Present: Board members – Jon Bentley, James Cavanagh, Narain Gehani, M. George Mitwasi, Megan Restuccia, Jane Roso-Salmon; 
CS faculty – Li-Hsiang Cheo, Erh-Wen Hu, Linda Kaufman, Cyril S. Ku (Ex-Officio and Chair), John Najarian, Gilbert Ndajtou, Bogong Su; 
College deans - Dean Sandy DeYoung and Associate Dean Jean Fuller-Stanley 

Date: 12:30 - 3:30 pm; Friday, May 1, 2009 
Site: Room 171A, University Commons 

The Chair called the meeting to order at around 1:00 pm. He then distributed to all participants a “packet” containing documents describing the purpose of the meeting, state of the CS Department, the set of brochures the CS Department used for recruiting new students including a beautifully designed postcard announcing the Department’s recent ABET accreditation, and the background of board members. The meeting proceeded according to the pre-released agenda. 

1. Each participant briefly introduced herself or himself. 

2. Dean DeYoung welcomed the board members. She then thanked them for binging in a diverse range of expertise and years of professional experience to the meeting. She hoped the inputs from the board members including the hiring practices of the employers, new trends in computer science, and new developments in computing industry, could help the CS Department to keep its curriculum up-to-date and to help its faculty members keep current. The Dean then pointed out that she recognized the national trend of declining enrollments in CS major programs over the past few years and believed that the worst was over. She also commented on the budget cut the University had suffered last year and expected the situation to become worse next years before it gets better. 

3. The Chair thanked the board members and then went through the “packet”, item by item, with all participants. He then gave a PowerPoint presentation of the CS major program, emphasizing its strength, which includes small class size with an average of less than 20, undergraduate research with NSF grant support, and the fact that we are one of the only seven ABET-accredited CS major programs in NJ. 

As the presentation went on, questions were raised by board members and discussions ensued, with the contributions from all board members, as summarized below without citing the names of individual contributors: 

Regarding program-level assessment: For a tighter quality control and better measurement of students learning outcomes, the Department has been considering the implementation of a new “Comprehensive Foundation Test”. The test is planned to be given to students who have
completed a subset of the following six CS core courses: CS230 Computer Science I, CS240 Computer Science II, CS260 Discrete Structures, CS280 Computer and Assembler Language, CS341 Digital Logic and Computer Organization, and CS342 Data Structures.

**Issues:** What are the optimal approach to it and how to deal with a range of questions such as when should such a test be given and how to deal with those who have already passed the courses but somehow failed the foundation test?

**Suggestions:** Clearly divide the test into topical areas. Those who failed certain particular areas are required to take the mandatory “review” classes of some sort and/or complete some specific set of assignments with the possibility of asking the students to retake the foundation test again but only in the failed areas.

**Regarding easy-access to documents needed by students for planning and studying:** It was noticed that the PPT document used for recruitment was dated 2006, a typo? Do students have easy access to all documents such as the curriculum control sheet and detailed course descriptions, etc?

**Chair’s response:** It was a typo and would soon be corrected, for the contents of the document are up-to-date. Since last ABET visit, the Department has posted all documents important to students on the website of the Department. In addition, all faculty members have either posted their course materials on the university maintained electronic Blackboard Course Management System or stored them in the web folders maintained by the CS Department. Moreover, all assessment materials and related information have also been posted on a separate website (CS Department ABET Website) protected by password for restricted access.

**Regarding student research:** Where are students’ research results presented? What kind of conferences do they attend and are the travel expense funded by the university?

**Chair’s response:** Most student presentations are made on campus during the annual University Research and Scholarship Day. Many presented their work off campus in regional student conferences and a few in national conferences. The University usually provides the funding for travel and registration expenses.

**Regarding the planning by the CS Department to offer a new CIS major program within two years (under the manpower constraint of seven full time faculty members):**

**Question:** What is the main motivation for your Department to offer such a program?

**Response from CS faculty:** Over the years, many of our entering freshmen dropped out of the CS major program either because they had difficulty coping with the demanding math and science requirements or they would like to pursue a more practical technology-oriented major in CIS or MIS program (many considered our CS major program as being too theoretical). To help increase enrollment and to provide an alternative to those who might otherwise have stayed with us, the Department has been planning to offer a BA or BS major program in either CIS or MIS. The job opportunities seemed good for such a major as national and regional forecasts (e.g., US labor statistics) seem to have consistently suggested over the last few years.
**Questions, comments, from board members:** What is your definition for CIS, MIS, or whatever other name? MIS is not necessary less demanding in math/science; the MIS program offered by NJIT is a good example. **Suggestion:** 1) The Department needs to do a thorough analysis to find out how many students have left the CS major program over certain period of time (say, e.g., the last two years) and for what reasons, 2) the title of the new program, CIS, MIS, or IT, is not important in terms of attractiveness to employers; other factors such as the ability to interact with people (people skills) are more important. In addition, the new program may consider preparing students to pass the certification tests and to promote internship, as both can make the new program more attractive.

**Regarding increasing internship participation:**

**Questions from faculty members:** How could board members help us, especially those who are in managerial positions in the industry?

**Responses from board members:** 1) one board member indicated that her company had discontinued the paid internship program; non-paid internship might be possible; 2) another board member mentioned that her company hired interns from RPI (Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute) working on semester-long project. Whether WPU could make the same arrangement with the company needs to be explored.

**Regarding having professors from NJIT (Dean Gehani) or specialist from companies to give seminars or talk to our students:** Dean Gehani promised that he would help make arrangement to make it happen. Dr. Bentley had given talks to our students in the past.

**Regarding future role and responsibility of the board members:**

**Comments made by a board member:** It must be a two-way street or it will be a waste of time.

**Regarding how many times should the two parties meet and in what form:**

**Comments from board members:** two parties should interact as frequently as needed and the form of interaction is not important; communication could be facilitated by emails or any other means such as a conference call.

**Regarding student recruitment:**

**Suggestions from board members:**

1. Get students involved in recruitment activities and give them a title such as “ambassador”.
2. Reach out aggressively to community colleges; visit them, promote/sell our program by talking with their counselors and students.
3. Treat recruitment as a business: package the product and market it.
4. Develop and offer attractive certificate programs in certain specialized areas and integrate such programs into the curriculum in such a way that students can earn credits from these programs.
5. Develop some unique new programs especially the programs that span interdisciplinary areas such as bio-informatics. Presumably, such programs should involve faculties from other department.
6. Design new minor programs jointly with other department that require students to take CS course.

Regarding the fact that WPUNJ is the only school in the region that does not have a GE (general education) CS course: A couple of CS faculty members who served on the faculty senate tried in vain to convince the GE committee of the University the importance of having our WPUNJ students, regardless of their majors, to take a computer course. Our experience in teaching the GE CS201 Computer & Information Technology (only an elective) and CS215 Computer & Information Technology for Educators (required only for those seeking a teaching certificate) have proven that students do need and can benefit much from either course. How can the Advisory Board help on this matter?

Response from the board: The board can help the situation by sending a message to the University to help convince the school the importance of having its students to take a course in computer and information technology.

Other items: The Chair handed out the course descriptions for two new CS courses to the board members for their comments. The two new courses Net-Centric Java Computing and Computer and Network Security are intended to address the ABET suggestion that the CS program needs to update it offering, particularly in the area of the Internet. Dr. Bentley gave the Chair a copy of the roles and responsibilities of the advisory board for our reference.

The Chair thanked all participants and adjourned the meeting at 3:30 pm.

Respectfully recorded and compiled by

Erh-Wen Hu