

From: Moyer530@aol.com [mailto:Moyer530@aol.com]
Sent: Saturday, April 18, 2009 9:31 PM
To: jvmaher@pitt.edu
Cc: rlarsen@pitt.edu; cloether@sis.pitt.edu
Subject: SIS Board of Visitors Report

James V. Maher

Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor

University of Pittsburgh

Via Email:

18 April 2009

Jim,

Once again I am pleased to transmit to you the report of the SIS Board of Visitors. A draft of the report was shared with Dean Larsen and you will note that the School has begun to act on some of our recommendations.

I know I speak for the Board when I express my appreciation for the privilege of serving the University in this important way and to Dean Larsen and his team for making the visit an enjoyable experience. We do believe the School is moving in the right direction and we look forward to returning in 2009 to further assess progress towards goals.

Best regards.

Alfred L. Moyé, Chair

SIS Board of Visitors

SIS Board of Visitors

Meeting Report

October 15-16, 2008

Board Members present were:

Gary D. Byrd *Daniel P. Mulhollan* *James Matarazzo*

J. Roger Glunt *Robert J. Strauss* *Patrick White*

David Holtzman *Alfred L. Moyé, Chair* *Keith Schaefer*

Andrew Blair, representing the Provost's Office

1. Introduction

The School of Information Sciences' Board of Visitors met on October 15 - 16, 2008. Materials supporting the meeting are available at <http://www.sis.pitt.edu/~sisbov/agenda.html>. The web site has a user-id (sisbov) and password (sisbov) to prevent it from being harvested by search engines.

The Board convened with a "Research Showcase" in the Information Sciences building, where about 40 SIS students and 14 faculty described their research activities with posters, 10 short presentations on academic and research interests of faculty, and 2 laboratory demonstrations were provided. This session was held as an open house for all SIS students and faculty and was very favorably received by Board members. Dan Mulhollan noted that the Provost would have enjoyed the poster session as evidence of the intellectual vitality of the School. The program is attached.

The formal meeting opened with the Provost issuing his "charge" to the Board.

2. Provost's Charge to the Board

The Provost opened his remarks by affirming the significant advances made by SIS since the Board last met and promising his continued and sustained support for the School.

The Provost's charge included a two-fold assessment of the "Internal Situation" and the "External Situation." Addressing the internal situation, he noted that opportunities exist university-wide in information technology, and that the University is serious about looking for potential opportunities that have substantial positive impact. He indicated that he is ready to invest in programs that can advance the University, and that SIS should seek to identify "home run" programs that, once underway, become sustainable through generated revenue streams. He expressed appreciation for the increasingly collective attitude of the School and its progress in operating more cohesively.

Addressing the external situation, the Provost noted that from 2001 through 2007, he accumulated reserve funds to be invested in high potential new or emerging program directions. Clearly, in 2008, the overall economic situation changed, and other factors (e.g., building code changes affecting facilities plans) impacted the University negatively. In early October, the governor reduced the University's Commonwealth appropriation by 4.5%. In spite of these setbacks, the Provost is trying to retain a pool of money to make highly selective investments in new programs that can become self-sustaining. He noted the University's Center for National Preparedness as a current example.

3. Board Discussion

On October 16, the Board reconvened to consider reports from the Dean, the SIS Council Chair, and each of the Program Chairs. The Board noted sustained progress in student recruitment, with enrollment having nearly returned to the 2003 level. (This trend has continued into early 2009; spring enrollment is more than 10% higher than during the spring 2008 term.) Credit for the growth is attributed to a number of factors, including increasingly targeted recruitment campaigns supported by the Provost's office (e.g., the "One-degree, Many-jobs" poster campaign), redesign of the School's website, recent hires of a student recruiter and a director of student services, and restructuring the curriculum along more clearly articulated specializations:

BSIS: information systems; user-centered design; and networks & security

MSIS: cognitive systems; human-centered computing; database & web systems; information security; geoinformatics; and telecommunications & distributed systems

MST: telecommunications systems; computer networks; policy & management; wireless; and security

MLIS: public libraries; academic libraries; school library certification; archives, preservation & records management; digital libraries; medical librarianship; and services to children and young adults

SIS Council

The Board was pleased to see the energy and focus with which the SIS Council, chaired by Stephen Hirtle, is bringing faculty together to solve School problems. The Council has reviewed all School policies and developed new tenure and promotion guidelines that are fairer and easier to employ. The Council has responsibility for recommending how faculty positions should be filled, keeping an eye on the needs of the whole School. While there are still outstanding issues to be resolved, such as the roles of the Research Interest Groups, overall it appears that the Council is effective. It is engaging all faculty members in dialogue; using a protected web site to post documents; and it is tracking the School's progress on the SIS plans bi-monthly.

