

# SIS Board of Visitors

## Meeting Report

### October 31 – November 1, 2011

Board members present included:

Gary D. Byrd	J. Roger Glunt	William Isler
Michael Macedonia	James Matarazzo	Alfred L. Moyé, Chair
Keith Schaefer	Robert J. Strauss	Patrick E. White
James F. Williams, II		

Juan Manfredi, representing the Provost's Office

#### **Introduction**

The School of Information Sciences' Board of Visitors met on October 31, 2011, and November 1, 2011. Materials supporting the meeting are available at <http://www.sis.pitt.edu/~sisbov>. The web site has a user-id (sisbov) and password (sisbov) to prevent it from being harvested by search engines. The Board meeting opened at noon on October 31 with a poster session featuring work of 15 SIS Ph.D. students. The Board convened the official meeting at 2:00 pm to review progress at the School since the 2010 Board meeting.

#### **Provost's Charge**

Provost Patricia Beeson reported that September was a "great month" for Pitt. The Commonwealth's Senate Appropriations Committee met at Pitt in Alumni Hall to a standing-room-only audience. The turnout was magnificent and the program showed off the University in the best of light. In that same month, Pitt was invited to join the ACC, in which a number of our peers reside, putting us in good company with universities including UNC, GaTech, and Maryland. In addition, out of 22 MacArthur fellowships awarded in 2011, two of them went to individuals with Pitt connections: Elodie Ghedin (School of Medicine) and Kevin Guskiewicz (EDUC '92G). Wrapping up a stellar month, Bill Dietrich announced a \$125M gift to Pitt.

Pitt continues to rank high nationally, including the Sierra Club's list of "cool schools" for sustainability, and the Princeton Review's ranking of Pitt as a home of "happy students." Over the past 15 years, Pitt has become increasingly more competitive. SAT scores this year averaged 1280; 126 students scored between 1550 and 1600; and 54% of Pitt students come from the top 10% of their high school class.

Pitt's externally funded research has now surpassed \$800M per year and the capital campaign has raised \$1.85B. This year Pitt is going through the Middle States reaccreditation process and has selected outcomes assessment and compliance as the principal areas to be reviewed.

This has also been a challenging year economically, with the governor initially proposing a 54% cut to the Commonwealth appropriation (when the Commonwealth, itself, was absorbing a 4% budget cut). In subsequent negotiations led by Chancellor Nordenberg, the budget cut was reduced to 22%. The Commonwealth is examining all forms of University support, from endowments to federal research grants and financial aid (principally Pell grants). The governor is also very interested in extending student vouchers to higher education; the University administration believes such a step would be exceptionally ill advised.

Even in the current uncertain economy, Pitt retains a "best value" rating for quality, despite the necessary tuition increases.

What can the School of Information Sciences do to elevate itself and the University of Pittsburgh?

1. Prioritize your plans
2. Reallocate your resources to achieve your highest priorities
3. Continue to move ahead, as you have been doing.

The Provost closed her remarks by welcoming the Board to campus and indicating she was looking forward to hearing the Board's assessment of the progress the School is making and learning how the administration can help achieve its objectives.

### **Chair's Welcome**

Al Moyé, Chair of the Board of Visitors, welcomed members of the Board to the annual meeting. He reflected on the materials prepared for the Board and invited Dean Ronald Larsen to review the agenda and introduce the program. At last year's meeting, the Board responded favorably to the quantitative progress the School was making on enrollment and research funding, and advised the School to develop a vision for its future. That is the primary topic of this year's meeting. Professor Michael Eisenberg (founding dean of the Information School at the University of Washington) is attending this year's meeting to facilitate progress on this topic among faculty, BOV members, PhD students, and administrative staff.

A full account of the proceedings of the open sessions held on October 31 and November 1 is included as an appendix to this report. The following documents the findings and

conclusions of the Board in closed session on Tuesday, November 1, and the Board's discussion with the Provost.

### **Closed Session; November 1, 2011**

After lunch on November 1, the Board discussed elements of a vision for the iSchool, noting that it is particularly important to identify goals that are impeded by existing conditions, (e.g., facilities), but critical to the success of the School. Professor Mike Eisenberg participated in this session, offering his independent perspective on the School, the choices it needs to make, and steps the University should consider to advance the vision of the School and the mission of the University.

