

Education Meeting Minutes Friday, October 4, 2019

The meeting was convened at 3:00pm.

According to the by-laws, there must be a quorum for voting, this means at least half of the members who are not on sabbatical or leave of absence must be present. 34 people were needed to meet quorum. Quorum was not met as there were only 31 people present at the meeting.

1. Update Computer Requirements: Golub presented the proposal to [update computer requirements for CS majors](#) to specifically say laptops so that parents/students don't buy desktops. We should expect students to have a laptop if they are majors, but keep in mind that more non-majors will take CMSC131 and CMSC132. This proposal outline was sent via email prior to the meeting.

In CMSC131 and 132, there are several coding activities in which students need to complete on the computer. In CMSC216, there are also activities to do online. Additionally, there are no workstations in the TA rooms for students to use during TA office hours. A laptop would be helpful to students in this scenario for TAs to review their code.

The CS Department has laptop carts. However, there are only 4 carts, and each cart only has 6 laptops. The carts are housed in IRB and CSIC. These carts are used in the discussion sections. The question was raised to find out to what extent the department maintains the laptop cart. Currently, instructors of CMSC131 and 132 coordinate to see who will be using laptop carts, and TAs maneuver to provide students the laptop.

A survey was administered to incoming students on laptop ownership. 827 surveyed have a laptop, 11 don't, and 8 are in the process of getting one. The question was posed in the meeting if the department should require all majors to have laptops. Plane shared that even though the number of students who don't have laptops is small, there are some who do not have access to a laptop to bring to class at all. Neuner mentioned the impact this will have on students from low socioeconomic status, as they may be put at a disadvantage. Another issue was raised to consider accessibility issues if the department requires all students to take their laptops everywhere.

The question was raised if making laptops a course requirement could help students use their financial aid package to purchase a laptop. Plane explained that at Naval Academy they require laptops, but they must buy it at the specific bookstore, then can use financial assistance.

Filippou shared that this might be a good opportunity to recommend affordable laptops for students and perhaps there is a possibility to work with companies to recommend laptops.

Currently, the Terp Store will replace any lost or damaged laptops that were bought from their store. Filippou and Golub will investigate these options further.

The committee concluded that we will update the website to include recommended reasons for students to buy a laptop, and still leave desktop as an option. No votes were taken on this proposal.

2. Change requirements to decouple CMSC216 and CMSC250: Hicks presented the proposal to decouple 216 and 250, so they are not corequisites. This proposal outline was sent via email prior to the meeting.

For CMSC216, CMSC250 is listed as a corequisite. However, for CMSC250, CMSC216 is not listed as a corequisite. If students wanted to take 216 or 250 over the summer (e.g., following a passing grade of 132 in the Spring), they would either be forced to take both classes, or just 250; they could not take just 216. And yet, doing 216 over the summer might be a smart option (compared to the regular semester) since it's very coding intensive and thus maybe a good idea to take it on its own, with no other classes.

Historically, it was to ensure that students take the 200's first. The coupling of courses prevented people from putting off CMSC250. However, that is no longer possible as CMSC216/250 are prerequisites for CMSC330/351. Decoupling the two will allow students the opportunity to take them apart if they choose. However, the advising team will ensure the recommended path is communicated to students.

There were no objections to decoupling CMSC216 and CMSC250. A vote will be taken at the next meeting.

3. Limit CMSC upper level elective credits: Hicks presented the proposal to limit elective credits to only allow one CMSC499A and to limit elective credits to at most 3 credits of CMSC388/389X courses. This proposal outline was sent via email prior to the meeting.

Currently, our curriculum proposal doesn't officially state there is a limit of 3 credits for CMSC499A. Hicks proposed that we make what is on the webpage consistent with official curriculum documents.

There were no objections to updating the credit limit for CMSC upper level elective requirement. No votes were taken for this proposal.

4. Re-consider approach to granting permission for 400-level courses: Pimpawathin presented the proposal. Data was presented from [1908 course requests from non-majors](#). This proposal outline was sent via email prior to the meeting.

Right now, the course permission process for all 400 level courses is as follows:

- Undergrad CS and CE students, grad CS students get first pick at courses at the time of registration - grad students get permission from Hurst.
- All non-majors fill out a form to request courses and are granted permission on or around the first day of the semester. Undergrads must meet prereqs, and grad students take the course at their own risk. The undergrad office administers the stamps.

