March 12, 2004

Education Committee Meeting Minutes

Larry Davis convened the meting on Friday, March 12 at 1:30pm.

1. The first topic of discussion was the rationale and the number of credits that graduate students should be asked to register for CMSC 899. The University has a Workload Report that must be completed on each teaching faculty member. Since tenure and tenure-track faculty are only required to teach one course per semester, it is possible for individual faculty members to show up on the report as being under the campus load requirement. Although administrative and research functions have some weight on the report, the calculations used by the campus administration are fixed so it is important that the appropriate amount of credit is given to faculty when they are "advising students". In addition, the department does not have a standard as to when graduate students should be registering for CMSC 899 vs. an independent study project. Some graduate students register for CMSC 899 during their reading stage while others do so once they have been admitted to candidacy.

Following the conclusion of the discussion, Larry asked that graduate students be encouraged to register for at least 3 credits of CMSC 899 vs. independent study. If each faculty member shows that they are advising students with a total of at least 6 credits per academic year, this should alleviate the problem that we have experienced with the Workload Report by giving sufficient credit to faculty members. Remember: 899 counts MUCH MORE than an independent study 818.

2. Shankar opened the discussion of the second agenda topic. He asked faculty members what information would be helpful to have on the department's web page regarding grade guidelines, advisor expectations etc.

Shankar explained that the Graduate Director, based on the student's interest, assigns a Gradate Student to an advisor. The Director also takes into consideration the faculty member who contacted the student during the admissions process. Students use to be required to see their advisor for sign off on their program of study. This requirement was dropped several years ago when the students began to register on-line. It had also been a problem for students getting the signature of the advisors since they often were not available when classes were starting.

Following the discussion on advisor assignments it was agreed that a list of all graduate students and assigned advisors would be posted to a department web site. This list will be updated at least once per year. Email messages will be sent to faculty members when changes are made to the student /advisor assignments.

It was clear that the department did not have a set standard or goal ref. grade distribution for graduate courses. One of the graduate student representatives stated that students go to a web site, "pickaprof" which is used by many to determine what courses they will take given the distribution of "A's" by faculty members. A suggestion was made that it would be helpful if the graduate office would compile a list by semester of courses and grades. There was an objection raised. It was felt that the department should not try to legislate grades and that often once information is collected, it is used to develop a policy for those teaching.

There was no resolution as to whether information would be compiled by the Graduate Office and distributed to faculty members.

3. Samir updated the committee on the PCC process regarding the proposed changes to the Ph.D. program. The PCC committee had met the prior week and the changes were accepted.

4. Howard Elman updated the committee on the subject of the Scientific Computing Certificate. The members of the subcommittee had met and Pete Stewart reworked the proposed curriculum. This information was distributed during the Education Committee meeting. The curriculum reflects a combination of CMSC 311 and 330 topics. The intent was to aim for a broader curriculum that would combine hardware and software topics. The course will be listed as CMSC 462 and since it is an experimental course, it will need to be evaluated as to its success. It is possible that it might fulfill the needs of the department for a future "service course". There was a brief discussion regarding the course contents and then a vote was taken regarding the curriculum's acceptance. The vote was unanimous in favor of the proposed curriculum.

5. The last topic reflected unfinished business from the faculty retreat on "the Upper Division Program". Larry stated that this topic would be revisited in the fall'04. During the remaining months a proposal will be developed so that any proposed changes can be presented to the PCC next academic year.

Larry asked Bill Pugh to briefly outline the proposal for additional instructional computing support in the department. Larry also said that the Dean had committed $15K towards the purchase of lap top computers, so that students can jointly work on computer assignments during discussion periods and benefit from TA supervision. Bill mentioned that there were other components of the proposal that needed to be addressed by the department. Larry mentioned that the department lab committee would be meeting within the next week to review this proposal in full and any other computing requirements needed for the next year. A ranked order of importance will be made and he will determine what costs the department can afford to cover and what items must be referred to the Dean for additional funding and final approval.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:15pm.