Reconsideration of the optimal size of the School (e.g., number of faculty, staff, and students), for example, has been implicitly constrained by the available space in the building, university caps on faculty lines, and budgetary assumptions. The Board encouraged the School to consider the potential for growth, free of current perceived constraints, as part of its visioning work.

Given that the iSchool is a professional school in a research university, the composition of the faculty must be carefully managed in order to balance leading edge research with instruction that is fully informed by current professional practice. Tenure-stream faculty members typically need to focus on the former, while Professors of Practice can contribute effectively to the latter. Dr. Eisenberg noted that the iSchool at the University of Washington hires one professor of practice for each six tenure-stream faculty members. While addition of tenure-stream faculty is quite complex and difficult given the long-term university commitment, professors of practice can be added rather easily on 3-5 year contracts.

The potential for enrollment growth is greatest at the undergraduate level, and growth in that program will largely dictate needs for additional faculty. The Ph.D. program typically enrolls around 90 students, and should stay about this size. The MLIS enrollment is large, given the current size of the faculty, and should probably be reduced, compensated by growth in MSIS and the undergraduate program.

Economic considerations play directly into the size of any program. While additional faculty will be needed in the undergraduate program if it grows to 200-300 students from its current level of 150, this also provides the economic foundation to broaden the experience base represented among the faculty. Ideally, professors of practice could offer state-of-the-art instruction on best practices in industry, while tenure-stream faculty members address theoretical foundations and exposure to research and research methods. Currently, six graduate faculty members teach in the undergraduate program.

## **The future of online education at the iSchool**

As the School has added tenure-stream, research-active LIS faculty, its administration has become increasingly sensitive to the larger teaching load that accompanies dual on-campus, online graduate degree programs. This has directly impacted the ability of newer faculty to build and sustain an active research program. In consideration of faculty concerns regarding blended teaching and an independent review conducted by NCHEMS, the Dean has accepted the conclusion that teaching a blended course is the equivalent of teaching two courses, and has reflected this going forward in teaching assignments and teaching load computations.

The 10-year anniversary of the FastTrack online MLIS program also provided the opportunity to consider its future. Given the University's recent investment in the newer Pitt Online infrastructure, the School is taking this opportunity to launch a 5-year transition of the MLIS online courses to Pitt Online. When complete, we anticipate being able to continue delivering superior educational experiences to online students while yielding substantial economies in the delivery of those courses. We also anticipate that Pitt Online will become viable and attractive to other iSchool programs, expanding their ability to reach students unable to relocate to Pittsburgh.

The iSchool has been a leader in distance education at Pitt for 10 years; it is vital that the transition to Pitt Online proceed in a way that respects the excellence of its highly acclaimed curriculum while incorporating an update to the delivery method.

## **Two ways the Provost can help**

Realizing a 5-year vision for the iSchool will require substantial collaboration and coordination with the Provost. The School needs both her *approval* and her *advocacy*, and acquiring these will necessitate a clearly articulated vision that underpins the University's own vision of its future.

The School needs to make its directions clear and its commitments secure. If, as many believe, digital information technologies increasingly both support and challenge scholarly research, then the School has an opportunity to create partnerships with other disciplines to advance education (e.g., x-informatics) and research (e.g., data-driven science). When such partnerships require accommodations in existing university policies and procedures (e.g., to

distribute tuition revenue associated with undergraduate certificates in informatics), the School and the Provost need to be in accord.

### **Giving to the iSchool**

The number of people giving to the School has been on a steady decline since the onset of the recession in 2008. While the iSchool is not alone in experiencing this economically driven situation, it remains a concern. Board members suggested that the School find ways to engage younger students in understanding that it is worthy for them to give back to their alma mater. They identified the Pitt Student Alumni Society and the Blue and Gold Society, as two ways students become members of the broader Pitt community. Locally, the Pitt Representation of Information Science Majors (PRISM – see <http://www.sis.pitt.edu/~prism/index.html>) is an iSchool group that engages the undergraduate students.

