Education Communication Meeting Minutes
Friday, March 6, 2020

The meeting was convened at 3:00 pm.

According to the by-laws, there must be a quorum for voting, which 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 taken at this meeting.

1. TA Training: Mount conducted a review of TA Training and discussed the enhancement of training for the upcoming Fall 2020 semester. TAs in the fall will be required to have a two-hour mandatory training session in teaching. This includes basic information and scenarios/role-playing student conflicts. An artificial (testing) course in ELMS was created to conduct the training.

Mount also stated the need for TAs to conduct peer TA evaluations and observations during TA office hours. In a future semester, Mount would like to create a 1-credit course to provide advanced training to TAs. This will provide more job opportunities in the future. Mount would like to also have TAs to meet weekly to discuss class issues and concerns across the board.

Mount discussed expectation and communication setting between instructors and TAs.

- Mutual expectations.
- Adhering to contracted workload amount.
- Attending required lectures.
- Provide timely responses.
- Adhere to FERPA and confidentiality policies: TAs cannot share any information regarding a student's record, and TA must keep information shared to them in private and cannot share this information with their peers, friends, or parents. Nothing can be divulged to anyone without FERPA approval.
- Adhere to Title IX mandatory reporting obligations.

Mount has received both positive and negative comments about expectation actions for TAs. Mount recommends that if any instructors have difficulties with their TAs, they can check-in with him, and he can offer advice.

Regarding student concern emails being reported in class, Mount outlined the steps to handle this situation.

- TAs should speak to the instructor first: TAs should not announce issues to the class.
- If no resolution is provided, TAs can submit instructor grievances to a confidential email "hotline."

- Emails are only being recorded for now, but in the future, Mount will use the email hotline to act on instructor/TA grievances and expand this functionality to students as well.

Duraiswami broached how to address TAs' performances, as funding is conditional to (graduate) TA performance. He asked if there was any mechanization in place for resolving issues for graduate TAs in their offer letters. Mount stated that there's a difference between graduate and undergraduate students. If an undergraduate TA is not performing to their required standard, they are not invited back as a TA. If a graduate TA is not performing to their required standard, that may cause additional issues. Mount confirmed that if there are TAs that feel they are being unfairly evaluated, the department should introduce a formal appeal process to facilitate grievances.

For TA start and end dates, Mount confirmed that TAs are required to be available for instructor assistance until semester grades are confirmed. If there are any issues with TAs requesting to leave before grades are posted, they should inform Mount of the issue. Mount informed instructors that they must abide by the dates in graduate TAs' offer letter, so instructors should ensure they are requesting the correct TA's availability. Instructors can dismiss TAs early, but they cannot hold TAs past the date on the offer letter.

The committee concluded that Mount's TA training recommendations should be enacted in future semesters. No votes were taken on this discussion.

2. BS/MS Updates: Hurst provided an update on the revised requirements for the Combined BS/MS program and the BS/MS webpage on the CS website. Hurst confirmed that the two-step process is now a single-step process. Previously, students would need to apply to UMD's Graduate school online but send Hurst the application materials to review at any time. Now students will apply to UMD's Graduate school online and submit any required application documentation with the application. Hurst will segregate our students from other applications and process their applications separately.

To apply for the Combined BS/MS program, Undergraduate CS students are required to apply to the Graduate School first.

- BS/MS students should apply for the Graduate School before the start of their senior fall semester.
- BS/MS students are not required to take the GREs.
- BS/MS students need three letters of recommendation.
- BS/MS students must maintain a cumulative 3.5 GPA to be eligible for the program.
- BS/MS students must pay the Graduate application fee.

Golub asked for clarification on the timeline for students to apply, and Hurst and Plane confirmed the department should reach out to eligible students before the *spring of their junior year* to apply for the program to meet their graduation time frame.

Plane, Hurst, Reiss, Duraiswami, and others weighed in on the timing of the application. <u>The committee declared that the new application time frame is too short for students to prepare for their last academic undergraduate year and confirm their admission to the graduate school.</u>

Duraiswami brought up the issue of equitable competition with outside applicants and the potential conflicts with internal CS students being able to secure graduate TA and other sources of funding. Hurst confirmed that this new process will work better to control the quality of undergraduate student admissions as only students recommended by faculty, instructors, or the advising department should be applying to the program.

The committee concluded that this issue will need to be reviewed in a later meeting. No votes were taken on this discussion.

3. COVID-19 Updates: Mount provided an update for plans for the CS Department to prepare for COVID-19 and a potential campus closure.

- Mount compared the University of Washington's decision to close for the rest of the semester with other institutions around the U.S. and what UMD may do after spring break.
- Mount wanted instructors to inform department leadership about key issues to consider with moving to online learning. Mount specifically focused on how instructors will present lectures and complete exams.
- Mount confirmed that department leadership is aware of issues with our students currently participating in Study Abroad programs.

Levin, Duraiswami, and Golub discussed the security of lectures and exams in an online environment. Mount mentioned measures being taken at institutions in Hong Kong. Other committee members mentioned other security protocols such as lock-down browsers, VR headset usage, and proctoring. None of the solutions proposed met the approval of the committee, and the committee confirmed exams may need to change how they are administered.

There was also a discussion regarding sanitation concerns in classrooms and during office hours and handling messaging overload via Piazza and emails. Duraiswami suggested an online queuing system, and Mount offered to create a faculty Piazza forum to discuss additional ideas.

No votes were taken on this discussion.

The meeting ended at 4:30 PM.