Education Committee Meeting  
Friday, November 1, 2013

The meeting was convened at 2:20pm by Samir Khuller who introduced Dean Jenny Preece and Susan Winters, both from the iSchool. (see attached agenda)

Dean Preece gave an overview of the Information Science Degree program that the iSchool is proposing be taught at the Shady Grove Campus (see attached document for details).

Initially, Dean Preece and Prof. Larry Davis attended a meeting approximately two years ago to discuss the possibility of teaching classes at Shady Grove. The Consortium for Shady Grove was interested in developing a CS degree. Larry had discussed this with CS faculty who were not sufficiently interested at the time due, in large part, to the limited resources to conduct teaching at another facility and the distance of the Shady Grove Campus from the College Park Campus was also mentioned by some faculty members as a deterrent.

Dean Preece pursued the development of a program to be taught at Shady Grove. It is believed that students from Montgomery College and business personnel located along the 270 corridor will be attracted to the degree program. Businesses have asked for a program to train their employees who deal with large amounts of information/data management. An Articulation Agreement is being developed between Montgomery College and the iSchool. Additional agreements may be developed with other two year colleges in the future. The purpose of this presentation was to make CS faculty aware of the program and to solicit suggestions as well as to welcome comments or questions that anyone had.

Dean Preece turned the discussion over to Susan Winters who summarized the information contained in the attached document. The timeline on the program is:

1. Gain approval this year from campus
2. Appoint a Director and Coordinator for the program
3. Begin teaching Fall 2015

The program is an undergraduate version of the iSchool’s M.S. in Information Management. The program is being built to handle 80 – 100 students in the last two years of their undergraduate degrees. It is hoped that the accepted students will have had some basic CS course work. The degree will be in Information Science with a Data Science Specialization. Depending on the success of this program, additional programs in others areas will be considered. It was noted that students at Shady Grove can take one course per semester at the College Park Campus. There is a shuttle service from campus that transports students and faculty who are teaching at the Shady Grove Campus to help with transportation logistics. Students will only be accepted into the program who begin in the fall of each year. Should the program become too popular, there is a mechanism by which the iSchool faculty can vote to suspend admissions.
Classroom space at Shady Grove is sufficient but office space is limited. Although faculty are not expected to remain at Shady Grove, offices are needed for student advising and for a place to leave teaching information.

The second topic on undergraduate benchmarks (see attached document for details) was presented by Brandi Adams. The CMNS Dean’s Office asked that the department make some changes to the current set of benchmarks. In the past, the campus did not want benchmarks developed which would have too stringent consequences for students who did not meet the necessary benchmarks. The current administration seems to be pressing for stronger benchmarks, which may be a reaction to the department’s previously requested limited enrollment major. Brandi summarized the proposed changes and stressed that the CS undergraduate office will be careful when advising students so that the students do not see themselves as failures. Student will not be automatically released from the major for not meeting initial benchmarks. However, failure to meet benchmarks will have some consequences, such as the need for students to meet with college personnel.

Reviewing some data points, out of 149 students, 39 did not meet the first benchmark but about 59% did succeed. Benchmarks are seen as a way to define expectations:

1. There are fewer habitually low performers
2. Students who would fall in the middle/average group of students do seem to be doing better in their course work.

Concern was voiced that these benchmarks will be a disaster. If a student is called into the Dean’s Office, there is a strong likelihood that the student will drop out of the major. Dropping the general education requirements in the benchmarks may cause women to drop out of the major, especially if they have non-traditional backgrounds.

The response was that Alan Sussman or Samir respond to the college with the sentiment that the CS faculty like the current set of benchmarks vs. those purposed. The concern is that the revised set of benchmarks will hurt under-represented student groups.

It was noted that computer science is the largest technical major on campus with no barrier for student recruitment/admissions numbers.

The meeting was adjourned at 3pm.