School of Computer Science
Council Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, February 25, 2020
1:00-2:30pm, REYN 1101

Present –
Faculty: L. Antonie, D. Calvert, R. Chaturvedi, R. Dara, D. Flatla, D. Gillis, M. Gong (Director), H. Khan, S. Kremer, C. Obimbo, J. Sawada, S Scott, F. Song, D. Stacey, F. Wang, M. Wirth, Y. Xiang;
Staff: D. Byart, C. Hosker, J. Lange, K. Gardiner (recording secretary), A. Nejedly;
Student Representatives: S. Modi;

Regrets –
Faculty: A. Dehghantanha, G. Grewal, A. Hamilton-Wright, X. Lin, J. McCuaig, P. Matsakis, D. Nikitenko, M. Wineberg;
Staff: K. Johnston, G. Klotz, D. Rea;
Student Representatives: J. Fraser;

1. Approval of Agenda for February 25, 2020

Motion: That the agenda for February 25, 2020 be approved.
(D. Calvert, C. Obimbo)
In Favour: All. Abstentions: None. **MOTION PASSED**

2. Annoucements

M. Gong welcomed Jake Harwood, our new Graduate Program Assistant. Jake started yesterday and will be here until March 2021.

He also announced that as a result of the AI Faculty search, an offer was sent and accepted by Dr. Ying (Tiffany) He. A second offer was sent to Dr. Neil Bruce and a signed returned offer should be expected this week.

M. Gong announced that D. Calvert will be stepping down from his role as Associate Director by the end of the academic year. Y. Xiang has agreed to step into the role.

It was also announced that M. Wirth will take sabbatical in Fall 2020, thus S. Scott will be taking over his role as Assistant Director at that time.

M. Gong shared that several undergrad students were found playing video games in 1101 on a late Friday afternoon. As a result, 1101 will now be locked over the weekend. D. Gillis asked what spaces students do have to use. M. Gong noted that 1101 is a lecture theatre and not meant as a space for socialization. D. Gillis agreed but wanted to note that space from students in general is being frequently removed. S. Modi asked if the space could be booked as a club in advance for this purpose. C. Hosker responded that because of recent problems with equipment in room now needing to be replaced (and costing money), that the answer is no until M. Gong decides what the equipment will be permitted to be used for. S. Modi objected that SOCIS needs

space to run social events. M. Gong replied that he will consider occasional booking requests, but it can not be done casually. C. Hosker also noted that the students have access to 0002 which is usually empty and also has large screens. S. Modi expressed that 0002 was "not a great a space". C. Hosker noted that she will continue to work with S. Modi on supporting SOCIS and the students.

3. Approval of Minutes from November 12th and 26th, 2019

Motion: That the minutes from November 12th and 26th, 2019 be approved.
(C. Obimbo, Y. Xiang)
In Favour: All. Abstentions: L. Antonie, S. Scott. **MOTION PASSED**

4. Approval of Minutes from February 11th, 2020

Motion: That the minutes from February 11, 2019 be approved.
(S. Scott, M. Wirth)
In Favour: All. Abstentions: D. Flatla. **MOTION PASSED**

It was stated that going forward, minutes will be sent out 5-7 business days after the meeting.

5. Business Arising from Minutes

M. Gong shared that as K. Gardiner is very busy with a variety of work tasks and is only working part time, something that can alleviate this workload is having faculty submit their own expense claims in ECS. A user manual will be sent out shortly. D. Gillis noted that while he has no specific concerns in doing this, he wanted to know if this could be an opportunity for the school to ask for more support. M. Gong replied that as other departments already have their faculty doing their own claims, we may not be able to use this particular situation as leverage for more resources.

S. Scott asked if graduate students had access to also submit their own expense claims. It was confirmed that yes, they do. M. Wirth asked if PDR claims were able to be completed on the ECS system and it was confirmed that yes, this is the case. He also asked how to find out his PDR balance. It was clarified that C. Hosker is able to provide this information to faculty upon request.

6. Minglun Gong

- **Further discussion of developing PhD in CS proposal**
  Motion: Support the PhD in CS program in principle using one of the options, with the understanding that there will be consultation during

the development and opportunity for voting before the proposal is finalized.

M. Gong followed up from the discussion from two weeks ago (see Appendix A). S. Kremer requested he add to slide 2, bullet point 1 "compared to neighbouring universities". This change was made.

