

October 1, 2004

### Education Committee Minutes

The first meeting of the Education Committee for this academic year was convened by Larry Davis on Friday, October 1, 2004 at 2pm. Larry reviewed two topics discussed with members of the Department Council.

1. There has been an ongoing problem with the switching of TAs and GRAs up until the start of classes and sometimes beyond. This creates problems for those teaching, for the students involved, and for the payroll process. Although there have been decision deadlines in the past, the deadlines have not been rigorously enforced. The committee discussed the issues involved and felt that the deadline should be enforced but that there should be an escape clause so that under exceptional circumstances a change can be made beyond the deadline. It is also important that information from faculty members on TAs that they wish to employ be sent to Heather/Samir. This is not being done in a uniform manner and consequently, there is confusion regarding a student's correct title (TA or GRA). **The dates for submission of information to the Graduate Office are July 15 for the fall semester and Nov. 15 for the spring semester. There will be few exceptions but if a faculty member decides to request an exception, please submit your rationale to Samir.** When a faculty member realizes that their research funds will not cover the costs of employing a GRA into the next semester, please notify Heather/Samir so that the student can be considered for a TA position if there are any available.
2. The Department has followed a system using Field Committees to determine a variety of matters including what courses are offered and who teaches them. The Chair of the field committee has changed each year on a rotating basis. Larry feels that this has not been uniformly successful and that in the future the Department Chair will make three year assignments regarding the Chairs for each of the committees. Larry will limit these assignments to tenured faculty members. The committee agreed on the need to do this and indicated that there is a need to define the responsibilities of the Field Committee Chairs as well as list a time schedule of when information is due and where it should be sent.

The meeting was then turned over to Bill Gasarch to discuss proposed course number changes for two, one credit courses, "How to do Research: Areas" and "How to do Research: Nuts and Bolts". There was a broad discussion of the courses, their value, whether they should be combined into one course, changing course/s numbers etc. It was decided that the two courses would be combined, a new proposal written and presented at the next meeting. The course number will be CMSC 696 and the students who took the

course last year should be contacted to determine how effective and useful the course was to the students.

Bill Gasarch then discussed his request to renumber CMSC 858G, "Complexity Theory". The Theory group plans to offer this course every two years and wants graduate students to recognize it as a course that will count towards their degrees. The course number was changed to CMSC 652. A motion to accept the course was made and seconded. The vote was unanimous in favor of adding it to the list of graduate course offerings.

Don Perlis proposed a change to CMSC 351 from a 3 credit to a 4 credit course. Discussion involved the need to look at similar courses and determine if they too should be changed. Department resources also need to be considered - both the availability of additional TAs to teach a longer course as well as the financial costs associated with such a change (estimated at \$50K per semester). Members suggested that the Department should look at how TAs are being used and perhaps their time could be redirected to covering different types of assignments. The decision was made to table further discussion of this proposal and that Larry Davis should request that a projection of student numbers and number of TAs three to four years out should be conducted. The situation should be assessed and a determination made if Department resources can be redistributed.

Samir Khuller was then given the floor. His intent was to raise peoples' awareness of several different issues affecting the graduate program.

1. There was discussion about creating additional MW teaching slots as well as more single 3 hour slots. Although possible, there is some difficulty with room scheduling and TA schedules since discussion sections are often held on MW. It may be possible to schedule a few three hour classes on Fridays or other days. There was also a question ref. teaching classes at 5pm or later and the faculty member was told that this is possible.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> It was discovered, after the meeting, that this issue had been discussed several years ago and on the basis of that discussion the following email was sent to faculty:

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Date: Tue, 30 Oct 2001 10:23:55 -0500
From: "Davis, Larry" <lsd@cs.umd.edu>
To: Faculty <faculty@cs.umd.edu>
Cc: "Kaye, Gwen" <gwen@cs.umd.edu>
Subject: Course scheduling
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We are in the process of scheduling courses for Fall 2002 and wanted to inform everyone of our scheduling policy with respect to three hour classes which meet one day a week:

1. No undergraduate courses will be scheduled "one-day-a-week" except after 4:00pm.
2. "One-day-a-week" graduate courses will be scheduled after 4:00pm Monday through Thursday or anytime on Friday so that they do not grossly interfere with the scheduling of teaching assistants to other courses.

2. Faculty members were told that it is now possible for seminars to be scheduled with students receiving credit. It was not possible in the old system.
3. There is also a need for faculty members to realize that MS comps must be an exam and not a project. This is required by the Graduate School.
4. There was discussion ref. the use of the FFL as a mechanism to review students' talks who will be graduating later in the year. Although not all faculty were in favor of this, the majority seemed to agree that this should move forward. Amitabh Varshney will coordinate with the faculty FFL coordinators to schedule students for talks.
5. The Department needs a way to collect information on graduating graduate students. Jeff Foster mentioned that he had what was called an "exit interview" which asked such questions as where he would be employed etc. He was required to turn this in to the graduate office before they would sign-off on his graduation.
6. Samir mentioned that faculty should encourage their students to apply early for travel funds. The students should not wait until two weeks prior to the trip as funds may not be available. First year graduate student who want to attend a conference will be considered for funds. Students beyond their first year must be giving a talk/presenting a paper at a conference to be considered for funding.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:20pm

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