

**School of Computer Science
Council Meeting Minutes**

Tuesday October 19, 2021

1:00pm – 2:30pm

Microsoft Teams

Present –

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

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

Student Representatives: S. Adi, A. Kohut;

Regrets –

Faculty: R. Chaturvedi, H. Khan, P. Matsakis, J. McCuaig, D. Nikitenko, S. Scott, M. Wineberg;

Staff: D. Byart, D. Rea;

Student Representatives: None;

1. Approval of Agenda for October 19, 2021

Motion: That the agenda for October 19, 2021 be approved.

(A. Hamilton-Wright, C. Obimbo)

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

2. Announcements

M. Gong announced that the annual Health and Safety inspection was performed this morning at Reynolds, with D. Rea's assistance. Everyone was reminded to keep the heaters clear to avoid a potential fire. Issue was raised about A/C being cold. He will look into a solution for the temperature issues in the offices.

Sarah Brennan was welcomed as the new Program Counsellor and Academic Misconduct Officer by M. Gong.

3. Approval of minutes from September 21, 2021

Motion: That the minutes from September 21, 2021 be approved.

(A. Hamilton-Wright, A. Dehghantanha)

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

4. Ali Dehghantanha (Appendix A)

- **MCTI Updates**

- **MCTI Class of 2021**

A. Dehghantanha reported that, of the 16 students in the program, 10 are graduating. There were 7 students with jobs and 2 with pending offers, 2 on LOA and 4 returning to school with expected graduation this semester.

- **MITACS Industry Projects**

Despite limitations due to COVID, 9 projects were secured to fulfill the requirement of industry exposure to 50% of students, with more projects expected this year as activities return to normal.

- **MCTI Class of 2022**

A. Dehghantanha announced that there are 19 new students registered for F21, with 3 as part-time, 3 as female, 9 international and 1 deferred to W22. Several international students could not secure a visa in time for this year or changed their minds.

Council was asked for input by A Dehghantanha about possibilities to prevent students from backing out in F23 thus removing the opportunity for another student. The first option would be to request a payment to confirm their position and the other is to increase the number of offers from 40 to 60, to ensure the program cap of 35 is reached.

C. Obimbo considered the payment option difficult if the student has to cancel due to Visa issues. M. Gong responded that students could be deferred to the winter. The option of a reserved status was raised by A Dehghantanha.

A Nguyen reported that the reserved option was not discussed with the Admission Office, only the deposit option. The deposit would need to be made by all students, domestic and international, and would be refunded if necessary. The issue of timely refunds continues to be a problem and may be a deterrent for potential students. A. Nguyen emphasized the objective of prompt communication from the student if they have to decline, allowing another student the space early.

L. Zalewski recommended a staggered offers and to offer international students all available supports to commit. M. Gong explored the option of making offers to the winter term instead of the reserve option.

- **MCTI Budget**

There have been no funds transferred to the School yet and A. Dehghantanha declared that no indication of an amount or a timeline for this process has been communicated to him. M. Gong

agreed that it was concerning but that the Budget Office assures him that there is nothing to worry about.

- **Strategies for Recruiting Women into MCTI**

A. Nguyen detailed that a subcommittee has been created with members of the Advisory Board and MCTI Faculty to develop near term tactics to increase interest in MCTI program from potential female applicants. As a result, 4 female guest lecturers have been added in our Professional Seminar course in 2021. In addition, they are working with GWICS student leaders on joint events, as well as a Guelph Chapter of WICyS (Women in Cybersecurity)

D.. Gillis asked what the School is doing to provide a more welcoming environment for women. A. Nguyen indicated that she plans to have a mentor for every female student in MCT which would ensure support and success in their program. D. Gillis worried that if mentors were to involve female faculty, there would be an additional burden for them. He added that providing a welcoming space should include keeping the website updated as to women's issues and increasing diversity among our committees.

- **Master of Cybersecurity Leadership Proposal**

A joint proposal with the School of Business was outlined by A. Dehghantanha. After several meetings, Faculty have sent course descriptions, but an issue has arisen regarding the percentage of International students. The usual 80/20 income distribution will drop to 50% income from international students in a shared program. The content, however, can be shared without affecting income. This would require a new course code and title but with shared learning outcomes. A. Dehghantanha acknowledged that the process is slower than expected and the launch is not expected until W23 or F23.

- **Canada Cyber Foundry Update**

A Dehghantanha reminded that discussions were held with the Office of Research to build a Research Centre in Cyber Security called Canada Cyber Foundry. This work to submit the proposal will continue in winter as there is a limiting factor of bandwidth currently. There is support from the University for this Research Centre.

- **Revised Process for MITACS Industry Project**

A joint partnership with MITACS was outlined by A. Nguyen where students are able to complete a research internship with industry and be supervised by faculty in MCT (Appendix A). A new procedure has evolved whereby faculty research profiles are shared in October with industry Advisory Board members who can request collaboration with faculty members to define an internship project. This early collaboration ensures a successful experience.

An addition from A. Dehghantanha informed that faculty interested in participating in these early engagements should contact An, and there may still be a few projects posted by industry in January.

- **MCTI Scholarship Selection**

A new scholarship was announced by A. Nguyen. Bruce Power is offering an additional scholarship for Indigenous students. MCTI now have a total of 9 scholarships with 4 for females and 1 for Indigenous students. Selections will be made using CGPAs and research potential in the second semester and there will be new opportunities made for students to connect with Industry donors.