This year, in particular, the iSchool's Students Services Office has organized and hosted a series of additional community-building events for students. These are designed with the objective that they will yield long-term benefits to the School, as well as the students.

A Board member suggested another option to consider is an alumni association event, "Dinner with 12 Panthers," at which alumni volunteers host a dinner for 12 students.

### **Elements of an iSchool Vision**

The undergraduate program presents an exceptional array of opportunities. Many of these may require the exercise of creativity and opportunism, particularly where a larger course requirement is encountered. The BSIS program currently has the ability to admit exceptional students with as few as 45 credits (the normal requirement is 54 credits). The School could actively recruit these exceptional students, either for full-time commitments to the information professions, or as informatics specialists in other disciplines.

If the School is successful in reducing the teaching workload of the LIS faculty, another opportunity opens up for the undergraduate program. Where that program is presently taught by faculty from the GIST and Telecommunications programs, an LIS component to the undergraduate curriculum could give it broader appeal and applicability, particularly to students interested in the humanities and social sciences.

Board members articulated the following components of a desirable iSchool vision:

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

- It should become central to the conduct of the University’s mission (e.g., leading in data-driven research initiatives)
- Enlarging the online opportunities for students (e.g., offering a broader array of learning opportunities for deployed military, working paraprofessionals, and those seeking professional certification)
  - Collaborative research (e.g., current work with the Historical Dataverse project and the GSPH; the emergence of the “embedded information professional”)
- Clearly stated signature research areas (the following were recently proposed by a faculty team)
  - 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)
- The Pitt iSchool is recognized among the iSchool group as the “techie” school; this strength of the School should be considered a marketing attribute.

Board members queried if there exists any one area in which the Pitt iSchool excels that distinguishes it from all other iSchools. Two strong candidates are *Information Assurance* and *Spatial Information*. While the current curricula and research focus on technologies such as information & network security and GIS, there is potential to expand into related issues of information ethics, information policy, and (non-geo) spatial information visualization.

### **Preparing Findings and Conclusions to the Provost**

Despite some setbacks (e.g., loss of faculty and inadequate facilities), there is a “palpable buzz” at the iSchool. The School and its Board of Visitors welcomed the Provost’s invitation to create a fresh perspective on the future for the School, and the implied support for what the iSchool is already doing. The iSchool at Pitt is ready for a larger role and impact, and is eager to engage its colleagues across campus and in the administration in shaping Pitt’s exciting future.

In preparation for the closed session with Provost Beeson, Board Chair Al Moyé led the Board in a discussion of the elements of a vision for the iSchool, including:

- The School’s future is inextricably tied to the building, facilities, and resources provided by the University. The inadequate existing facilities put the School at a competitive disadvantage to other iSchools. The vision for the future iSchool at Pitt needs to include updated physical facilities that are environmentally suited to information research, are secure, and provide a safe environment for students, staff, and faculty.
- The increasing centrality of *information* to Pitt’s mission

- A proposal to grow the undergraduate program and make it more strategic to both the School and the University
  - While this will require additional resources, it could be ameliorated somewhat by employing professors-of-practice rather than adding tenured faculty lines.
  - At the current time, relatively few faculty members choose to teach in the undergraduate program.
- The information domain (or iField, as it is sometimes called) is so large that there is little room for true generalists; we expect to see more “x-informatics” and Art / Technology / Media (ATM) positions that involve partnerships between information professionals and disciplinary specialists in other fields. Refined policies, procedures, and financial models may need to be developed to support such partnerships.
- iSchools are clearly a growth area in academia; starting as a group of 8 less than 10 years ago, the organization now includes more than 30 universities around the world.
  - iSchools are becoming the go-to place for issues relating to the development and use of information, and many of them are now situated both physically and virtually central to the mission of the university. The iSchool at Pitt should consider and/or expand in the following areas:
    - Informatics certificates to students in other disciplines who need to be proficient in digital information technologies
    - Offering online programs that have a global reach
    - Collaborative multidisciplinary research, expanding on the early activities with the Historical Dataverse and GSPH
    - Definition of signature research areas, such as
      - Web science
      - Big data
      - Information assurance
      - Geospatial information & telecom
    - Developing the concept of an embedded informationists who serves as a peer member on multidisciplinary research teams, with responsibility for data curation
    - Expanding the undergraduate program to include more tracks and up to ~300 students
    - Leveraging Pitt’s distinguishing reputation among iSchools for its technical emphasis and rigor
    - Building a greater sense of community among students, faculty and staff, within the School and throughout the University and the region
    - In short, create the conditions necessary for the School to fulfill its destiny as the *Pitt iSchool*
  - There are significant implications to taking on an aggressive, visionary perspective at the iSchool.
    - 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?

