




Disposition of Recommendations from 2011 SIS Board of Visitors Meeting

In the following pages, you will find an audit of the recommendations made by the SIS Board of Visitors at the October 31 – November 1, 2011, meeting. It has been sorted into four categories:

1. Size and Composition
2. Vision
3. Facilities
4. Philanthropy

You will see two forms of color coding. The first consists of colored boxes in the left margin that carry the following interpretation:

-  A green box is used to indicate either full accomplishment or progress on schedule per the recommendation.
-  A yellow box indicates progress has been made but the work has not been completed or some impediments have been encountered.
-  A red box signals an area where essentially no progress has been made, either by choice (e.g., resource availability may have deferred its start) or because insurmountable difficulty has been encountered.

The second carries the same color interpretation but brings it down to a more detailed level of granularity:

Green shading is used to indicate either full accomplishment or progress on schedule per the recommendation.

Yellow shading indicates progress has been made but the work has not been completed or some impediments have been encountered.

Red shading signals an area where essentially no progress has been made, either by choice (e.g., resource availability may have deferred its start) or because insurmountable difficulty or extenuating conditions have been encountered.

Size & Composition

- **The potential for growth, free of current perceived constraints.**

- **Undergraduate program: grow to 200-300 students**

- The undergraduate program is the most attractive area for growth, with the greatest potential to sustain a larger domestic enrollment
- Undergraduate enrollment continues to rise at a modest 5-6% rate (157 in fall 2012). Continuing to grow the program will require additional faculty (e.g., Professor of Practice, for which an active recruitment and interviews are underway), more engagement with graduate faculty, some structural changes (e.g., a dedicated budget) and staff support.
- Course schedules are being adjusted in order to attract non-traditional (e.g., working) students
- New courses for the proposed telecommunications specialization have been added and a new track in data analytics is being explored.
- Among our stated goals is the expansion of opportunities for undergraduates to participate in research-oriented activities. Students have this opportunity through the Capstone course, but now internships are currently plentiful and popular, providing students and employers other interesting (primarily development-related) options.
- Doubling the size to a range of 250-300 is encountering resistance from the Provost's Office, particularly if it requires expansion to a 3-year program (100 students x 3 years, rather than 75 students x 2 years).
- Goals included in the School's new 5-year strategic plan
 - Professor of Practice
 - Expansion to a 3-year program
- The Provost expresses reservations
 - Data from the Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) survey suggest student placement and other issues may need attention first
 - SIS response:
 - SIS will analyze SERU data to identify areas where improvement is advised.
 - Pitt's Career Services office reports a placement rate of 94% for 2011 BSIS graduates; we are also conducting an independent survey of recent graduates. SERU "placement data" is pre-graduation; Career Services data is collected 6 months after graduation.
 - An increase in BSIS enrollment would need to be offset by a decrease in other undergraduate programs (this is a residence hall capacity issue), and other schools are also proposing similar growth plans.

- **Graduate programs: rebalance enrollment across programs**
 - MLIS enrollment down 17% year-on-year (from 156 new students to 130)
 - Increased admissions standards (particularly in the Archives, Preservation, and Records Management program)
 - The curriculum has been substantially scrubbed of low enrollment courses, reducing adjunct requirements and enabling regular faculty (in particular, tenure-stream untenured faculty) to devote greater time and energy to research
 - Potential opportunities may develop for LIS faculty to teach undergraduates
 - Applications for the online degree program increased, but yield has decreased (37 new Pitt Online students registered for Fall 2012 – four have since dropped out of the program)
 - Decreasing public employment prospects (particularly in the school and public libraries)
 - MSIS enrollment up 26% from last year (from 137 in 2011 to 173 in 2012)
 - Primarily family-supported full-time Chinese students
 - Course scheduling, classroom capacity, and sequencing present greater challenges as the student body has shifted from a large proportion of local part-time students to international full-time students
 - Relying on international students may not be sustainable. The program would benefit from stronger engagement with local industry, with a larger proportion of part-time students who have greater course sequencing flexibility.
 - Growth in the undergraduate program will require commitment from faculty members who have traditionally associated themselves with the graduate program. A cultural shift to “one faculty” will be required.
 - MST enrollment up 30% from last year (from 33 to 43)
 - Current strategy is to build a strong undergraduate track and a strong PhD program.
 - New students are primarily family-supported full-time Indian students
 - As with MSIS, this may not be sustainable, but unlike MSIS, where there is potential to grow the part-time enrollment from local industry, there is insufficient telecommunications industry in Pittsburgh from which to draw such enrollment.
- **The composition of the faculty to balance leading edge research with instruction informed by current professional practice.**

