

**School of Computer Science
Council Meeting Minutes**

Tuesday November 30, 2021

1:00pm – 2:30pm

Microsoft Teams

Present –

Faculty: N. Bruce, D. Calvert, R. Dara, A. Dehghantanha, D. Flatla, D. Gillis, M. Gong (Director), A. Hamilton-Wright, S. Kremer, X. Lin, C. Obimbo, J. Sawada, F. Song, F. Wang, M. Wirth, Y. Xiang;

Staff: S. Brennan, D. Byart, J. DeFreitas (recording secretary), C. Hosker, J. Hughes, K. Johnston, G. Klotz, J. Lange, D. Rea, L. Zalewski;

Student Representatives: S. Adi, A. Kohut;

Regrets –

Faculty: L. Antonie, R. Chaturvedi, G. Grewal, H. Khan, P. Matsakis, J. McCuaig, D. Nikitenko, S. Scott, D. Stacey, M. Wineberg;

Staff: A. Nguyen;

Student Representatives: None;

1. Approval of Agenda for November 30, 2021

Motion: That the agenda for November 30, 2021 be approved.

(A. Dehghantanha, N. Bruce)

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

2. Announcements

M. Gong called for applications for the CARE-AI position and asked members to refer strong candidates before the posting closes on December 15th. There are only a few applications to date.

Regarding the Holiday Social, M. Gong asked for a show of hands for those able to attend on Monday December 13th and 12 responded. He will discuss with C. Hosker if this is a sufficient number to go ahead with the plans.

3. Approval of minutes from November 2, 2021

Motion: That the minutes from November 2, 2021 be approved.

(C. Obimbo, A. Dehghantanha)

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

4. Rozita Dara

- **SoCS Awards (Appendix A https://uoguelphcamy.sharepoint.com/:b:/g/personal/lzalewsk_uoguelph_ca1/EQ2ldza_YNpPmOS78zHg3qUBr-ZCF4pL_0MjWQVCkr05eA?e=Jbi5V7)**

R. Dara reported on the recipients of the 4 awards selected by the SOCS Awards Committee, based on credits and grades. The Sandbox Software Solutions Scholarship was awarded to Rachel Broders, Dr. Ted Swart Scholarship to Michael Dombrovsky, Dr. Mary McLeish Scholarship to Kenneth Chan and Lou Thompson received the Adknown Inc. Scholarship. R. Dara noted the lack of applicants for the scholarships so there is one Adknown scholarship remaining to be awarded.

R. Dara added that 5 SE students and 5 CS students received the CEPS Dean's Scholarship. She offered congratulations to all recipients.

5. Lauren Zalewski

- **Outreach and Recruiting (Appendix A)**

L. Zalewski updated on her recruitment activities for the Bachelor of Computing. It is currently the Application period at the UAC so they are promoting CS programs, beginning with Fall Preview Day on November 7th. The virtual event had 40 participants at the program information session hosted by G. Klotz, L. Gatto, L. Zalewski and Sara Adi. The BComp Student Panel hosted by SE and CS students had 28 participants. The event was recorded and posted on YouTube and had been seen 45 times. Staff and volunteers were thanked.

The new program brochure was unveiled by L. Zalewski with hard copies available for distribution. SOCS was featured significantly on U of G Admission Instagram channel recently with lengthy posts from student influencers, who gave insights into the programs.

L. Zalewski reported her new initiative of separate web pages for CS and SE on the SOCS Future Student Site, which should be launched by the end of the year. Her other initiative of VIP cards for admitted students as well as a confirmation initiative for female admitted students were highlighted.

M. Gong added that after meeting with D. Thomas, the enrollment target for next year will remain at 200. Based on the feedback from co-op office, the Registrar's Office proposed to increase the number of students in the two co-op programs and reduce the number of students in non-coop programs accordingly. This change was supported by M. Gong as it fits our strategic goal.

6. Minglun Gong

- **W22 Return to Campus planning**

M. Gong reported the goal for increased in-person activities for W22 with supporting staff attending on campus at least 40% of their hours, which equates to 2 days per week for full-time

staff. The main office at Reynolds, as such, will be staffed every day during working hours, however, there is the possibility of a closure if scheduled staff have symptoms.

S. Adi asked if there will be an email sent out to students regarding office hours, lectures and labs. M. Gong replied that they should receive update emails from Central Communications.

M. Gong added that grad pods re-opening is delayed until the ventilation reports have been completed. He also briefed that international research travel should resume in the near future, depending on Federal guidelines and the research managed plan will remain to the end of the year.

