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

1. What are the major factors in your discipline that are currently shaping its long term, strategic evolution?

Factors that shape the evolution of our discipline are almost entirely exogenous. These include:

a. ubiquitous wireless technology: smartphones and tablet computing
b. vulnerability of computer systems to unauthorized access
c. the emergence and immense popularity of social networks
d. mining, analysis, and exploitation of large databases
e. competition and cooperation among governments, commercial concerns, and NGOs
f. continued acceleration in computational speed, memory capacity, and software capability (eg, pattern recognition, speech recognition, database integration, AI)
g. exploitation of personal information both aligned with to the user's interests and counter to them

2. What is the impact of these factors? Why are they so important? What difference do they make?

These factors reflect aspects of a global society whose population and information capabilities are growing at a dizzying rate. For better or worse, the instruments that are developed by information professionals will have a strong influence on their impact.

3. How do these factors affect the future of SIS and your program?

In order to maintain the ability to conduct relevant research and to train students to take a meaningful role in society, SIS must endeavor to remain current in both the research arena and in the structure of the curriculum. Our graduates will benefit from a comprehensive understanding of information as it is encoded, stored, retrieved, encrypted, communicated, and used in a specific mode and in a specific context. Thus, our program must maintain both a theoretical approach to the abstract nature of information as well as providing students with current tools for developing systems.

4. How can the School respond most effectively to these factors?

Most of the leading research and technological developments originate in industrial labs, or in projects conducted jointly between a university lab and an industrial lab. We need to strengthen research ties between projects within the school and projects outside. Also, in the teaching area, it would benefit the school to broaden the internship/practicum program.

5. Who are the necessary partners that would need to be engaged in order to respond effectively?

Partners for curriculum development should include recent graduates (less than 10 years out, 5 years is ideal) and (other) project managers from industry. Research partners could come from peer institutions or industrial labs -- preferably forward-thinking labs.

6. What would an effective response look like and what difference would it make?

An effective response would be to make strategic hires, including faculty in key areas and a full-time manager for the practicum program. Also, it may make sense to greatly broaden our adjunct faculty with high-quality instructors from top companies and organizations in the region (such as Intel, Maya Design, Google, Apple, CERT). Bringing in more folks from such sources may promote the hiring of students and the development of research projects.