There have been several non-CS graduate students who are requesting to take CMSC4xx courses but are unprepared for the course because they do not have the appropriate background. This also poses an issue with scheduling as these students are filling up the seats and leaving fewer seats for CS undergraduates.

CS graduate students can use CMSC4xx courses to satisfy their degree requirements. Lin pointed out that CS undergraduate and graduate students should receive the same treatment in accessing courses.

The committee discussed if the department should change the policy on how CMSC4xx courses are approved for non-CS graduate students. Rather than granting blanket permission, non-CS students should be required to get the instructor's permission to take the course. There was a discussion of including a written assessment as part of the permission request process, whereas people who don't do well on the assessment will not be able to take the course. This will be especially helpful to assess the students who do not have the appropriate background for the course.

[Data was presented on how many non-CS](#) students are enrolled in CMSC4xx courses in 1908 and on how many of the professional master's students are getting the 400-level courses. For CMSC422, there were 15 students ENPM students. These are engineering students who are taking CMSC422. Lin was able to secure a financial agreement with engineering where they have agreed to pay CS for every single student that is enrolled in CMSC courses.

The committee concluded that non-CS graduate students will have to request permission from the instructor to take a CMSC4xx course. Further discussion and vote will occur during the next meeting.

5. Codify the informal rules for grad committees: Duraiswami presented the proposal on [graduate committee requirements](#). Specifically, on how external members are decided/approved, and what percentage of a committee must be CS faculty. Both are informal/unwritten right now, and the result is a bit of wasted work (and frustration) for students and CS faculty. This proposal outline was sent via email prior to the meeting.

What requirements are expected for someone to be on a graduate committee? We need to consider the CS rules vs. graduate program rules.

Background: There were two issues to which some of our senior faculty complained about.

- Perceived committee packing: Where the majority of the committee was involved in the research (e.g., two advisors and a research scientist/junior mentor at a company where the student worked)
- Too many non-UMD CS members.

In these cases, the Grad Chair worked with the student and the committee chair and anonymously conveyed the feedback. This led to a reconstituted committee (usually by adding an extra local member). The current rules make this clear to students.

Graduate level rule is that 2 out of 5 must be CS. Currently, faculty must be involved to evaluate the qualification of external members. If one person objects, the graduate chair is responsible for resolving the dispute and deciding. The committee discussed that the policy should be clearly stated, for example: 2 CS, 2 external, 1 dean representative required. It was also suggested that it should be written down explicitly what the minimum requirements are for external member qualification.

The committee decided that they will continue this discussion at the next meeting. Duraiswami, Mazurek, and Jacobs will come up with a minimum requirement list for the qualification of external members.

6. STICs taught by grad students: Hicks presented the proposal regarding grad students teaching STICs. This proposal outline was sent via email prior to the meeting.

STICs taught by grad students cost a lot, so is it worth it for us to allow them to offer these courses? Undergraduates are paid an hourly rate while graduate students are paid a stipend in Tuition. Graduate students' TA rate costs 2x more than undergraduate students. The department is not allowed to pay graduate students hourly rates. CS is the only department that pays STIC student teachers TA rate. We are also unique to allow STIC courses to count towards graduation requirements.

Should the department have a policy on who teaches STIC courses given the cost differences? Grad students only get TA positions for 2 years. Undergraduates benefit from getting experience teaching a STIC course and the students benefit from learning from their peers. STIC courses are good for the student teaching/learning experience but on the other hand, there are budget considerations.

The committee discussed several ideas:

- To have a fixed number of grad-led STIC course (have a ceiling on it)
- 2 undergrad teachers vs. 1 grad teacher for a STIC course
- Graduates students can teach 1 or 2 STIC courses to fulfill their TA position (half time vs. full time)

The committee decided to monitor the progress of STIC courses, and they will review this topic again if the number of graduate TAs teaching STICs and/or budget constraints increase.

7. Change TA allocation policy: Hicks and Hurst presented this proposal. This proposal outline was sent via email prior to the meeting.

