

**School of Computer Science
Council Meeting Minutes**

Tuesday June 9, 2020

1:00-2:30pm;

Zoom

Present –

Faculty: L. Antonie, D. Calvert, R. Chaturvedi, R. Dara, D. Flatla, M. Gong (Director), A. Hamilton-Wright, H. Khan, S. Kremer, X. Lin, J. McCuaig, D. Nikitenko, 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), J. Harwood, K. Johnston, G. Klotz, A. Nejedly;

Student Representatives: A. Murcias Rios, K. Rourke;

Regrets –

Faculty: A. Dehghantanha, D. Gillis, G. Grewal, P. Matsakis, M. Wineberg;

Staff: None;

Student Representatives: None;

1. Approval of Agenda for June 9th, 2020

Motion: That the agenda for June 9th, 2020 be approved.

(Y. Xiang, A. Hamilton-Wright)

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

2. Announcements

- An interim Dean has been announced for our college. Gerarda Darlington was previously the Associate Dean of Academic in Math and Stats, and will be starting July 1st.
- It was requested that any important discussions in the chat that should be included in the minutes be brought to the attention of M.Gong or K. Gardiner. A transcript of the chat will be exported and included in the minutes as an attachment.

3. Approval of Minutes from May 26th, 2020

Motion: That the minute from May 26th, 2020 be approved.

(C. Obimbo, S. Scott)

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

4. Business Arising from Minutes

- **Number of new grad students in Fall 2020**
- Currently we are expecting 2 PhD students and 6 MSc students for the fall term. This number is lower than Fall 2019, so it is expected that the total number of guaranteed GTAs will not increase.
- J. Sawada clarified that most of these offers went out before the change to 2 guaranteed GTAs, so this change will only affect future admissions.

5. Joe Sawada

- **Discussion about course requirement and breadth requirement for PhD in Computer Science (see Appendix A)**
- J. Sawada presented an updated timeline for re-introducing a PhD in Computer Science, working backwards from a Summer 2021 launch.
- J. Sawada reviewed the course and breadth requirements for the old PhD program (appendix A), stating that we are currently looking at a more streamlined breadth requirement for the new program.
- When comparing with other Universities, 4 courses appears to be the average requirement.
- J. Sawada consulted with B. Bradshaw, Associate VP of Grad Studies, who did not feel as though SoCS would gain support for this new program if it were to have no course requirement, therefore J. Sawada felt we should move the proposal forward with a course requirement (to be discussed).
- A proposed course requirement for discussion: CIS*6890 plus two to four additional graduate level courses. The additional courses to be prescribed in consultation with the advisory committee. Proposal for breadth requirement: A total of 8 graduate courses must be completed (including CIS*6890) where at least four additional courses with computer science content (see Appendix A).
- J. Sawada: a discussion was raised about allowing existing Computational Sciences PhD students to transfer into the new program. The reduced course requirement would make this transfer easier.
- A. Hamilton-Wright asked for clarification regarding courses versus credits, as most courses are 0.5 credits but a thesis is usually 1 credit. J. Sawada: a thesis would count as 1

course for the new PhD course requirement.

- A. Hamilton-Wright asked the number of grad courses that are being currently offered. J. Sawada explained that not including cyber courses, we are currently offering 3 courses in fall and 3 in winter. J. Sawada would like to advocate for adding at least one course to the summer semester. M. Gong shared that as new faculty will be joining SoCS, more graduate courses will be possible, although not immediately.
- C. Obimbo questioned how we can ensure that students will have enough breadth with the proposed requirements. J. Sawada explained that while we can't be 100% certain, there is an assumption students will come into the program with breadth from their own academic backgrounds. M. Gong also noted that with 8 required courses, it would be difficult for a student to take all 8 courses under a certain topic (i.e. AI) and not obtain some level of breadth.
- A. Murcia-Ross asked: if a student ended into SoCS as a masters student, would they have to complete the full 2 years masters before transferring into the PhD program. J. Sawada explained that if they are demonstrating success in their first year (i.e. research results), then they could initiate a transfer into the PhD program in their 4th or 5th semester. To J. Sawada's knowledge, SoCS historically has not had any masters students transfer into a PhD.
- D. Flatla expressed a concern that we don't currently offer a broad enough set of graduate courses (especially in summer semester). Noted that he would be in favour of increasing and broadening our graduate courses.
- It was confirmed that the approval of this new PhD program would not end the existing Computational Sciences PhD, and both programs would run.

