

**School of Computer Science
Council Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, May 19, 2020**

1:00-2:30pm;

Zoom

Present –

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

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

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

Regrets –

Faculty: H. Khan, D. Nikitenko, J. Sawada, P. Matsakis;

Staff: D. Byart;

Student Representatives: None;

1. Approval of Agenda for May 19, 2020

Motion: That the agenda for May 19, 2020 be approved.

(A. Hamilton-Wright, R. Dara)

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

2. Announcements

M. Gong introduced A. Murcia Rios and K. Rourke, respective new graduate and undergraduate student representatives. He also shared that Dean M. Wells has announced that the AGM will be taking place on June 26th. Whether it will take place or in person is TBD, agenda will follow shortly.

3. Approval of Minutes from April 28th, 2020

Motion: That the minute from April 28th, 2020 be approved.

(A. Hamilton-Wright, A. Dehghantanha)

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

4. Business Arising from Minutes

M. Wirth was able to clarify that for D.E. courses, there is no payment for a faculty's intellectual property (IP) and that materials put forth by faculty for D.E. courses can be used by other instructors to teach other courses.

This is different from regular courses that use an online delivery, where the faculty would retain the IP of all of their course materials. The University also can provide support to faculty to protect their IP in this case.

S. Scott noted that in order for faculty to check whether or not their IP was being used by students, a membership is required for the various material sharing sites. She suggested that the University provide access by purchasing a site licence so that faculty can monitor their own IP without paying out of pocket. M. Gong said he would follow up with the Council of Academic Chair, but felt having to pay for site license may not be the way to go as it is encouraging such online sites.

G. Grewal noted that when he was Associate Director, there had been reports of students using Chegg, at which point K. Gordon did pay for an account to have it investigated. He explained that whenever faculty post anything online, there is a risk of their IP being used elsewhere. He also noted that often times these websites are not willing to work with the University on these matters.

M. Gong: report from K. Gordon that the University has been able to identify specific students from these websites, and that the SoCS is willing to pay for a shared membership to these websites if and when it becomes necessary.

5. David Flatla

- **Policy for GTA assignments**

Graduate students are currently offered zero, one or two guaranteed positions based on recommendations from the academic staff hiring committee. GTAs are also currently restricted to 3rd and 4th year courses, with UTAs being used to backfill these gaps. These changes were made in 2017/2018 for the purpose of the budget as well as concerns regarding the quality of GTAs.

Based on the changes with COVID and the recent self-study (identifying a need to increase GTAs), D. Flatla proposed to the council restoring the original policy of offering 2 guaranteed GTA positions per grad student per year. He noted the possible implications of this: more GTAs would mean less UTAs as well as more GTAs being placed in first and second year courses. While needing to provide funding and support to graduate students, it was also noted that faculty and undergraduate students have both expressed that UTAs are much more familiar with our program and course materials, are more responsive and engaged with supporting students. It was noted that GTAs are generally less familiar with our program and may be working under a different motive (i.e. emphasis on research over teaching).

G. Grewal asked if any decisions had been made regarding bringing international students in the fall semester, as other schools have reported delays in international students obtaining their visas. D. Flatla: confirmed that all our graduate students who were set to begin Summer 2020 have deferred to the fall. M. Gong: there is a possibility that the government will allow graduate students to begin their studies remotely, but no formal announcement has been made.

G. Grewal: expressed a concern with paying a GRA who is only able to work remotely and therefore unable to completely participate, possibly facing a time difference, etc. M. Gong:

agreed that in some cases grad students should defer to a date when they actually able to come to in person, but that some students may begin their graduate studies with course work.

J. McCuaig expressed a negative experience with GTAs teaching first and second year courses, sharing that they often refuse to do the work that is asked for them, as they are “guaranteed” their position. She also expressed a challenge where GTAs are unable to help with a lot of first and second year course content as they are often unfamiliar with the material, and faculty don’t have the time to “pre-teach” their GTAs their course content. R. Chaturvedi noted she has shared this experience, and that some GTAs lack the confidence to manage lab sections that are required for first and second year courses.

A. Hamilton-Wright clarified in the chat that although their job is guaranteed, GTAs can still be fired if they refuse to do the work that is expected of them. This has already happened in other units.

S. Kremer offered a potential solution of when a graduate student comes in with a guaranteed GTAs, they are assigned a TA position with their advisor’s courses.

S. Scott suggested a mandatory TA training course for all incoming grad students. D. Flatla explained that while there may be union implications with what we can and can not ask of GTAs, requiring training should not be an issue. It was noted that we do have to pay TAs for any training they participate in. M. Gong agreed we can make a TA training as part of the graduate student orientation.

