might attract additional graduate students to teaching during summer months.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:05pm.