5. Minglun Gong

- **COVID-19 vaccination enforcement**

M. Gong presented an update that the university has started to deregister students who have not submitted vaccination proof for in-person courses. These students will lose access to CourseLink and will be removed from F2F class list. Due to privacy concern, instructors are not notified if students are removed from their courses. He advised instructors who have group activities in their courses, please check the class list and adjust group assignment if needed.

M. Gong notified Instructors and Program Counsellors who may receive inquiry from students that were removed from their classes, to direct students to university website for information. If the students have been vaccinated but neglected to register on the university website, they can upload the proof and get re-registered.

- **Fall course evaluation**

M. Gong disclosed that the university and UgFA is still working on the LoU and it is expected to be signed by both sides soon. FASR did state that, in terms of course evaluation, the agreement is that all courses need to be evaluated, but the instructors have the choice not to include the result in the T&P review. For courses being delivered in-person, the instructors have the choice of requesting evaluation being done either online or in person.

M. Gong encouraged all instructors to consider online evaluation option, which helps to reduce student and staff contact and also reduces staff workload. He added that Deb and Jennifer will be requesting instructors' choice.

M. Gong acknowledged frustration from parents whose students have limited interaction with instructors but defended the university decision and explained that there would be limited interaction in large classes anyway and in person labs are more effective. He noted that there is a disconnect with the way the university advertises the programs and what is actually experienced.

- **Winter term planning**

The winter term plan was conveyed by M. Gong. He quoted from the Provost that "U of G will progress its return to more conventional course delivery and offer in-person instruction for most courses this winter." He described the 2 measures for preventing outbreaks: 1) in-person instruction will only be available to students who are fully vaccinated or who have received an approved exemption from a specialist and 2) course sections will have a default enrolment cap of 450 students to help manage traffic flows in and out of our largest classrooms. M. Gong observed that computer science courses are well below that cap and will be delivered in person.

M. Gong clarified that the University will continue to support instructors who choose to use hybrid or blended approaches to teaching this winter. Hybrid, he explained, means offering remote access on top of in-person instruction and assessment, so that students can complete the whole course, including all assessments, remotely. He indicated that this is not a popular option among faculty and will not be required by the university.

M. Gong detailed that the blended option means offering some components remotely, and others in person. This includes having online lectures and in-person labs or having 1 face-to-face lecture per week and the remaining 1 or 2 lectures delivered online. He added that faculty members requesting to deliver courses completely online will require an approved medical accommodation through Occupational Health and Wellness.

There is a requirement for Units to submit plans for course delivery format, but M. Gong disclosed that no date for submission has been set. Requests should be sent to Greg and the final decision will be made by the Registrars Office and higher administration.

- **Winter TA hiring**

M. Gong confirmed that the estimated TA needs for undergrad courses is less than 50, but with 50 committed GTA assignments for Winter 2022, there may not be any room for accommodating UTAs, which is a new and unique situation. He acknowledged the benefits of using UTAs, as undergrad TAs are more familiar with the courses and the TA work experience is also beneficial to the students. This occurred due to the growth of the grad program and the reduction of the overall budget. M. Gong opened the floor to discussion on using GTAs only in undergrad courses and to hear suggestions on how to address the issue.

A Hamilton-Wright expressed concern that a result of building a unique undergrad program and training UTAs in the program over several years, is that GTAs from other places are unqualified to teach these courses and would require more support to maintain the high level of teaching quality.

M. Gong agreed that many GTAs would not have experience in our Software Engineering program but clarified that this would only affect 1st and 2nd year courses. He directed instructors to notify himself or Josh if they believed a UTA is necessary in their particular

course, and they would see what can be done to assist. The number of committed GTAs may change and there may be opportunity to shift some assignments to S22.

C. Hosker clarified that the issue has arisen due to an increase in guaranteed GTAs assignments to 2. She explored the option of reducing that number to support the undergrad TAs. M. Gong concurred but conveyed that the increase to 2 was a response to the College's minimum funding requirement for MSc students, which is useful in recruiting. He felt it is too soon to revert the change as it is not clear whether the increase in grad students will be maintained in the future. We can revisit the issue after another year of observation, to maintain a balance between teaching and research.

Discussion continued with A. Hamilton-Wright, M. Gong and C. Hosker as to the suitability of specialized GTAs teaching a course which is not their study area and the budget support for the growing number of TAs. R. Dara supported research growth and keeping the 2 GTA funding.

M. Gong added that the second reason for 2 guaranteed GTAs was that the interview process was very time consuming to Committee members and did not result in identifying good TAs. He will continue to monitor the situation next fall to see how the numbers evolve.

- **Feedback from Alumni survey (Appendix B)**

An Alumni survey conducted by S. Scott as part of the Program Review was presented by M. Gong. For privacy reasons, the full review was not shared because some instructors' names were mentioned. Surveys were conducted with Alumni from the past 5 years in Computer Science (65 total) and Software Engineering (33 total) who responded to questions about their degree program, career status, overall experience, teaching quality satisfaction, and preparation for careers. M. Gong examined the sections on Main Strengths and Weaknesses as well as the students thoughts on potential improvements to the programs (see Appendix B).

M. Gong summarized the findings that the overall response was very positive with most graduates employed in the private sector. The School can choose either to defend our programs in the CPR report or to use this opportunity to further improve our programs. He proposed another meeting to discuss the issues raised by students to improve the programs and secure additional resources.

6. Any other business

No Other business. Meeting adjourned at 2:34pm.