

**School of Computer Science  
Council Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, January 15th, 2019  
1:00-2:30pm, REYN 1101**

**Present –**

**Faculty:** L. Antonie, D. Calvert, R. Chaturvedi, D. Chiu, A. Dehghantanha, D. Flatla, A. Hamilton-Wright, H. Khan, S. Kremer, X. Lin, J. McCuaig, C. Obimbo, J. Sawada, S. Scott, F. Song, D. Stacey, Y. Xiang (Interim Director);

**Staff:** O. Adesina, D. Byart, K. Gardiner (recording secretary), J. Hughes, K. Johnston, D. Rea, L. Zweep;

**Student Representatives:** J. Fraser, F. Hassan

**Regrets –**

**Faculty:** R. Dara, D. Gillis, G. Grewal, X. Li, P. Matsakis, D. Nikitenko, B. Nonnecke, F. Wang, M. Wineberg, M. Wirth;

**Staff:** C. Hosker, G. Klotz;

**Student Representatives:** None.

**1. Approval of Agenda for January 15th, 2019**

Motion: That the agenda for January 15th be approved  
(C. Obimbo, D. Flatla)

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

**2. Approval of Minutes from December 4, 2018**

Motion: That the minutes from December 4, 2018 be approved.

(A. Hamilton-Wright, D. Flatla)

In Favour: All. Abstentions: S. Kremer. **MOTION PASSED**

**3. Interim Director's Remarks – Y. Xiang (*See Appendix A*)**

**Welcome, Retirement and Replacement**

Y. Xiang welcomed new faculty X. Lin to the department. He also announced D. Chiu's phased retirement. He shared that the Office of Provost has approved the replacement of his position in the rank of Assistant or Associate – Tenure Track, and that the search for this replacement will begin in May upon the start of the new Director.

## **New Faculty Position**

The Centre for Advancing Responsible and Ethical AI (CARE-AI) includes three (3) new faculty hires for the college including one for the School of Computer Science. The Dean has directed SoCS to recruit an Assistant or Associate Professor in the field of Artificial Intelligence. This process will begin immediately and suggestions on search committee and hiring are welcome. The hiring focus would be:

- 1) Responsible and ethical use of AI
- 2) Master level Collaborative Specialization in AI (CSAI)
- 3) Possible affiliate member in Vector Institute preferred

S. Scott asked a question regarding the Vector Institute hiring focus and whether or not it limits our hiring pool of applicants by including it. Y. Xiang responded that it will be looked at carefully by the Faculty Search Committee once constructed. C. Obimbo further asked about the clause and Yang clarified that upon hiring they would become an affiliate member and would not have to necessarily be an existing one when hired. C. Obimbo asked where the other two faculty positions were granted, and although it can be assumed to be either math or engineering Y. Xiang was not directly informed.

## **Facts on TA Hiring Operation**

A. Hamilton-Wright made a presentation at the beginning of last semester outlining the current process. This is available on the SoCS wiki and is still a good reference which is useful to refer to. Currently, we are teaching 3000-3600 students per semester, hiring 50-60 TAs and processing 300-450 TA applications. Some of the constraints identified were TA needs by individual courses, TA budget, financial support to graduate program, collective agreement (CUPE 3913) and applicant pool (undergraduates and graduates with and without guaranteed GTAs).

Y. Xiang reviewed the current process as well as the significant effort made by the ASH Chair, ASH Committee, Assistant Director, Program Counsellor, Associate Director, Graduate Assistant, Clerk, Administrative Officer and Director. He also wanted to comment on different perspectives (from instructors and student applicants) and provide input on how to improve the process.

For example, for instructors, Y. Xiang noted that they can re-invent their specifications to meet their needs each semester, however it is imperative to distinguish between required and preferred qualifications. Too many non-essential qualifications (across both categories) may lead to a very small pool of candidates. He also provided a “Not To Do” list for instructors:

1. Don't ignore the opportunity to update TA qualifications for your course.
2. Don't put preferred qualifications as required
3. Don't include non-essential qualifications

4. Don't list qualifications that don't make sense to people unfamiliar with the course (e.g. new graduate students, ASH committee).

For students, Y. Xiang advised faculty to assist students in creating better applications. For example, encourage grad students to apply even they do not have a guaranteed GTA. It is also important to remind students how vital it is to respond to each qualification in the job posting. Applications should not assume that the ASH committee knows their qualifications (e.g. level of coding skills) not explicitly stated in their application, nor should they forget to respond to each relevant qualification.

S. Scott noted that she has tried to update her TA qualifications and that the only qualification that is of value to her is whether the students have been a TA for her course before. She wanted to know how to convey that priority to the committee. A. Hamilton-Wright responded that as ASH chair he will look into this specific matter however his advice going forward is to speak to the committee directly for specific preferences. He also advised not to confuse "requirement" with something that is important to you in a TA, as the applicants meeting any required qualifications are always considered first. He confirmed with S. Scott that if an instructor wishes to have certain qualifications weighed more heavily than others, inform the committee. He also acknowledged that it can be confusing as TAs who are qualified for one course may be assigned to another if they are ranked higher there. S. Scott noted that even if an applicant specifies a high value qualification (such as previously TAing the course), it is still critical that they sufficiently fill out the other requirements.