- Three new tenure stream faculty members joined SIS in 2012 and two more will join our faculty in 2013.
 - Prof. Sheila Corral is the new LIS program chair, joining us after serving as the founding director of the iSchool at the University of Sheffield
 - Assistant Prof. Brian Beaton has joined the LIS faculty after completing his PhD at the University of Toronto. His research interests include science and technology studies, social and cultural theory, and information workplaces.
 - Assistant Prof. Rosta Farzan has joined the IS faculty after two years at CMU as a post-doc. Her research interests include social navigation and social information filtering, social Web technologies, and personalized information access.
 - Dr. Yu-Ru Lin will be joining the IS faculty after two years at Harvard and Northeastern as a post-doc. She received her Ph.D. from Arizona State University and will be bringing strength in web science and big data to the School.
 - Balaji Palanisamy will be completing his Ph.D. at GaTech this spring and joining the IS faculty, with research and teaching interests in information assurance and network security.
- Stephen Griffin has joined SIS as a visiting professor to lead the A.W. Mellon Foundation Cyberscholarship research program, following his retirement from a long and distinguished career at NSF as a Program Director
- Elizabeth Mahoney has joined SIS (from her prior position as Head of the IS Library) as a full-time lecturer. She will be exploring models for embedded information services, working initially with LIS students to answer course-related LIS reference queries, but aiming to develop more specialized support for researchers in other disciplines.
- All faculty hiring is conducted within the existing allocation of faculty lines, strategically reallocating vacated positions to emergent School priorities (e.g., Prof. Thompson's retirement resulted in a shift of research focus from optical networking to one of expanding the School's information assurance faculty, since IA has been identified as a signature area).
- The new 5-year plan links all tenure-stream faculty recruitment to signature research areas
- The School is currently recruiting a Professor of Practice in software systems engineering to teach in the undergraduate program.
- Online teaching demands for tenure stream faculty will decrease as we progress through the transition to Pitt Online
- Eliminating specializations
- Reusing online course components
- At the Provost's request, in response to the uncertainty of Commonwealth support to higher education, the Dean deferred recruiting for one of the open tenure stream faculty positions in 2012.

- An extended negotiation with a candidate for the Doreen E. Boyce Chair in 2012 was ultimately unsuccessful. Recruitment activities for the Chair will resume in the Fall of 2013.
- The financial aspects need to be understood, and may even need a new financial model. What degrees of freedom exist for the School and the University to creatively consider alternatives?
 - We have assessed our fiscal reallocation priorities and abilities for the next 5 years and have identified the potential for gradual reallocation of about 17% of the current budget to emerging priorities.

Vision

- A **clearly articulated vision** that underpins the University's own vision of its future.
 - After substantial discussion of a new and clearly articulated vision, faculty concluded that a single, unifying "vision" may not be an apt characterization (or even desirable goal) for our school, but that its strength is, instead, in its ability to distinguish itself as one of the most *technical* of the iSchools that has a varied portfolio centered around signature research areas.
 - The School's plan currently expresses its vision as **"Embrace our Differences, Differentiate our Strengths, Strengthen our Impact."**
 - Faculty consideration of vision-related issues remains an ongoing conversation that is beginning to converge around the growing recognition that the future of librarianship (and academic librarianship, in particular) lies in the stewardship of the vast array of digital resources that contribute to the human record. This is emerging from our consideration of "Big Data," and provides a glimmer that begins to illuminate a vision that truly cuts across the many disciplinary interests of the School's faculty and programs. It is currently being refined in the context of more careful explication of the signature research areas.
- **Partnerships with other disciplines to advance education (e.g., x-informatics) and research (e.g., data-driven science).**
 - Research and educational partnerships have been built across campus, including History [Manning], Art History [Langmead], Public Health [Burke], Health & Rehabilitation Sciences, and Electrical Engineering [Reed], and others.
 - The Multi-institutional Historical Dataverse project led by Patrick Manning and Vladimir Zadorozhny has recently received NSF funding.
 - Alison Langmead has a 1/3-time joint appointment with SIS in the Archives and Information Science (AIS) program to develop collaborative endeavors in Digital Humanities.
 - GSPH and SIS faculty are exploring "scientific data rescue" and advancing data management and information visualization for epidemiology.
 - David Tipper is working with the Associate Director of the Swanson School of Engineering's Center for Energy on Smart Grid communications and security.

- Hassan Karimi is collaborating with Pitt's Disability Resources and Services Office to create an interactive map for personalizing pedestrian directions based on specific physical limitations.

- The recently-offered Certificate of Advanced Study (CAS) in Health Sciences, funded by IMLS and developed in collaboration with the Health Sciences Library, was less than successful. Even with substantial scholarship funding, enrollments were quite low and the program has been discontinued with the depletion of funding. An independent review identified the lack of employer demand for a formal certificate as a disincentive for students.

- Stephen Griffin, who joined the School as a visiting professor in January 2012 following a long and distinguished career at NSF, is actively reaching out to Pitt scholars to examine the rapidly changing character of digital scholarship.