Change to 40 students = 1 (grad, full-time) TA, for 400-700-level classes.
Policy stays as is for 100-300 level, and 800-level classes

The committee did not discuss this proposal. The discussion was postponed until the next meeting.

8. Discussion of teaching evaluation strategy: Mount presented the proposal. This proposal outline was sent via email prior to the meeting.

[Student evaluations](#) are suspect. Peer evaluations should be better/helpful. What should we do? Why should we care? We need a more rigorous process than we have right now.

Some resources:

- <https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/teaching-portfolios/>
- <https://tltc.umd.edu/teaching-portfolio-workshops-retreats>

Proposal: An empowered committee would evaluate teaching performance in conjunction with learning assessment because ultimately, the learning is what teaching tactics are about. For example: Potentially what we need are two teams - one for coaches to act as a resource, the second to be the evaluators. We would also vet CourseEvalUM data for everyone, so we have perspective, not just select data. We would offer coaching as a service, and we would be able to flag instructors for teaching awards (not wait for students to nominate based on popularity so the admin committee can choose based on popularity).

Mount and Hicks are currently serving as chairs of teaching evaluations. The committee discussed to what extent peer evaluations are used for rank, pay increase, faculty promotion, and reappointments. For evaluations, sometimes there is trouble having enough people and those who do it in a timely fashion.

Mount pointed out the need to vamp up the training and support of assistant professors and instructional faculty and then to evaluate appropriately.

The committee discussed a few ideas:

- Co-teaching a course with a senior faculty. Senior faculty would sit in on new faculty sections and vice versa and work closely together. If we want to help people get better, we need to spend more time with them.
- Creating a teaching portfolio. A list of examples to include would be student work, syllabus, alum feedback. Cultivate portfolio just as you would CV. This could encourage good behavior.

No votes were taken on this proposal.

9. STIC course code listing: Hicks presented the proposal. This proposal outline was sent via email prior to the meeting.

Proposal: Update the course name of STIC courses to say, "Special Topics in Computer Science Student Initiated Courses; Course Name " in place of what is there now, which is shown below: CMSC389C example. Currently, it is not clear from the course name that it is a STIC course but rather explains it after.

CMSC389C Special Topics in Computer Science; Bitcoin and Other Cryptocurrencies ▶ Syllabus Repository ☆

(Perm Req) Credits: 1 Grading Method: Regular

Prerequisites: CMSC216 and CMSC250 with a grade of C- or better; and permission of the Computer Science Department. This course provides a comprehensive, practical introduction to the technology behind cryptocour ency and the economy surrounding it. This course will have a heavy emphasis on Bitcoin, but will dive into other types of cryptocurrency as well, such as Ethereum. This course is primarily intended to focus on the technological aspect of cryptocurrency, but we will also spend time discussing the economics of cryptocurrency.

A student-led course through Student-Initiated Courses (STICs) @ UMD: <http://stics.umd.edu/> Please click here for more information.

▼ Hide Sections

0101	Jonathan Katz F 12:00pm - 12:50pm	Seats (Total: 30, Open: 7, Waitlist: 0) CSI 2118	
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The updated STIC course name can be modeled after BSCI, e.g., BSCI238A.

BSCI238A Special Topics in Biology Student Initiated Courses; Ornithology
Credits: 1 Grading Method: Regular

The committee will review this topic during the next meeting to see if it requires an official vote to pass.

10. Scheduling policy for IRB conference rooms: Hicks and Keleher led this discussion.

Can we schedule classes in IRB conference rooms? What should the policy be? When we were in AVW, we would sometimes have grad seminars or one-day-per-week classes in AVW 4172 or AVW 3258. CS controlled the scheduling of those rooms. Have things changed in IRB?

The conference rooms are shared by CS/UMAICS and other departments have access to book the conference rooms. In IRB, there are thirteen moderated conference rooms of varying sizes.

Of these, two can accommodate 30 people and one can accommodate 48 people. The current policy is that people can't schedule repeating events/meetings to allow others access to the room. Also, no regular course activities can take place in the conference rooms. TA group meetings are okay for conference room reservations, but not TA office hours (on a repeating basis). Currently, the moderators don't allow long-standing courses to be scheduled in the conference rooms. In the future, the plan is to start charging campus for conference room usage.

No action was taken on this discussion.

The meeting ended at 4:30 PM.