Regarding the sticker voting on reintroducing the PhD in Computer Science, D. Gillis wanted to clarify there was no rule stating a member can only put one sticker under one item, hence the number of 'stickers' may not represent the number of people supporting a particular issue. S. Scott noted that this matter (reintroducing the PhD) was brought up at the original retreat and was given a lot of votes at that time as well. M. Gong agreed that some faculty (although not all) could benefit from the reintroduction of the program.

S. Kremer mentioned that the protecting the current PhD in Computational Science isn't about the students we can maintain, but are we drawing from one joint applicant pool for two PhD programs, will this create a strain on staff and do we have sufficient resources? He asked how many TA positions we would offer and whether these would be split across the two programs. He also asked about the time commitment from faculty and whether that would be split across the two PhDs.

He further questioned whether the intent was to shrink the current program in order to create the new one, or keeping the original program the same size and adding the new one additionally (thus requiring more resources). He noted that this could be a good opportunity for SoCS to leverage this against CEPS (to say for example, that in order for us to introduce this second program, we will require more TA funding). He noted that since CEPS is supportive of a second program, we should be in a good postion to ask for more resources. M. Gong agreed that if we do get the second program we should ask for more TA resouces. He didn't feel like we would would be in a position to ask for additional staff or faculty until the new program sees some real growth.

L. Antonie commented the correlation of ratio changes versus funding changes. She noted that we should be comparing different fundings to different ratios across other departments. M. Gong agreed that we can compare GTA supports, but other units may have more external research funding that are secured by individual faculty members.

D. Gillis asked that if we increased our PhD student enrolment to match the college average (in our case, adding 7 more students to bring it up to 26), to say that we are carryin the average load, are we then splitting those 26 students into two different programs? M. Gong replied not necessarily.

D. Gillis noted that if we create a new program and bring up our average, we will have two programs that each aren't very big and he is worried that this will reflect poorly in future when the programs are evaluated.

M. Gong pointed out that not all students (including his own) are interested in Computational Sciences, currently our only PhD option. He also noted that the Geography department currently has one PhD program but different streams to

finish. The director there confirmed for M. Gong that a single program can have different streams as well as different admission requirements. He also noted that at some other universities in Canada, when they have a “Computational Sciences” PhD it is actually in addition to a regular “Computing” or “Computer” Science PhD program.

C. Obimbo noted that for option 2 (see Appendix A, a single PhD program with two streams for completion), if both streams were labelled as a PhD in Computer Science, this could become confusing for future employers (distinguishing between computational and computer science) as the streams would be very different but share a program name. M.Gong stated that he was not overly concerned about this, but it could be addressed when labelling the different streams. He noted that this would be a question for the University or office of graduate studies to answer and decide. He also referred to Geography where multiple streams are hosted.

C. Obimbo asked about the third option (change the existing PhD in Computational Sciences back through internal major modification) and if the degree names would be changed for current students. M. Gong responded that someone else at the University would have to address this question.

S. Scott asked about option 2. It was noted that two different admission requirements could be put into place, but she wondered about actual program requirements (e.g. length, course requirements). M. Gong replied that we could make them both the same length if needed (e.g. both 4 year programs) but could also stipulate that students who don’t have a CS background are required to take additional courses in order to meet the requirements for Computational Sciences.

S. Scott noted a concern that the Computational Sciences PhD program will be due for a review soon and finishing times could be an issue. J. Sawada noted that B. Bradshaw had come to the school aready with concerns that students were not meeting the criteria; as some students were not doing interdisciplinary research. He noted a risk to the program that we are not currently meeting its objectives, hence the suggestion to add the Phd in “Computer Science”. This would allow the Computational Sciences students to be the ones actually doing interdisciplinary work.

Regarding the finishing times, J. Sawada noted that students are not completing the program in the planned 3 years. S. Kremer pointed out that the program has only been running for 3 years. R. Dara replied that she has one student in their fourth year; the program began in 2016. J. Sawada noted a general trend that a 4 year program is likely more realistic, based on current small sample size.

M. Gong noted that we choose the route of two separate degrees, he understands the concern of Computational Sciences having enough of its own enrolment. He noted an option would be to open that program to PhD students in other units as a way for them to pursue a collaborative specialization. He said we should go out and engage others to join the interdisciplinary PhD program that we already have in place.

