GIST Program Chair's Report (Peter Brusilovsky)

1. MSIS Admission

- This year, we have a record number of matriculated students (109, if counting one LIS transfer).
- Students increasingly spend the summer doing internships, hence summer courses are much less loaded than Fall/Spring
- As a result, we have about 120 continuing students in the Fall
- In total, MSIS is for the second year the largest program at SIS, well ahead of BSIS and LIS
- The dominant majority of students are coming from PRC. The program currently has only 14 new US students.

2. PhD Admission
- This year, we had a good number of PhD applicants, but many top applicants who were offered admission selected other programs; this is a concern, as we do not fully understand the reason.
- We may need better promotion of the program and review our competitive position with respect to financial aid.

3. Class sizes and adjuncts

- We are offering several new classes this term, both to address industrial need and to absorb extra students:
    - 2 sections of English for IS, to increase language proficiency of our foreign students
    - New class on software testing (Summer), will continue as a regular course taught by an adjunct
    - New Cloud Computing class, approved by the faculty, will be taught in the Spring by Balaji Palanisamy
    - We have revived the information visualization course (taught by Yu-Ru Lin)
- Yet, due to the increase in enrollment, many classes are large
- We have had to offer two sections of each of the most popular classes (Databases, Web Tech, and Data Structures), using extra adjuncts and teaching fellows
- Web/database, big data, and human-centered computing classes are full or almost full. There is capacity in GIS, TELE and SAIS track classes.

4. We are trying to find ways to attract US students, specifically to courses with extra capacity
- New CAS (Information Security; Big Data Analytics) were approved and a specialization in Big Data is in the process of formal approval
- Online versions of SAIS classes (also a CAS) are in development.

5. Financial Aid
More PhD students than usual are engaged as teaching fellows (4), but we have fewer PhD students than before. Given increased class sizes we need more GSA support. For the first time since early 2000, we have engaged our best MS students as GSAs. This is not bad, but we would prefer more good PhD students who could contribute to research, as well.

6. Key problems (in order or priority)
- We need to increase the engagement of US students while sustaining the flow of PRC students
- We will likely need a promotion campaign to address several kinds of prospective US students. I think graduates of STEM degrees from Pitt and local good colleges could be good candidates, particularly in fields where there are relatively few good jobs (e.g., math, physics, and some other STEM areas) but their academic preparation is good. This may require additional attention to incentives.
- We also need to improve our internships, placements, and related industry contacts. This is to be the role of a new staff hire that is currently in the recruitment phase.
- Our experience this year recruiting PhD students suggests we need to improve recruitment strategies and approaches.
- We also feel a need to improve communication between staff and faculty. Our field is sufficiently dynamic that people are necessarily shifting positions and responsibilities, with the side effect that sometimes important things are lost in the process. We discovered several miscommunications over the last year when things usually done by the original responsible staff member were not picked up by the newly assigned one. This suggests that we need to develop a clearer list of responsibilities that can more easily be transferred among individuals.