- The physical facilities are totally inadequate to support the vision for the iSchool. The School needs to be placed as a priority on the Pitt Master Facilities Plan.
- The size and composition of the faculty will likely need to be revisited. It is likely that the faculty will need to add some combination of tenure-stream positions, non-tenure-stream positions, and professors-of-practice.

Chair Moyé suggested a visit to the AT&T Foundry in Plano, TX or Palo Alto, CA would provide a perspective on an incredibly collaborative space. He wondered about the feasibility of Pitt allocating a space on campus that is central and open to all for collaborative activities and cross-disciplinary research? He suggested that any BOV members that were able to should accompany the dean on such a visit.

## Findings

Reflecting on the discussions over the past two days, Board members recommended emphasis on the importance and the seriousness of the facilities issues. The School needs a plan and a commitment from the University.

Regarding the unanticipated but unavoidably depleted condition of the LIS faculty, the Board advised the School to request a one-year extension in the reaccreditation of the MLIS program by the ALA.

Concern was reiterated regarding the number of donors to the School decreasing over the past few years. Recalling that one factor is the highly international nature of the graduate student body, Board members wondered how the School could attract more domestic students into programs such as Telecommunications and Networking, where employment prospects are good, but typically require US citizenship.

The Board emphasized Pitt's opportunity to not only fulfill the destiny of this iSchool, but to also build on the potential of iSchools nationally and internationally. The iSchools' importance is becoming increasingly central to research universities such as Pitt. The University and the School have an opportunity to develop and foster the role of the *embedded informationist* as a pioneering model for graduate education in information, and for encouraging new modes of collaboration across the campus. In this model, students work as peers on research teams in other units of the university.

The Board acknowledged the importance of identifying signature research areas, noting that *Information Assurance* and *Spatial Information Systems* are two areas of current strength and that they also demonstrate potential for sustained growth and importance. The Board



advocated developing greater clarity on growth plans; expanding our vision for the role of online education; including *building community* as a part of the vision; and using social networking to advance the School's interests. Collaboration with other units on campus has great potential, and is a natural strategy for the School. The potential was viewed as especially significant in the health sciences.

An ongoing challenge is to balance the demands of a research university with those of professional education. Board members expressed a level of enthusiasm for emphasizing **research-centered professional education** as a feature of schools like ours. The potential of a professional doctorate also attracted interest, although the character and demand for such a degree would need to be carefully examined.

The potential opportunity to develop a 2-year Masters program in Information Management also attracted positive attention, with at least two Board members saying they would hire such a graduate. Despite its longer time and expense, Board members expressed the opinion that if it was designed in consultation with employers and included field placement to develop real experience beyond the classroom, it could be a very successful program, for which a marketing tag line might be "Come to Pitt, Build Your Future." They noted such a program could even become a recognized source for future CIOs.

### **Closed session with Provost**

Chair Al Moyé welcomed the Provost to the meeting and briefly summarized the events of the past two days, starting with the Ph.D. poster session. This is the third year we have held this "research showcase" as part of the BOV, and, as in past years, students, faculty, and Board members found it to be informative and valuable. This session provides a meaningful and substantive opportunity for Ph.D. students to benefit from the vast experience of Board members, and for Board members to hear about truly leading-edge research concepts.

Al noted that the Board sensed "a real buzz among the iSchools," from an initial set of 4 (including Pitt) to the current international membership of 32 and still growing. The Board continues to advocate a culture of collaboration, and most faculty members acknowledge its growing importance across the school and with outside units. The Board discussed the ubiquitous impact of information and the resultant growth of "x-informatics," (where "x" can be replaced with a wide variety of prefixes, such as "geo", "bio" and "health"), observing that nearly everyone needs a level of proficiency in finding, evaluating, using, and managing information. The iSchool has the potential to drive progress at Pitt.