Undergraduate Program

In reviewing progress in the undergraduate program, led by Bob Perkoski, the Board discussed alternatives for providing interesting and relevant undergraduate experiences. One suggestion was to encourage undergraduate students to take an elective course or two outside of SIS in areas that

complement their SIS program. CMU's Entertainment Technology Center was named as one possible source. David Holtzman suggested student projects that focus on developing games for platforms like the iPhone, noting that these are easier than using Flash and it gets the student thinking more about information visualization. Alfred Moyé described Harvey Mudd College's capstone experience, which runs for two semesters and engages 6 -7 students on a team addressing an industry-funded project. The cost of these projects (sponsored by industry) was estimated at \$60 – 80K.

The Board commended Bob for turning around the undergraduate program and encouraged him to seek ways these students could transition into graduate study. Board members suggested that SIS graduate programs consider recruiting students from the undergraduate program.

Graduate Library and Information Science Program

Richard Cox reviewed progress and current challenges in the LIS program. He described the rapidly expanding Partners Program, which places Master's students in professional settings for a semester to develop hands-on experience. The program includes a partial tuition scholarship from SIS and a stipend paid by the employer. The Board suggested consideration of the Special Libraries Association (Pittsburgh chapter) to further expand the Partners Program.

Gary Byrd expressed "some concern" over the LIS faculty teaching workload. He was concerned about sustaining high quality instruction as the program continues to grow without adding new faculty. To continue to be effective, faculty will need additional help and will need to think strategically about their own future.

The Board observed the dependence, particularly in the MLIS program on a strong cohort of adjunct faculty, and that many of these adjuncts are providing exceptional service, particularly in bringing a "real world" perspective to the classroom. The Board recognized their value, noting that the quality of program would be diminished without them. They recommended strengthening the relationship with adjuncts, treating them more like full faculty in terms of information dissemination and services provided.

Graduate Information Science and Technology (GIST) Program

The GIST program, led by Paul Munro, is restructuring its curriculum into more clearly articulated tracks or specializations as identified above. Enrollment is markedly improved, although not to the level desired. The SIS core strength in system analysis & design has historically yielded strong employment prospects for its graduates. Much of the historic success of this area is attributed to retired Prof. James Williams' passion, coupled with strong industry contacts that he personally developed. There is no one in the program with his influence currently, with the result that industrial relationships are not as strong as they once were.

Telecommunications and Networking Program

David Tipper reviewed the changes in the TeleNet program and their rationale since the Board meeting in 2007, noting the shift in emphasis toward undergraduate education and PhD research. The absence of

a major telecommunications industrial presence in Pittsburgh led the faculty to conclude that the Masters program should not be the central focus of the program.

Pat White engaged the Board in a discussion regarding the name of the Telecommunications and Networking program. The use of the term “telecommunications” was questioned. Pat White suggested renaming the program “Information Networking” as more appropriate to an iSchool. Board members in attendance endorsed consideration of the renaming. Upon further reflection, the Board recommended changing the name, as an interim step, to Information Networking & Telecommunications, leaving open the possibility of dropping the Telecommunications term in the future.

Board members observed that the Telecommunications and Networking research presented in the Research Showcase was “very impressive.” Pat White noted, however, that wireless services are taking on a bigger role in global telecommunications and the student posters at the Research Showcase were largely in the wired and fiber area. He suggested that students be encouraged to focus on access issues related to wireless infrastructure and services, including authentication and security. Consideration should be given to a wireless laboratory similar to the wired lab that opened this year.

Board members had the opportunity to visit the new 8th floor Telecommunications laboratory, noting that it is “very nice, and it would be nice to have a similar lab for wireless.” They noted a growing number of challenging problems in spectrum management, for example, from technology to policy and business, and the exciting potential emerging for software radios. The Board recommended focusing on a broad set of large problems in this area that could collaboratively engage SIS, Katz, Law, GSPIA, and, perhaps, others in advancing scholarship related to large-scale telecommunications issues, particularly in broadly accessible wireless access.

The Board expressed approval of the TeleNet Program’s collaborative curricular relationships with other schools (e.g., Business, CS, and Engineering), suggesting that this model could benefit other SIS programs, as well.

Online Education

Online education continues to present both opportunities and challenges, particularly for programs as diverse as those offered by SIS. Opportunities reaped to date in the MLIS program, while clearly successful in generating tuition revenue and providing a service to students, continue to be labor-intensive, presenting challenges of scale. Developing online curricula for the GIST and TeleNet programs present additional complications, with the emphasis these programs place on laboratory experiences and system development.

Richard Cox observed that the FastTrack online MLIS program continues to grow and that it remains the only online degree program at Pitt. Andy Blair noted that the University has hired an Associate Director for Online Programs at CIDDE who is currently working with two other schools to develop online Masters programs.