A student perspective was addressed, specifically a complaint that is often received when students with a guaranteed GTA ship do not understand why they weren't hired, only for it to be discovered by the committee that they never actually applied. Some students don't understand that that a guaranteed GTA does not negate the requirement of an application. Advisors were reminded to remind their students to apply, even if they are not guaranteed GTAs.

Y. Xiang wanted to address one additional issue that was encountered during the most recent hiring round which was how instructors should influence TA hiring. He reiterated the collective agreement from the University which states:

1. "In all cases of job competition, the University's selection criteria shall only include: qualifications (academic and professional), competence, capability, skill and ability, and prior relevant experience." – CA (CUPE 3913)
2. CA directs that hiring decisions can only be made by the hiring committee.

He noted that instructional personal reference was not included in this wording. He advised that while instructors may help students file complete applications they should refrain from requesting specific TAs from the hiring committee.

Y. Xiang also discussed some of the limitations of improvement in the TA hiring process, including the late discovery of time conflict (after TAs for a course are hired, it is discovered that no one is able to cover a lab section due to time conflict) as well as late faculty influence (after a student applied for and was hired as a GTA, their thesis advisor advised the students not to take the TAs, causing more work for the hiring committee).

It was noted that D. Flatla will be taking over as the chair of the committee and suggestions for improvement are welcome.

#### **4. Chair of Graduate Outreach Committee – L. Antonie**

L. Antonie announced an event taking place on Monday January 21, 2019 from 12:00 – 1:00pm in Reynolds 1101 which is an information session on the AI Masters Program. The goal of the information session is to recruit undergraduate students. The format would be as follows: J. Sawada will present information on graduate program in general (e.g. rules, regulations, how to apply etc.) to address the questions many students posed at Grad Preview Day. S. Kremer would then present about the AI program specifically and provide details. L. Antonie explained that the graduate outreach committee debated whether to have more faculty come to make presentations and it was decided that it would not be possible due to the limited time to have further slides and presentations, but faculty who are engaged in AI research would still be welcome to attend, introduce themselves, engage with students 1:1 and answer any questions they may have.

C. Obimbo asked if three faculty could present for five minutes each. L. Antonie explained that due to time constraints it was decided that additional faculty would be limited to coming and introducing themselves and that we didn't want the information session to turn into another lecture for students. Y. Xiang also addressed Charlie's suggestions. It was determined that J. Sawada's and S. Kremer's presentation would take a total of approximately 15-20 minutes. When he asked the group if any other faculty would be interested in presenting, no one expressed an interest. It was determined that no further presentations since that was as much a volunteer issue as a timing issue.

C. Obimbo asked about recruitment for the new Cyber Security program for fall 2019. L. Antonie explained that an information session will take place for this program in the future (possibly February or March) as the program is not yet fully approved. C. Obimbo noted that some students are already interested and applying, to which L. Antonie explained that those students can continue to be encouraged, but the information session is geared towards recruiting new students not already engaged or motivated to apply.

D. Calvert requested the information session details be sent to him so he can forward to his students. F. Song noted that while he cannot attend the information session in person, he would like to provide an information sheet with his research interests, contact information etc.

S. Scott asked if the information session would be appropriate for current master's students or if it was being geared more towards undergrad. Y. Xiang clarified that mostly it was geared mostly towards undergrad but other students are welcome to come and potentially switch into AI specialization.

S. Scott inquired about a supposed Vector Institute PHD scholarship. She asked J. Hughes to clarify and she had not heard of the PhD scholarship. S. Stacey will follow up to determine whether she has been misinformed.

## **5. Update on SoCS computing infra-structure – K. Johnston & D. Rea (*see Appendix B*)**

K. Johnston and D. Rea provided an update including an IT Year in Review for 2018 (see appendix B),

They also shared what is coming in 2019, including self-service GIT hosting, creation of VM infrastructure for Cyber MsC, Updated Redmine Collaboration Suite VM's, Automated VM provisioning for students and faculty, digital signage, setup of REYN 0002 and Cyber Security Lab and refresh of offsite backup solution.

D. Rea also identified cable issues in THRN 2420 that are to be addressed. F. Song asked about nextfile which is cloud.socs.uoguelph.ca. Further instructions can be found on the SoCS wiki.

## **6. Any Other Business**

C. Obimbo wanted to speak about graduate students (both from SoCS and from engineering). He noted that in regards to academic misconduct, since we have some students coming internationally we need to be clear on what is expected of them in order to avoid misconduct situations. J. Sawada pointed out that all students take an academic integrity course within the first month. D. Rea noted that he and G. Grewal ran reports and e-mailed students who had not yet completed the course, but will start advising instructors on who these students are so instructors can further remind them. D. Calvert noted that if it is done for undergraduates and can be automated it may as well be done for grad students as well; J. Sawada agreed.

No other business.

Meeting adjourned 2:03pm.