The Board suggested that the undergraduate program should grow substantially (to 200 – 300 students), making it more strategic to both the School and the University. While this will require additional resources, it also provides the opportunity to engage professors-of-practice

with state-of-the-art knowledge of industrial practice. The Provost noted that a research university requires a strong undergraduate program and that this has been a priority at Pitt. The undergraduate student expects and deserves access to full-time regular faculty, rather than substitutes or adjuncts. We need to be assured that the undergraduate student is well served by a professor-of-practice.

Parents and students are increasingly discriminating (in their assessment of campus life as reflected in food, residences, recreational facilities, and the like.). And while the iSchool can develop a reputation and recognition for its signature research areas, the facility is not functioning adequately and it cannot be renovated to an acceptable level to support the mission of the School. *Physical facilities* and related infrastructure are on the critical path for the School to achieve the vision (and potential) to which it and the University aspire. The School needs to relocate to a physical and intellectual space that is central within the University.

This is not merely the typical request for a new building, but one that supports the vision for what the School can and should become, and one that redresses long-term deficiencies in a building that everyone has tried to make work for decades, with little success.

Pitt is nicely positioned to be a leader among the iSchools (this observation was attributed to Mike Eisenberg, the facilitator of part of the meeting and the founding dean of the iSchool at the University of Washington). There are many ways that the School can help people manage information, including vitally important areas such as the health sciences. *This* program could become the seed of transformation for a new generation of graduate students working as *embedded informationists*. Such an initiative would also help position the school more central to Pitt.

In the iField, the truly impactful research is collaborative, and this is reflected in NSF funding. Some of the best ideas in collaborative research come from actually *doing* it. Pitt can capitalize on this through multifold collaborations... with the medical school, the natural sciences, and a host of others. By positioning the School at the center of these issues, a whole series of new research ideas is generated.

The Chair noted the existence of impediments to progress; including entrenched financial models and disincentives for faculty to teach in other parts of campus, but observed that creative solutions to these were not hard to conceive.

Mike Eisenberg brought an outside perspective about the Pitt iSchool that impressed the Board. Board members found it striking to try to align the strength of the School's reputation with the condition of the facilities, strongly advising that the University needs to initiate a plan for a new facility. If endorsed by the Provost, we need to begin the planning and

fund raising. The Board recommends development of a feasibility plan that is, among other issues, justified by the fact that the current building is not safe.

Changing topics, the Chair noted that the iSchool Inclusion Institute (i3) is off to a great start and could, perhaps, attract more domestic students into programs like Telecommunications. The current situation is that most graduate students in Telecommunications and Networking are international, where employers typically require US citizenship. He also complimented the Chief of Staff (Sandra Brandon) for the great progress she has made in advancing the effectiveness and efficiency of the School's staff operations.

The school is anticipating an accreditation visit in 2013; the Board recommends that the Dean request the ALA Committee on Accreditation to postpone the visit for one year in light of current faculty losses. The school is doing the right things but is at a momentary disadvantage due to death and illness.

Board member Michael Macedonia observed that this is a critical time, not only for the iSchool, but also for the nation. In a recent meeting with the Director of National Intelligence, the DNI indicated, "we really messed up. We don't understand the social media thing. Everyone is on FaceBook and we don't understand its implications." It is the iSchools who are uniquely positioned and intellectually disposed to evaluate and understand these phenomena.

The Chair observed that there is growth within the School in enrollment, curriculum, and research, and that the vision for online education is becoming clear. While the vision is not fully crafted, many pieces have been identified and are agreed. Now, the School and the University need to address the resource issues that are holding it back.

Provost Beeson acknowledged that the School has done a tremendous job in collaborating across campus. She pointed out how the School is reaching out both programmatically and in research (GSPH Burke, for example). She noted that the School has been successful because much of this can be done virtually, facilitated and fostered by the leadership of the Dean and the faculty. Provost Beeson observed that the facility is not on the 10-year master plan, although the condition of the building was duly noted.