Al Moyé suggested that the Provost's Office consider SIS a valuable resource for the new Associate Director, sharing what has been learned in FastTrack. FastTrack has implemented evolutionary changes every year in response to need, experience, and technology. Effective classroom space is required, particularly, for blended courses where online students are combined with on-campus students. Providing effective audio coverage was noted as a continuing challenge. The Board observed that SIS has been aggressive in partnering with developers of emerging technologies, like CMU's spin-off Panopto classroom video suite, in advancing its online education services to students, and encouraged consideration of course management systems beyond Blackboard for delivery of online education.

International Students

Given that SIS is a professional school, the Board observed that roughly a third of its graduates are international students who return to their home countries, a third go to industry in the US and the remaining third take academic positions in the US. Board members expressed concern over the growing dependence on international graduate students, citing it as a "scary" trend in which the US has created an export industry that may not serve its own long-term interests.

The Board further expressed concern that foreign students don't contribute to the long-term interests of the School as alumni. This is not a problem unique to Pitt, but Pitt could address it by targeting undergraduate SIS students to continue on in graduate study.

Funding opportunities

The Board suggested the School focus more on fundraising. Dan Mulhollan also urged Board members to focus more on fundraising, suggesting this as an agenda topic for next year. He also thanked the Provost and the Office of Institutional Advancement for responding to the suggestions of the Board in fundraising last year, leading to the new Director of Constituent Relations position held by Joelleen Yerace.

The Board observed that foreign students who return to their homelands rarely become significant financial contributors to their US schools. While the Board offered no specific recommendation, they noted that SIS must remain aware of the phenomenon as it develops plans for more effective fund raising.

Board members suggested the School pursue grant funding from sources such as the National Library of Medicine more aggressively and approach the Ford Foundation for additional support to the School's diversity initiatives.

David Holtzman reminded the Board that the Provost said he is looking for investment opportunities. The Board could take this opportunity to provide a "stamp of approval" for a SIS proposal. He recalled Wayne Gretzky's famous quote that "I skate to where the puck is going to be, not where it has been." SIS needs to do likewise. The School should consider areas where the combination of faculty interests and strengths produces a unique or new perspective on the field. He suggested looking at topics such as studying the relationships between social networking algorithms and telecommunications and

networking, noting “It’s all about networks. What can we learn about survivability, rerouting, automatic intrusion detection, for example, from studying social networks from a more technical perspective?” He recommended looking for synergy between telecommunications networking and social networking, suggesting that online learning is “ahead of the game” and that we are in a transitional point regarding the use of mobile devices in education.

Faculty Affairs

The Board noted with concern the long-term vacancy in the Doreen E. Boyce Chair in Library and Information Science, urging the School to fill this important senior position soon. At the time of the meeting, recruitment processes were underway for the Boyce Chair as well as for a senior scholar in cyberscholarship that is partly funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. While the official announcement is still pending, Dr. Susan “Leigh” Star has accepted the Boyce Chair, and Dr. Geoffrey Bowker has accepted the Cyberscholar position. They will formally begin their tenure at Pitt on September 1, 2009.

The Board took note of two impending retirements (Dr. Toni Carbo and Kenneth Sochats) and one relocation (Dr. Patricia Lawton returning to Milwaukee), creating three open faculty slots at the end of the 2008-09 academic year. The Board recognized the urgent need to fill these positions, indicating this would be one of their recommendations to the Provost. (Note: the Provost did approve recruitment actions to fill these positions; nearly 200 candidates applied, more than 20 were interviewed, and ten were brought to campus for in-depth consideration; as of this writing, the search committee’s recommendations have been forwarded to the Provost to seek approval to negotiate with the top candidates for two of the open positions. Due to an across-the-board 5% budget reduction, one of the three positions will be left temporarily open.)

Al Moyé discussed the Board’s observation of the number of faculty positions that are currently open or coming open, urging the Provost to give high priority to recruitment actions as one means of addressing the current, exceptionally large class size issues in LIS. He noted that new faculty hires should be considered strategic, reflecting the broadening of the school’s domain. He also noted the good progress in improving student services.

A strategic plan for faculty growth is needed, including consideration of alternative faculty approaches, such as visiting clinical professors and non-financial means of strengthening adjunct relationships. The School was encouraged to be both creative and strategic, bringing a plan to the next BOV meeting for faculty development.

Diversity

Current approaches for funding diversity scholarships present a sustainability problem (the LIS program has been using one-time funds for scholarships, for example). Board members suggested that diversity issues also be discussed at the next meeting. The School is applying to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for funding to support a Diversity Initiative. A decision on a planning grant is expected in January 2009. (Note: a \$100K planning grant was awarded to the School and the early steps of

organizing an annual summer institute to introduce high potential undergraduates from under-represented segments of the population to the information professions is underway.)