6. Minglun Gong

- **Recap on budget update**
- M. Gong presented updates from the budget town hall. The 2019/2020 projected budget is a \$5.3 million deficit. Reduced spending from COVID-19 actually reduced this from the original forecast of 7 million.
- Although COVID-19 will not result in reduced government funding, there is an expected tuition loss of approximately \$14.4 million.
- The University reserve is currently \$192 million.

- **Update on Fall enrollment**

- June 1st was the deadline for accepting University offers. The University portal shows that SoCS has 201 undergraduate students coming in the Fall, 67 of which are international. Of the 201, 83 students are Software Engineering and 113 are Computer Science.
- These numbers are expected to decrease due to the typical “summer melt” as well as increased challenges for international students due to COVID-19. M. Gong noted that this is actually good as it allows smaller class sizes and therefore better quality education. However, it could also mean a more difficult time requesting additional support from the College.
- S. Scott asked if we had any information on the number of transfers. M. Gong explained not at this time, as that is a different category that we don’t currently have access to.
- Y. Xiang expressed a concern over the high number of international students who may not be able to come, greatly reducing our overall enrolment. M. Gong shared that many other Universities have taken a more aggressive approach to recruiting domestic students in response to the effects of COVID-19 on international student enrolment.
- M. Wirth expressed a concern over long term consequences of so many international students come to our school. Gong explained that we are unable to control the percentage of international versus domestic acceptances, and that cut off grades are the same for both categories.
- S. Scott asked about the new onboarding program for international students proposed by K. Gordon. She noted that as the University moves to remote learning, it may greatly impact an international students’ acclimatization, especially in areas like group work. M. Gong said he would bring up these concerns at his next meeting with K. Gordon.
- **Adjustment to committee structure (see Appendix B)**
- M. Gong reviewed the existing SoCS Committee Structure. Based on the self-study report, it was decided that we would reorganize our committee structure to reduce some administrative overhead. However, with faculty members occupied by Fall course preparation, it is not a good time for a major reorganization. Hence, a few minor changes are proposed.

- Proposed changes:

a) Remove Faculty Search committee

b) Change Grad Outreach to general Outreach and move to under Assistant Director's portofolio.

- S. Kremer expressed a concern about losing a graduate specific Outreach committee.
- S. Scott explained that as we are unable to hire an outreach officer at this time, we have hired a co-op student to help with some of our outreach efforts. They have discovered that there is a lot of overlap on social media use, meaning we are potentially doubling our work unnecessarily. She agreed with S. Kremer that the Outreach committee needs to focus specifically on graduate outreach, as this has been underserved in the past.
- D. Flatla noted that in addition to outside students, we have an opportunity to recruit our current undergraduate students to a masters program, and this is a population that we should be focusing on. S. Scott agreed that the Strategic Plannning Committee determined that SoCS does not promote itself adequately.
- K. Rourke offered to forward any recruitment information to undergraduate students. He also shared that SOCIS is in the process of planning an online orientation week event and if faculty have information they want shared, please let K. Rourke know.
- D. Flatla noted on our large 4th year courses, which make it hard to connect with students individually to pursue them into a masters program.

c) Merge Computing Infrastructure and Physical Space committee into one

- M. Wirth noted that the Physical Space committee was created for the renovation and may no longer be needed. It's role in assigning offices and graduate space does not need to be fulfilled by a whole committee.
- D. Stacey (chair of Computer Infrustracture Committee) noted that this change makes sense as the committee has begun re-evaluating lab space to accommodate social distancing etc.

d) Move the committees chaired by ADA to a separate category

e) Add Cyclical Program Review to the mandate of Strategic Planning committee.

- S. Kremer asked when the new committees would be announced and if faculty could volunteer for which committees they would like to sit on. M. Gong explained that he wanted to assign faculty to committees after the proposed structural changes were approved by the school.
- It was confirmed that we do not need to vote on these changes, and M. Gong will proceed with the updated structure.
- **Back to campus planning**
- As the provincial government begins to lift restrictions, a back to campus committee has been formed. It is chaired by the University Librarian, Rebecca Graham. The committee membership is not yet clear. The COAC has requested R. Graham address the whole council on the committee's mandate. M. Gong will update the school when he receives more information.
- The VPR office is also planning for the next phase of reopening campus for the purpose of research. The policy on what research projects will be given priority is still under development. Currently SoCS does not have any research projects approved for on-campus.

7. Any other business

- Informal social gathering: M. Gong asked if staff and faculty would be interested in an online social event. Based on interest shown, it was decided that this will be pursued at a later time.
- No other business. Meeting adjourned 2:34pm.