

**Observations by the Dean, Associate Dean, SIS Council Chair, and Program Chairs  
(BSIS, GIST, TeleNet, LIS)**

- 1. Changes in the School / Program over the past 5 years driven by or related to assessments.**
  - a. Establishing SIS Council and working toward making it a mechanism for School-wide discussion, review, and decision-making, primarily driven by annual planning process and other required assessment requirements.
  - b. Making strategic hires of new faculty, as opportunity presents itself, to support building of a stronger unified School
  - c. Transforming individual annual review of faculty to have at least some focus on School-wide priorities and initiatives
- 2. Exogenous trends that have impacted or influenced the changes that have been made.**
  - a. The marking of the tenth anniversary of the Fast Track program, the development of increased competition of other online programs (especially in LIS programs), issues of teaching and advising loads (and other non-research commitments on faculty), and the modest expansion of online offerings in SIS outside of the LIS program has put us at a point where outside assessment and evaluation of the online focus is needed (and underway)
  - b. Recent negative economic issues coupled with the pervasive notion of the corporate university has generated more masters students seeing themselves as customers interested in credentials leading to difficult challenges in advising and classroom dynamics.
  - c. Increasing efforts by a variety of professional associations to develop more detailed calls for new educational and training programs accompanied by some form (although very mixed) of assessment and accountability requirements requiring some adjustment in curricular efforts and individual faculty teaching.
  - d. The economic downturn has made it much more difficult to acquire foundation funds and to be successful in establishing funds for items such as student financial aid and other support, lecture series and program development, and faculty support for travel and research.
  - e. Graying of faculty, including retirements, have created critical shortages and increased competition for new research-oriented faculty in a number of areas requiring some new efforts to recruit and prepare future faculty (such as the Archival Education Research Initiative).
- 3. Dominant challenges and risks to SIS and its programs that are informed or driven by current assessments.**

- a. A dominant definition of research as being what is funded or could be funded at the expense of downplaying or minimizing the value of important research and publication that is not funded, with the risk of having research only driven by money (another reflection of the corporate model). There have been successful efforts to publish research and to set research agendas outside of funding schemes, such as the recent LIS research group's publication in *Library Trends* and in other individual faculty efforts to collaborate with students.
- b. High teaching loads and administrative responsibilities creating the risk of losing junior and senior faculty with strong aspirations for research, with the commensurate impact on the School's reputation.
- c. An increasingly antiquated facility, even with spot repair and miscellaneous upgrades, threatens to put us farther behind in our reputation with competing I-Schools and other schools especially schools with new and newer facilities (such as Michigan and Penn State).
- d. The culture of the School is evolving gradually, beginning to explore, to experiment with, and, hopefully, to ultimately embrace a more holistic understanding of itself as an iSchool, but there remain legacy issues, interests, and concerns for what is lost in contrast to what is gained. In addition, the pressure of adding and adapting course materials that respond to contemporary needs of the information professions introduces course compression issues that may suggest an expansion of Masters' programs beyond the current 36 hour requirement. [This is the Dean's assessment, but I agree very strongly]

**4. Notable opportunities that have become apparent as a result of current assessments. [I agree with the Dean's list, but have just focused on a couple of minor points related to this area].**

- a. Research and instructional opportunities are emerging with groups on campus with whom we have had little interactions in the past, and beginning to create new opportunities for joint hiring of faculty and/or staff (such as the joint hiring of Alison Langmead with Art & Architecture).
- b. The growth of inexpensive technology options and opportunities have us poised us for experimentation in the cooperative teaching of doctoral seminars with other I-Schools (we are at very early exploration here, but promising).

**5. Potential scenarios that suggest alternative futures for the School and its programs, that offer insight into the School's 5-year prognosis and contribute to its vision.**

- a. Traditional areas of employment for our graduates need to be re-evaluated, especially in light of the increasing expressions of frustration and in some cases anger about the growing number of graduates and the declining number of jobs, and our programs adjusted accordingly. This includes tightening admission requirements, targets, and expectations.

- b. The continuing focus on information *and* public policy should suggest the opportunity for faculty collaboration in areas of *public* scholarship that draw attention to the School and its increasingly diversified faculty expertise (if we are successful with the 9/11 essay ten year reflection, this would be an example – but we should be able to go far beyond this limited effort).
  - c. Increasing scholarship in traditional areas, such as the printed book and the publishing industry, also suggest the need to incorporate such perspectives into our digital focus.
  - d. We need to scrutinize our global initiatives also as opportunities for influencing other countries in areas such as information ethics, access to information and transparent government, and so forth.
  - e. We create separate faculties, one primarily focused on research and one on teaching, allowing both aspects to develop and enabling faculty members to opt to follow their primary focus and interests (and to do so in such a way that benefits both groups and strengthens the School overall).
- 6. How does SIS assess itself with respect to the iSchool vision and SIS mission (below)?**
- a. While acknowledging the new more interdisciplinary emphasis, we also create some new masters programs, such as in the APRM area, that enable the School to differentiate itself from its competitors in a way that is both positive and innovative in an economy suggesting a shrinking set of employment possibilities. These new degrees should be able to draw on our growing interdisciplinary strengths.
- 7. What steps can SIS (and the BOV) take to advance its effectiveness and stature as an information school? [I endorse the Dean's list]**
- a. Assure full funding for all full time PhD students.
  - b. Improve and expand the physical facilities supporting faculty and student research.
  - c. Reduce online and on-campus teaching workloads for **all** research-active ~~junior~~ faculty, **creating an environment encouraging senior faculty with established research and publication records.**
  - d. Define, develop, clarify, and enunciate the set of existing and emerging signature strengths of the School that are expressed in research, colloquia, and curricula.
  - e. Define a series of coherent threads, tracks, or specializations that extend from the undergraduate program, through the Master's programs, and into the PhD programs.

## VISION & MISSION

**The following is the *vision statement* of the iCaucus, the management forum for the iSchools Consortium:**

"The iSchool Caucus seeks to maximize the visibility and influence of its member schools, and their interdisciplinary approaches to harnessing the power of information and technology, and maximizing the potential of humans. We envision a future in which the iSchool Movement has spread around the world, and the information field is widely recognized for creating innovative systems and designing information solutions that benefit individuals, organizations, and society. iSchool graduates will fill the personnel and leadership needs of organizations of all types and sizes; and our areas of research and inquiry will attract strong support and have profound impacts on society and on the formulation of policy from local to international levels."

**The following is the *mission statement* of Pitt's School of Information Sciences:**

"The Mission of the School of Information Sciences is to support and advance the broader education, research, and service mission of the University by educating students, furthering knowledge, and contributing our expertise to advance humankind's progress through information.

This mission is achieved through specific actions:

- Providing a high-quality undergraduate program in Information Science
- Offering superior graduate programs in Library and Information Science, Information Science, and Telecommunications
- Engaging in research and scholarly activities that advance learning through the extension of the frontiers of knowledge and creative endeavor
- Cooperating with industry and government to transfer knowledge
- Extending our expertise to local communities and public agencies to contribute to social, intellectual, and economic development in Pennsylvania, the nation, and the world."