

**School of Computer Science
Council Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, April 28th, 2020**

1:00-2:30pm;

Zoom

Present –

Faculty: L. Antonie, D. Calvert, R. Chaturvedi, R. Dara, D. Flatla, D. Gillis, M. Gong (Director), A. Hamilton-Wright, S. Kremer, X. Lin, J. McCuaig, D. Nikitenko, C. Obimbo, J. Sawada, S. Scott, F. Song, D. Stacey, F. Wang, M. Wineberg, M. Wirth;

Staff: D. Byart, C. Hosker, J. Lange, K. Gardiner (recording secretary), J. Harwood, K. Johnston, G. Klotz;

Student Representatives: K. Rourke;

Regrets –

Faculty: A. Dehghantanha, G. Grewal, H. Khan, P. Matsakis, Y. Xiang;

Staff: A. Nejedly;

Student Representatives: J. Fraser;

1. Approval of Agenda for April 28th, 2020

Motion: That the agenda for April 28th, 2020 be approved.

(C. Obimbo, S. Scott)

In Favour: All. Abstentions: None. **MOTION PASSED**

2. Vanja Banks and Blake Helka, Research Innovation Office (See Appendix A)

- **Industry liaison activities**
- **Updates on funding programs (e.g. NSERC Alliance and OCE)**

S. Scott asked about the alliance program and if NSERC have gotten rid of their strategic projects and networks that were rolled into the alliance program. V. Banks explained that they have been rolled into the alliance grant. The upper bracket of funding for this is a million dollars, and up to five years. She noted that it would depend on the scale of the project and which partners were involved, but they are leaning towards option two (see appendix A.) V. Banks said if S. Scott had something specific in mind, they can sit down and discuss it with NSERC.

3. Announcements

M. Gong congratulated L. Antonie on being awarded an NSERC discovery grant.

L. Antonie also had a M.Sc. student recently successfully defend her thesis online, and thank you to J. Sawada for organizing the defense in the new format.

Faculty and staff members are reminded to update their out of office autoreply. There are two options for this: discontinuing an out of office reply altogether (provided one is able to respond to e-mail messages during regular business hours) or use the wording on the University's COVID update page. This can be found at <https://news.uoguelph.ca/2019-novel-coronavirus-information/>

M. Gong announced that the University has decided to provide funding supports to all eligible graduate students. Faculty are to let C. Hosker know by Wednesday, April 29 morning the level of funding their graduate students are currently receiving so that eligibility can be determined. It was also noted that the University discourages faculty members to cut funding supports that were committed to the students. If faculty decide to cut financial support to students, they will need to justify why the students are unable to complete their research remotely.

4. Approval of Minutes from April 14th, 2020

Motion: That the minute from April 14th, 2020 be approved.

(A. Hamilton-Wright, D. Flatla)

There were a few minor typos pointed out by A. Hamilton-Wright. K. Gardiner will adjust before uploading final copy to the SoCS wiki.

In Favour: All. Abstentions: None. **MOTION PASSED**

5. Business Arising from Minutes

M. Gong followed up with D. Gillis and J. McCuaig regarding the written record on permission of using faculty members' affiliation elsewhere to satisfy the PhD Computational Sciences constraint. J. McCuaig explained that her and D. Gillis are currently working on a plan for this, but due to time constraints it has not been completed.

6. Minglun Gong

- **Voting results for self-study report**

M. Gong shared that the online vote has concluded. Unfortunately, the votes between staff and faculty were mixed up, causing some confusion. In the end there were 25 votes: 24 in favour and 1 abstention. C. Hosker confirmed that 6 staff members voted, leaving 19 eligible votes for quorum. The motion is passed.

M. Gong apologized for the technical error and asked if there were any concerns on voting result. None were brought up.

- **2021-2022 cyclical program review**

M. Gong had a meeting last Wednesday with P. Tersigni, Director of Academic Programs and Policy. They discussed that normally the office of Quality Assurance begins the cyclical program review process in May, which would include the School of Computer Science. However, due to the circumstances of COVID-19, they are looking to move the start date to this to August.

There will be a kickoff meeting, usually attended by chairs and associated chairs. M Gong consulted with C. Hosker, J. Sawada, Y. Xiang, S. Scott and D. Calvert. They felt it would be better to start this process earlier due to the increase volume of the start of the fall semester. They will meet in May and then will report back to council.

