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. Development and introduction of the quantitative evaluation model based on mis-aligned workload and incentive structure
2. **Exogenous trends that have impacted or influenced the changes that have been made.**
   a. A shift in professional needs from the "managing devices" or "physical layer" to more of a higher level and service provisioning layer in the IS & T areas has led to a restructuring of the curriculum that has guided some recent faculty hires
   b. The growth of social networking and decentralized information production has caused a shift in research priorities that will make its way into professional education.
   c. The growing focus at Pitt on establishing itself as a top 25 research university has led to a change in the character of new faculty hires and also promotability of existing tenured professors.
   d. National priorities have focussed on multidisciplinary problems. The new faculty hires have strength in this area
3. **Dominant challenges and risks to SIS and its programs that are informed or driven by current assessments.**
   a. The change to a research focus puts new faculty hires at odds with the long standing traditions of professional education. If we are unable to rebalance the workloads to align with the new focus, we are at risk of losing the junior faculty who will hopefully form the core of the faculty in future. This will resonate through the relatively small iSchool community, making it difficult to hire research-oriented junior faculty in future.
   b. SIS needs to sharpen its understanding of what it means to be a professional school in a research university. Failure to get this right means losing credibility either in the research community or withing the university.
   c. SIS has relied on associate professors in significant leadership and teaching positions because the ranks of professors have been small. The higher promotion standards now in place set up a situation where this is likely to continue. The consequences of this are one or more of the following:
      i. Talented and visible associate professors leaving to positions where career progression is possible

  ii. Difficulty in finding people who will agree to serve in leadership positions in the school

  iii. Weak leadership by senior faculty, especially as numbers decline with retirements

  iv. Dissatisfaction and declining morale in the middle ranks as associate professors feel that their career progression opportunities slip further away.

 d. Opportunities for external funding remain challenging, especially for larger grants.

4. **Notable opportunities that have become apparent as a result of current assessments.**

 a. More research collaborations have taken place within the school as well as with colleagues on the outside. The funding agencies' focus on multidisciplinary problems has largely motivated this.

 b. The learning outcomes assessment for degree programs has forced a rigor and discipline into curriculum and course design that will be helpful in the long run.

 c. The "Working Memory" and "Values in Design" research foci has stimulated a conversation about "Complex Adaptive Information Systems" as a research focus area as well.

 d. Continued collaboration with international partners has positioned SIS ahead of most peers in building an international network. In addition to augmenting educational opportunities, this provides us with a platform for research collaborations that diversify our base of expertise (and funding) so that we can compete more effectively in a global marketplace for ideas and talent.

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.**

6. **How does SIS assess itself with respect to the iSchool vision and SIS mission (below)?**

7. **What steps can SIS (and the BOV) take to advance its effectiveness and stature as an information school?**

 a. Reduce online and on-campus teaching workloads for research-active junior faculty.

 b. Define, develop, clarify, and enunciate the set of existing and emerging signature strengths of the School that are expressed in research, colloquia, and curricula.

 c. Provide clear support and mentoring for research active associate professors to assist them in achieving their next career stage.

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."