- Become the **"go-to place"** for information-related issues on campus (e.g., collaboration on Data Management Plans for National Science Foundation research proposals)

- Elizabeth Mahoney has newly joined our faculty from the ULS to teach in the MLIS program and to experiment with the development of an embedded librarian service.
- Sandra Brandon created internships/Partner Placements for archives students with University Marketing and Communications to create a searchable photo repository.

- Enlarge the **online opportunities** for students (e.g., a broader array of learning opportunities for deployed military, working paraprofessionals, and those seeking professional certification)

- The School recently hired Jeffrey Lawson as the new **Director of Distance Education, eLearning Partnerships and Outreach**.
 - He is managing the transition of the online MLIS program from the FastTrack platform to Pitt Online.
 - He is also assisting faculty in identifying other opportunities for online education and fostering their development.

- Pitt was among the second wave of universities joining Coursera in Fall 2012.

- The Provost has identified **residential** education as a signature attribute of the Pitt undergraduate experience. Online programs to reach post-baccalaureate students need to clearly reflect their post-baccalaureate nature (e.g., by identifying them as post-baccalaureate certificates or as graduate degrees, as opposed to a 2nd bachelor's degree, which had been proposed).

- Clearly stated **signature research areas**

- Big data (building community around big data; not simply "having" big data)
- Spatial information (not limited to geospatial)
- Information Assurance (e.g., security assured information systems)
- Web Science (including topics such as social network analysis)
- These four remain our stated signature research areas, and they have been endorsed by the School's Industry Advisory Council. New faculty recruitment for 2013 targets these areas.

- The potential for a **2-year Masters program in Information Management**
 - Discussions with the faculty have revealed a wide range of enthusiasm for a 2-year Masters, accompanied by a rich and varied array of issues, opinions, and concerns, such as:
 - How many students would be willing to stay (and pay) for an additional semester?
 - What jobs would such a degree prepare them for that our existing degrees don't?
 - Wouldn't such a degree be a direct competitor to our existing Masters programs?
 - The "2-year" idea seems to have gotten in the way of a more creative and useful examination of what the jobs of the future will require of information professionals, which was the original intention. For the moment, it has been tabled.

Facilities

- Updated physical facilities that are environmentally suited to information research, are secure, and provide a safe environment for students, staff, and faculty.
 - Pitt's Office of Environmental Health and Safety set up air sampling monitors in the building to assess the levels of mold spores and related irritants in the air of the building. Their sampling did not detect hazardous levels of contaminants in the building.
 - An assessment of the physical integrity of the building was also conducted, with the objective of identifying the sources of water leakage during storms. That analysis did identify likely sources and, as a result, a number of corrective actions have been taken, including re-sealing windows.
 - The Vice Provost for Academic Planning and Resources Management has agreed with the Board's assessment that the building is inappropriate for its current use and inadequate to realize the School's vision, but indicates that construction of a new building for SIS is not feasible. He did recognize the possibility and feasibility of moving SIS to a different building in the event that the university has the opportunity to acquire one of the buildings in proximity to campus.
 - Security in the building continues to be a concern. Attempts at forced entry to locked spaces occur occasionally, and in 2012 resulted in the loss of a server.
- The IS Library has moved out of the 3rd floor and that space has been repurposed as student collaborative workspace and study space.
- Plans for renovating an 8th floor room for use as an online teaching theater were discontinued after the cost of renovation exceeded estimates by \$250K and the decision to move to Pitt Online was finalized. Renovation of that space (Summer 2013) has been redirected to address the needs of our Ph.D. students for research, study, and collaboration space, and will include upgraded power, HVAC, and accommodations for multi-media and video conferencing.

Philanthropy

- Engage younger students in understanding that it is worthy for them to give back to their alma mater

- This needs ongoing attention. The chair of the undergraduate program is doing competitive analysis of student activities offered at other iSchools and is identifying deficiencies in our student organizations and activities.
- Student Services is analyzing the demographics of the undergraduate program (e.g., part time, full time, adult, commuters etc.) in order to identify activities that would engage them more fully in the life of the School.

- “Dinner with 12 Panthers,” at which alumni volunteers host a dinner for 12 students.
 - We have yet to explore this idea.

- Build a greater **sense of community** among students, faculty and staff, within the School and throughout the University and the region

- This is an ongoing challenge and a continuing ambition. Our Student Services Office has greatly expanded the portfolio of events and activities available to students, from the strictly social and community building to resume reviews and mock interviews.
- The repurposing and dedication of the 3rd floor to a range of student uses provides a place to socialize, study, and collaborate on team projects that is already developing an enhanced sense of community.
- A recent competitive analysis of the student activities afforded our undergraduates revealed a need to do more, particularly to foster the activities of student organizations.
- The iSchool has had increased success in engaging the graduate student community in the life of the school. Whether or not this results in engaged alumni remains to be seen.
- The BSIS program is taking steps to reinvigorate the student group PRISM. This peer group is most effective in fostering student engagement with the School and the University.