- **Spring Academic Open Houses**

The Spring Academic Open Houses usually takes place during the third week of May. Due to COVID-19 the Spring Open House will be online. The registrar's office has hired a third-party company to put together an online platform for students to go on and look at different units and programs for consideration. C Hosker, S. Scott, G. Klotz and A. Nejedly have worked on the content for our School. Dean M. Wells will also create a welcome video for our School. We are looking for faculty and student volunteers.

S. Scott wanted to thank C. Hosker for her help. She explained that this event will look very different than a usual on campus event. The open house is designed for students who have received offers but haven't chosen which school they will attend. It is a very important event especially since we have already had to cancel the other open houses.

The virtual open house is scheduled for Wednesday May 20th from 10:00am until 1:00pm. S. Scott explained that the first 30 minutes will consist of a video presentations for parents and potential students. This will include a welcome video from the Dean, an overview of school (prepared by M. Gong, S. Scott and C. Hosker), a program overview (prepared by G. Klotz and A. Nejedly), as well as a student video testimony.

Following these video presentations, from 10:30am – 1:00pm there will be an opportunity for students to live chat and ask questions. This is where we need the faculty and staff volunteers. S. Scott does not know exactly how this live chat will look. S. Scott will send out an e-mail to all faculty asking for volunteers. S. Scott will confirm with B. Van Hiest if there will be an involvement from Admissions. The format and the number of volunteers needed is to be determined.

K. Rourke asked about student involvement in this event, how many students would be needed, and what years they wanted represented. S. Scott said she is meeting today with B. Van Hiest and will follow up with K. Rourke after to answer these questions.

- **T&P process and guideline**

M. Gong met with T. Oakley, Manager of Faculty and Academic Staff Relations to discuss how to redo the T&P Department Member nomination process. T. Oakley confirmed that having week one for nominations and week two for voting when needed has been the past practice for all units for many years. However, this is inconsistent with the UGFA Collective Agreement. This practice will be changed this year from our unit. Please note the new due dates for the new round of nominations.

M. Gong also consulted T. Oakley regarding the T&P guidelines which SoCS has approved and are waiting for the Provost's approval. She said that there will likely be some editorial changes around some of the wording.

D. Calvert asked whether we would be using the new or old documentation for the next four years, while waiting for approval on the new guidelines. M. Gong said that he doesn't believe the upper administration has made this decision yet, but there will likely have to be an

agreement between the University and UGFA and that we may be looking at a combination of using both old and new guidelines for evaluation.

M. Gong noted that when the next major T&P review takes place in two years from now all four years will be evaluated. The impact of COVID-19 will be taken into account. In the past faculty were only able to appeal certain decisions (e.g. ones that are 'below satisfaction') now they will be able to appeal all even ones that are 'very good'.

- **COVID-19 Updates**

M. Gong confirmed that the Summer 2020 semester will take place entirely online. The decision for Fall 2020 semester will take place in person or online has not yet been determined.

M. Gong said that the Provost feels that students come to campus for classes but also to make and see their friends. The Provost fears that by going online exclusively for the fall semester may defer some students from selecting UofG. M. Gong said the recruitment efforts are still being made to recruit new students. The UofG goal is to offer in person experiences for the fall term. Due to the COVID crisis we may need to look at moving the courses online. There are also discussions about smaller in person classes and social distancing practices in the classroom.

K. Gordon will be approaching first year course instructors to gauge any concerns about offering first year classes online. M. Gong expects any classes over 100 people would be considered a "large class", anything less than 50 students would be considered "small class" and that anything in between remains to be defined. The UofG will follow the guidance of the provincial government. J. McCuaig pointed out that most of SoCS courses are over 100 students and would therefore be considered large classes.

M. Gong reiterated that although we don't yet have a clear message regarding the Fall term, we need to be prepared for both online course offerings as well as potential disruptions to an in-person semester.

S. Scott expressed a strong concern about this plan, stating that she would not step back into a classroom to teach until a COVID-19 vaccine is in place. She asked if there was a plan in place to disinfect classrooms between sessions. She noted that regardless of how far apart students sit, there is still uncontrollable student turnover in the classrooms over the course of any given day from lecture to lecture.

S. Scott expressed this concern on behalf of both high and non-high-risk individuals. She noted an understanding of the political concerns of offering online classes only, as well as the importance of recruitment, but felt that without a strong message of whether or not the fall semester will take place online, it becomes increasingly difficult to plan her summer (e.g. how much to focus on research versus planning better online courses etc.). M. Wirth expressed agreement with all of these concerns. It was noted that all Universities are currently juggling this decision-making process for Fall 2020.