4. Provost's Executive Session

In his introduction to the Provost's Executive Session, Alfred Moyé offered "kudos to Dean Larsen and his team for a quick response to last year's board meeting." He noted that the attitude of faculty is much improved, that enrollment gains are strong, and that the research presentations and posters provided evidence to the intellectual vitality of the School. Board members collectively endorsed AI's assessment, praising the progress the School has made under Dean Larsen's leadership. As the University develops other online programs, the Board recommended that the University use SIS as an internal reference, leveraging its knowledge and experience with the rest of the University. The Board further recommended that dedicated classrooms be built for distance learning and consideration be given to course management systems identified by SIS that are better suited to online education than Blackboard. The Board further urged the Provost to support recruitment actions for all five SIS faculty positions (two senior hires, two tenure-stream junior hires, and one non-tenure-stream junior hire), with an emphasis on strategic hires that can bridge several areas within the School.

The Board observed that the SIS Council is becoming successful in developing ways to execute its mandate as the primary governance vehicle for the School. Faculty are coming together to solve problems across the School, as evidenced by the re-energized Telecommunications and Networking program, the restructured undergraduate program, and the continuing growth in the LIS program. The leadership provided by the Program Chairs was commended.

The Board is pleased with the direction of the undergraduate program and by the developments in the Telecommunications and Networking program, which is now focusing more on applications. The MST program has developed a new laboratory class, created a seminar series with speakers from industry, and modified its relationship with the Katz School of Business. It is currently considering collaborating with GSPIA. It is organizing internships for students, and implementing network and security tracks.

Challenges to the Telecommunications and Networking program include attracting more domestic Ph.D. students, increasing alumni giving, increasing corporate giving, and improving the marketing of the programs. The Board endorses the faculty's decision to de-emphasize the MST degree in preference to the BSIS and Ph.D. The Board also recommends

- evolving the curriculum toward the higher layers of the communications "stack" and away from the physical layers,
- continuing to enhance research strength in security and information assurance
- seeking more funding and research experience for undergraduates (through, for example, REU's), and
- recruiting high quality Ph.D. students.

The Board recommended renaming Telecommunications and Networking to Information Networking and Telecommunications.

The Student Services Office was called out as already become a notable success story, including the introduction of web-based programs to advise and serve students (and faculty).

The Board expressed concern about the increasing teaching workload in SIS, particularly in the LIS program, reducing the time available for faculty research. Managing enrollment increases and large classes are problems. Infusion of new faculty will help, but the Board also suggested strengthening relationships with adjunct faculty who are making exceptional contributions to the program.

The Board expressed its interest in adding the topic of fundraising to future meetings, noting that this was not dealt with in depth this time.

Responding to the Provost's statement of interest in strategic investment, Board members summarized their earlier discussion of the potential for research addressing the interplay between social networking and telecommunications networking. They suggested going after fairly aggressive research projects to flesh out this largely unmapped territory, noting its relevance to the Telecommunications and Networking curriculum's move up the OSI stack and the reshaping of faculty research areas.

The Board concluded its report to the Provost by asking, "Can we shape a vision that would engage faculty in each of the programs that could be seeded by the Provost?" This may position the School to seek matching funds through federal or corporate grants. One example noted was IBM's New York Headquarters addressing vital concerns of Health Information Management in collaboration with the University of Buffalo. These types of projects require cross-disciplinary work to develop the scale desired.

The Provost responded to the Board, confirming the progress made by the School since the Board last met and observing that "the Dean and I agree on the difficulty of repositioning groups with fixed members. The Telecommunications and Networking program, for example, cannot and should not try to compete with EE. In order to become a leading group in its field, it needs to continue to refocus away from traditional hard-wired telecommunications systems to the directions recommended by the Board."

He also endorsed the separation of curricular needs associated with professional education from the School's research agenda, and noted the positive results that could follow by making adjuncts more valued members of the faculty.

Board member Gary Byrd summarized the Board's assessment of SIS progress, noting that he would give "A's" on nearly everything. He noted "massive progress" in student services. Stephen Hirtle was cited for his work as chair of SIS Council, where he is "making good progress in finding ways to bring faculty together." Bob Perkoski was observed to be doing a "great job" on the undergraduate program, and the Telecommunications and Networking program has been re-energized under David Tipper's leadership. The Board cited Richard Cox and David Tipper for providing strong leadership, and noted that the IS program should also get an "A" (IS was addressed, but was not central to this year's Board agenda).

In closing David Holtzman applauded the “big improvement” since the last meeting of the Board of Visitors.

The Board adjourned at 4:00 pm.