M. Gong expressed concern over a three-way motion vote, the concern being the votes will be split three ways evenly. Therefore he suggested that people vote on as many of the three options that they believe to have merit (even if that means a vote for each of the three). J. Sawada pointed out that option 1 and 3 are very

similar. M. Gong replied that the difference is taking the efforts to protect our current program when adding in a new one. J. Sawada pointed out that either way there is a risk that our current PhD program will be put under scrutiny. M. Gong agreed that each of the options carry their own risk.

S. Scott asked about option 1 and would it give us an option to create further specializations (for example, a PhD in Artificial Intelligence). M. Gong replied that the degree would have one name, but AI could very well become its own stream within the PhD. S. Scott noted that this could be an opportunity to physically cash out on that trend and we should consider the marketing.

D. Flatla shared that he supports a PhD Computer Science. He also shared that we currently offer guaranteed GTA positions to our current PhD students for 3 years. This will need to be reevaulated depending on the outcome of the vote. He also noted that the people voting don't possibly have enough information on the options in order to make an informed decision and expressed concern that in a few years time we will be held accountable to the decision made, despite lacking the required informed knowledge.

C. Obimbo pointed out that it would be difficult to vote for option 2 as there is some confusion to what it actually would entail. M. Gong explained that he is looking to get a sense on the council's general preference; the approach the school decides to take can be decided upon later.

S. Kremer shared that he agrees with D. Flatla, he would like more clarity in the issues before voting. He likes the idea of a Computer Science PhD in addition to our current interdisciplinary program, but doesn't want to see our current one suffer. He stated that we should be voting on a proposal to be developed for a PhD in Computer Science and that the proposal be clear about what we expect the impacts will be on both programs in terms of applicant pool, student enrolment numbers, growth and research funds, TA psitions, faculty time commitment and staff resources. He said he would like to see a concrete, well reasoned plan for the council to then come back and vote on. He commented on the wording of the current motion "voting on the proposal before finalized", should be changed. He suggested that rather than have three different motions to vote on, we should create one motion to have the graduate committee write a proposal for a PhD program in Computer Science but with more detail.

M. Gong initiated the following motion: that the council would like to see the development of a proposal for a PhD program in Computer Science. (M. Gong, C. Obimbo). S. Kremer requested an amendedment that the proposal is voting on before being "moved forward" (verus finalized).

In Favour: All. Abstentions: M. Wirth. **MOTION PASSED**

7. Dave Calvert

- **Continue the discussion on the first year discrete mathematics courses.**
  Motion: Delete CIS*2910 from the program and replace it with a senior Math/Theory course.

D. Calvert re-shared his power point presentation from the February 11th meeting, with one additional slide added (see Appendix B; Motion: Delete CIS*2910 from the program and replace it with a senior Math/Theory course). He noted that because this is happening so late, it won't likely take effect this year.

He did share that this year what could be done is having the first part of the motion complete (deleting CIS*2910) and then over the summer/fall work on the development of the new course. He said that if the council felt too much risk associated with that plan, the entire process could be done at the same time next fall. He shared his personal preference of at least getting it started this year.

Motion: Motion: Delete CIS*2910 from the program and replace it with a senior Math/Theory course (D. Stacey, M. Wirth).

J. Sawada noted that he teaches a lot of discerete math courses and disagrees with removing CIS*2910 arbitrarily. He shared that the development of CIS*2130 is almost done which is already a combination of 2910 and 1910. He explained that 2130 was created for pathways (from college). D. Calvert said he worried about adding a fourth 1st year DE course. J. Sawada replied that it wouldn't have to be exactly CIS*2130 but similar to. D. Calvert agreed that this could be an option.

J. Sawada also pointed out that there is potentially a course mssing in our current curriculum; he referenced CIS*3490 and noted that we don't have the best algorithim courses in 3rd or 4th year. He noted that one wouldn't have have to be "super math focused" but could center on algorithms or graph algorithms. D. Calvert agreed that was a fine option but there will have to be negotiation regarding the course content between the various faculty interested in teaching it.

In Favour: 10. Oppposed: J. Sawada. Abstentions: None. **MOTION PASSED**

Due to time, remaining agenda items will be moved to the March 11th meeting. M. Gong did want to share that Bill Van Heyst will be at the next council meeting to explain current outreach activities and what is planned for the college; he thanked D. Gillis for inviting him to address council.

He also shared that Go Code Girl took place last Saturday. He thanked J. Lange to participate and support the event.

Meeting adjourned 2:31pm.