R. Chaturvedi noted that typical DE courses are offered very differently; OpenEd has a lot of control over the resources, they require certain things from faculty before the course starts etc. She wanted to know if these potentially online fall courses will be treated like traditional DE courses. M. Gong explained that there are two options. In option one, OpenEd hosts the online courses, and if faculty choose to run their courses this way, they would transfer their intellectual property to OpenEd, for which OpenEd will pay a fee. They currently have a few open spaces to host courses for the summer. M. Wirth noted in the chat that there is no payment for intellectual property unless a grant is given.

There is also the second option of putting courses online but only using some support from OpenEd; this would keep course material copyrighted by the faculty member who teaches it. S. Kremer pointed out that if faculty are considering turning their courses into actual DE courses, under the collective agreement, a teaching credit would be given for that. He explained that we need to figure out the tradeoff between gaining a teaching credit and giving up intellectual property to OpenEd.

A. Hamilton-Wright shared that he has spoken to many students who have expressed stress over housing due to a lack of decision making and clarity from the University and is worried that upper administration has not taken this into consideration. M. Gong will share these concerns at the Dean's council meeting. He shared that a message was sent out to the students from the Provost, explaining that the University is working on the issues and trying their best to help students while coming to a clearer decision (on whether the fall semester will take place online or not).

M. Wineberg noted that while upper administration has discussed social distancing in the context of a classroom, SoCS especially puts an emphasis on group work within our program, and concerns around that piece have not yet been considered or addressed.

S. Kremer noted that regarding the fall semester, UGFA has taken a strong stand on the notion that the faculty themselves are the best people to decide how to deliver their courses, which is in line with the principles of academic freedom. He warned that UGFA will argue against any direction that is too prescriptive (i.e. telling faculty they must complete their lectures online etc.). He noted that UGFA has done an amazing job in looking out for faculty interest during this time. He wanted to remind faculty that UGFA recently sent a link to vote for a new VP and that faculty should vote and support the association. M. Gong agreed on the importance of faculty engaging in this vote.

K. Rourke wished to echo the concerns brought up by S. Scott. He too would be uncomfortable returning to a classroom without knowing that there are strict disinfectant measures in place. He noted that the idea of returning to a physical classroom is raising anxiety for students, as well as uncertainty regarding the fall semester. He shared that he has had many discussions with SoCS students these past few weeks and wanted to mention that we are a unique program (Computer Science) with an ability to deliver our program virtually, and hopes that faculty will consider doing this, even if not an official DE course. M. Gong noted the importance of this

perspective, as existing survey result shows that students prefer in person classroom experiences. Conducting a survey among SoCS students may help the School to decide how to proceed.

D. Stacey pointed out the prospect of returning to in-person learning, and the potential concerning impacts regarding labs. She noted that while the University will likely have a say in this, our labs (in THRN especially) are very cramped. She asked if we would be re-evaluating our labs, i.e. cutting the number of people, which would in turn have other impacts (our IT team, number of TAs to hire etc.). M. Gong explained that if we have students come back to campus, the same social distancing policy will apply to both classroom and labs. Hence, we have to reduce lab capacity. We also need to reconsider how TA works as they may have close contact with multiple students. Possible approach is to ask students to join online labs from their homes.

D. Stacey wants to ensure that we don't disadvantage students who may not have laptops etc. She asked about loans for students to upgrade their own infrastructure. M. Gong commented if most students can work from home, then we could make labs available to students do not have computers, just like how library provides computer access.

D. Calvert noted that our lab capacity is already lower than it's ever been and any faculty with a lab-centric course in the fall semester should start thinking about it now, rather than wait for the University to make its decisions. He stated that while directing students to use the library is fine, it does not help students who are off-campus.

D. Calvert expressed that a vaccine won't be in place by the fall and therefore we should be proactive, and that given that classroom space on campus is already at a shortage, it will be nearly impossible to run a normal semester while practicing social distance.

7. Any other business

D. Flatla asked if an email can be sent out for the deadline for letting C. Hosker know about S20 Special Dean's Award - Covid - Up to \$2500.

M. Gong thanked everyone for their additional efforts in adjusting to a new format for course delivery.

No other business. Meeting adjourned 2:36pm