J. McCuaig expressed that it appears that the graduate student funding problem is trying to be solved “on the backs” of the instructors already teaching large courses. She wanted to know whether this TA training would include teaching students how to use the Linux program, programming in C language etc. as they are currently lacking these skills.

Minglun Gong

- **Volunteers for University’s COVID-19 planning committee**

D. Stacey, S. Scott and R. Dara have volunteered to be a part of this committee. Names and areas of expertise were sent to Provost and she responded that sub-committees will be established in the next few weeks.

S. Stacey asked about an internal task force in addition to the University level COVID-19 committee, as was discussed at the last SoCS council meeting. Although work should not be duplicated, it is possible that SoCS has its own set of concerns regarding these issues. M. Gong will review the minutes and return to this issue; he believes it is a good idea, but may need to wait for parameters to be setup by the University first.

S. Scott noted that some of these decisions need to be made sooner than later (i.e. which textbooks to order for Fall 2020).

J. McCuaig shared in the chat that she is currently teaching a fully online course right now, is actively documenting the issues that arise and will share them with faculty. D. Gillis asked if SoCS could provide support to J. McCuaig in these efforts. M. Gong will follow up with D. Gillis and J. McCuaig offline.

- **Spring Academic Open Houses**

The Spring Academic Open House is taking place on Wednesday May 20th, M. Gong thanked S. Scott for her coordination efforts, C. Hosker, G. Klotz, and A. Nejedly for preparing contents, as well as the student, faculty and staff volunteers.

- **Procedure for academic misconduct investigations**

Currently, when instructors suspect potential academic misconduct, they notify A. Nejedly who creates a report. Once the report is complete, faculty are to notify their student and at that time may choose to drop the charges. It was suggested to change the process to require faculty to notify by students by e-mail first. This would then give the student an opportunity to explain themselves, before having A. Nejedly put in the time and effort of a report (for a potentially dropped charge).

S. Kremer reminded that the University has an official policy on academic misconduct, based on a progression of incidents, monitored by the Dean's office. Therefore, handling misconduct cases ourselves without reporting to the Dean's office is discouraged.

C. Obimbo suggested faculty meet with A. Nejedly first to determine the validity of the case, before moving forward with the work of a report and/or contacting the student.

A. Nejedly reminded faculty that she has 10 days from the day the assignment was due to write her report, and often times she receives requests for reports after this 10 days has passed. She asked faculty to identify potential misconduct as soon as possible after the assignment is due to help mitigate this issue.

- **Campus access**

M. Gong shared the University's statement that unless faculty are conducting essential work or approved research, please do not come to campus. According to the provincial government directives, the University is not an essential service, although research is. Campus police and Physical Resources are going to be enforcing this. Public Health is requiring to know who is on campus each day and why. Directors and chairs have been asked to manage campus access.

D. Stacey asked if documentation was required to be on campus with permission from the Director, in the event that campus police approach and question their presence. M. Gong noted that while permission must be obtained in advance, he does not believe documentation is required at this time, nor would it be necessary for brief visits to collect office materials etc.

C. Obimbo reminded that permission is required even to attend campus to briefly collect materials from one's office. He also shared that a faculty member in Mackinnon was recently fined \$560.00 for being on campus, and so it is recommended that anyone coming to campus do so with appropriate documentation.

M. Gong is happy to approve brief visits to campus, but will have to consult with the Dean's office for any requests for regular campus work.

It was confirmed that starting any research projects requiring campus space must be approved in advance, but off campus projects do not apply to this rule.

- **Survey results of SoCS students (See Appendix A)**

M. Gong shared the results of the SoCS student survey (see Appendix A). The survey asked students about their preferences regarding online versus in-person learning, how social distance will affect the courses they take, their concerns about online learning as well as on-campus learning with government guidelines in place. It also asked students about their Co-op options and plans in light of COVID-19. The survey results also shared comments submitted by students.

Students shared concerns about ability to focus from home, as well as privacy issues around being filmed while taking exams.

D. Gillis asked in the chat if there was anything we can do to help support the 13% of students reporting that they do not have a webcam.

J. McCuaig asked if M. Gong would be interested in having her current students in her online course take this same survey in a few weeks time, having had the first hand experience, to compare with the survey results being currently presented. Concerns about paired test vs unpaired test were discussed. J. McCuaig withdrew the suggestion.

- **Fall Planning**

Due to time, this discussion will take place at the next meeting.

7. Any other business

M. Wirth asked for clarification in the event that an instructor is not personally comfortable with conducting an in-person class. M. Gong confirmed that if this is the case, the instructor are not required to provide in-person course delivery, and as per academic freedom they are permitted to offer their courses in a different format.

No other business. Meeting adjourned 2:52pm.