

**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. Shaping SIS Council as an open collaborative platform for School-wide discussion, review, and decision-making, primarily driven by vision of the faculty, annual planning process and other required assessment requirements. Serves as a platform for on-going communication between faculty, staff, and administration.
 - b. Making strategic hires of new faculty, as opportunities present themselves, to support building of a stronger unified School. For example, one school-wide search committee for the current three new faculty positions, all of which have emphasis on research and teaching across the whole school
 - c. Transforming individual annual review of faculty to have at least some focus on School-wide priorities and initiatives
 - d. One unified orientation event for new students across all programs.
 - e. The online program has been revamped in light of assessments by outside evaluators, faculty and current/past students, and based on the following needs and issues: the marking of the tenth anniversary of the Fast Track program, the increased competition from 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
- 2. Exogenous trends that have impacted or influenced the changes that have been made.**
 - a. The rapid development of the iSchools movement, and the increasing visibility and influence of iField, make the identity of the Information Science discipline and schools working in that discipline more prominent and more research-oriented.
 - b. The recent signals about slowing demand for new hires in LIS-related professions, the recovery of IT and Tele-related job markets, and the shifting of emphasis on Master's vs. bachelor degrees all call for a careful study about the program structure of the school. The School should clearly define how it wants to expand or redesign academic programs to meet market demand.
 - c. The economic downturn has made it much more difficult to acquire foundation funding 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. In particular, the iSchool needs to acquire additional funding for doctoral students; the lack of which will negatively impact both our ability to offer classes (TAs and TFs) and our research programs (GSRs).

- d. The graying of faculty has created critical shortages and increased competition for new research-oriented faculty in a number of areas requiring increased efforts to recruit and prepare future faculty (information organization, archive and record management in LIS for example). Pitt and the iSchool must become more competitive in recruiting new faculty. In addition, the timeline for hiring new faculty here is not in synch with other iSchools, so many qualified candidates have already secured positions before we begin to solicit applications.

3. Dominant challenges and risks to SIS and its programs that are informed or driven by current assessments.

- a. The culture of the School is evolving gradually: we are beginning to explore, to experiment with, and, hopefully, to ultimately embrace a more holistic understanding of our institution as an iSchool. However, there remain legacy issues, interests, and concerns for what is lost in contrast to what is gained. The invisible-but-still-existing departmental boundaries in the faculty's ways of thinking, teaching and research still divide the school's attentions, energy and facilities. With each step of moving towards a stronger unified school, and with new faculty hires, this challenge may eventually be resolved.
- b. How to balance the sometimes conflicting requirements of being a professional school in a top-tier research university is another challenge. Faculty, particular junior faculty members, often are required to be productive in their research and in seeking external funding seeking -- under heavy teaching loads. Existing expectations for promotion and tenure do not always adequately value the teaching or certain publications.
- c. Small faculty body, which results in significant teaching loads and administrative responsibilities, creates the risk of losing junior and senior faculty with strong aspirations for research, with the commensurate impact on the School's reputation.
- d. 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 institutions -- especially schools with new and newer facilities (such as Michigan and Penn State).

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

- 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. There have been discussions among faculty members across LIS, IST and Tele programs on a jointed introduction of doctoral study course. There are adequate enthusiasm to move this ahead
 - c. The growth of inexpensive technology options and opportunities have us poised us for experimentation in the cooperative teaching of doctoral seminars with other iSchools (the iSchool deans have examined the technology options and included this as a priority area for investment).
- 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. Recent increases in enrollment in programs other than LIS makes it possible to strategically balance the teaching burden across programs, and plan for new joint master's or undergraduate programs. However, the School must carefully consider the teaching capabilities within those other programs.
 - b. The proposed three new hires make it possible to have more faculty members who are more open to creating a stronger unified school
 - c. We need to increase our global initiatives to collaborate with other countries on education, information technology, information ethics, and open access to information.
- 6. How does SIS assess itself with respect to the iSchool vision and SIS mission (below)?**
- a. The school is one the right track to become an information school, which has a more interdisciplinary emphasis; the faculty member's background and research interests are increasingly fluent across different programs; and the boundaries of programs are certainly less visible to external audiences.
 - b. The School has commenced a long-term planning and visioning process, upon the advice of the BOV.
- 7. What steps can SIS (and the BOV) take to advance its effectiveness and stature as an information school?**
- a. Enhance emphasis on doctoral programs, and consider unifying three doctoral programs.
 - b. Improve and expand the physical facilities supporting faculty and student research.
 - c. Define, develop, clarify, and enunciate the set of existing and emerging signature strengths of the School that are expressed in research, colloquia, and curricula.
 - d. 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.
 - e. Clearly define the long-term goals of program development and focus the appropriate level of resources on seeing those plans come to fruition.