- **Self-study Report for Cyclical Program Review (Appendix B, C and D)**

M. Gong presented the draft of the Self-Study Report produced by the Strategic Planning Committee. He thanked everyone that helped with the mapping of the graduate and undergraduate program, led by J. Sawada and Y. Xiang, and the Student Survey, led by S. Scott. He noted that the incomplete information will be added as soon as it is received from the Office of IRP, along with an updated student survey. A suggestion from D. Rea has led to an inclusion of infrastructure update information.

M. Gong invited Council to share concerns or suggestions that could be added to the final document.

S. Kremer applauded the efforts of M. Gong and the Committee and provided a few comments. He had concerns about Faculty workload inequality, the reduction in UTAs, and course load assignments. As for the comments by students regarding languages, he cited existing courses that taught Java, Python and Cloud computing. S. Kremer endorsed a for-profit, course based Master's but worried about the accessibility for some students. He pondered SOCS recruitment capacity with reduced resources and a shared Recruitment Officer. In addition, he raised the question of the debt repayment (page 8), and the requirement for continuing to repay it with 18% of the budget, which could be used for other priority items.

M. Gong thanked S. Kremer for his comments and responded that the debt was inherited due to research overspending. He agreed that SOCS should not have to bear this burden but although willing to bring this matter to the University, he is not optimistic that it will be resolved, given the current financial climate.

S. Kremer expressed his concern that the money that is used to debt repayment would be better served to hire more UTAs which would in turn reduce the workload on instructors and thus increase their productivity. He proceeded to give a historical review of the matter and his unsuccessful attempts to clear the debt during his term as Director.

M. Gong agreed that it is an unfortunate circumstance and noted that, since the upper admins didn't address the issue when it happened, current leaders will likely be reluctant to address it. He clarified that the reason for SoCS using fewer UTAs is because more guaranteed GTA offers

were made due to more incoming Grad students. The student-to-TA ratio didn't change. He felt there is a balance between undergrad program size, which affects the total TAs we need, and graduate program size, which affects the number of guaranteed GTAs. He updated that, of the 50 GTA job obligations, only about 30 grads sent in applications and so there is room to hire UTAs for 1st and 2nd year courses.

D. Gillis concurred that the debt should be the responsibility of The Office of Research and he worried that further budget cuts could arise if SOCS pays it off. He added that the loss of a full-time Outreach staffer has resulted in an outdated website and social media channels, which he believes will impact interest from companies and thus, recruitment to the program.

M. Gong agreed that there is a need for support staff to manage the content generation for the website. He highlighted a recent example where X. Lin's students received an award at a conference and the need to celebrate these research achievements. He will look into increasing L. Zalewski's outreach capacity with the Dean's office.

D. Gillis emphasized the need for content besides research, since he believes students want to know about the student experience and interesting projects. He suggested a renegotiation of L. Zalewski's role with SOCS. M. Gong will take these concerns to the Dean's office.

C. Obimbo clarified that the effort was made to keep L. Zalewski's position but ultimately it was lost to the Dean's Office. With regard to the debt, he reflected that the whole school is affected by the loss of 18% of the budget. He inquired about the value of the debt, the value of the repayment and the length of time to repay the whole debt.

M. Gong clarified that the debt is roughly 18% of the 2013 fiscal year budget, but not 18% of the budget every year. There is no interest applied and no firm timeline for repaying the debt. However, SoCS is expected to find savings in the department to cover the deficit. He asked C. Hosker for a current value of the debt and she agreed to send the information separately to interested parties. M. Gong added that the debt has somewhat protected the School from budget cuts.

Responding to A. Hamilton-Wright in chat, M. Gong explained that he does not feel SoCS made drastic cost-saving measures because of the debt. There was policy to use more UTAs and fewer GTAs, but this policy has been reversed. He agrees that SoCS should further grow our programs and identified that the goal for the next 5 years, as suggested by J. Sawada, is to propel SOCS to the list of the top 20 CS Institutes in the Maclean's rankings, by improving its reputation and student experience.

M. Gong affirmed the CPR shows that the School is doing well and has made many improvements in the undergrad and grad programs as well as research funding and publication, and thanked everyone for their efforts in teaching and research. He acknowledged concerns regarding the budget, space and infrastructure as well as support staff with Outreach. He also noted the permanent position secured for J. Lange in instructional support which will alleviate

some of the workload of the Academic and Staff Hiring Committee and the second Program Counselor supporting misconduct cases, as positive signs of the School's improvement.

7. Any other business

No other business. Meeting adjourned at 2:21pm.