Provost Beeson noted the strong BLS employment projections and wondered why Penn State had stronger enrollment than Pitt in this area? Board members pointed her to the \$39M new building (completed in 2003) that houses the College of Information Sciences and Technology at PSU, which was founded in 1999 (see <http://ist.psu.edu/about>).

The Provost observed that the University is beginning to think about the next facilities plan, so the recommendations of the Board are very timely.

Chair Moyé thanked the Provost for her understanding and indicated the Board would welcome advice on how to get the building into the new facilities plan. This is an opportunity not only for the iSchool, but also for the University to leverage the unique strengths and potential of the School to the University's benefit.

Thanking all for their commitment, their attention, and their contributions to the life and future of the iSchool, Chair Moyé adjourned the meeting at 4:30 pm.

## Appendix to SIS Board of Visitors 2011 Report

### Notes from BOV sessions held Monday, Oct. 31, 2011

#### Dean's Report (Larsen)

- At last year's meeting, the BOV expressed approval with quantitative progress the School has made in building enrollment and research funding, and advised the School to develop a vision for what it could become qualitatively over the next five years. We have been engaged in this conversation over the last year and have made progress but we are not done. Mike Eisenberg is attending this year's meeting to facilitate conversations around this topic among faculty, BOV members, PhD students, and administrative staff.
- Some events of note from the past year
  - Sherry Koshman passed away this past spring
  - Bernadette Callery will be out this year on medical leave
  - Douglas Metzler retired
  - Geoffrey Bowker has been offered an endowed Chair at UC Irvine and will be leaving Pitt at the end of the fall term.
- There are currently 4 faculty vacancies (including the Boyce chair), offering a significant opportunity to recruit new faculty members, informed by the emerging vision. Rather than issuing individual job postings for each position, we will publish one ad, listing research areas of interest and teaching needs for the School. We will seek three candidates who offer the best combination of research interests and teaching expertise to fill these positions. One search committee will handle all three searches.
  - QUESTION: How are classes previously taught by faculty that are no longer with us or who are unable to teach at the present time being taught? ANSWER: We are using adjunct faculty to teach, where necessary.
  - OBSERVATION: With the ALA reaccreditation scheduled for 2013, and the COA visit in spring 2013, it is important to be at full strength, where the majority of LIS classes are being taught by full-time faculty and not by adjuncts and PhD students.
- Oct 15<sup>th</sup> is the annual deadline for faculty recruitment requests to the Provost; responses usually come back mid-November, at which point advertisements can be placed, which typically go out around the holidays. Interviews are conducted in January. By then, most other institutions have already made offers to candidates, putting Pitt at a disadvantage.
  - QUESTION: Is a professor of practice an option?
  - ANSWER: Yes, that is an option. The three open faculty positions are tenure stream faculty positions, but professors of practice (which are positions outside the tenure stream, analogous to clinical faculty in the medical school) can also be considered.
- Since its inception in 2000, a marketing feature of the FastTrack MLIS program has been the "blended" course structure in which a class is composed of both online and on-

campus (in class) students. This was done to provide assurance that the quality of online instruction matches that of the classroom. Newer faculty have recently expressed a sense that teaching a blended course constitutes teaching 2 classes, one for those present in the classroom, and a separate one for the online students. An independent review of the FastTrack program by the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) supported this assertion. In response, (1) the faculty workload model has been amended to consider a blended course as 2 separate classes, (2) FastTrack will begin a transition to the newer PittOnline platform (which was not in existence when FastTrack started), and (3) faculty will decide whether they teach online, on-campus, or both.

- SUGGESTION: The Board suggested that faculty recruitment seek candidates with experience and/or interest in teaching online.
- As part of the Pitt Capital Campaign, the Dean was invited in July to discuss with Institutional Advancement and the Provost the effect that a “transformational gift” of \$25-50M would have on the iSchool, and what the priorities for such a gift would be. The following is a brief summary of that discussion.
  - Demand for iSchool graduates is expected to continue to grow. While the nature of specific jobs will change, the overriding need for informational professionals (some refer to them as “informationists”) to manage information will increase for the foreseeable future.
  - This new breed of information professional must not only be technically competent, able to manage information and design information systems, but must also understand the social, ethical, legal, and economic implications of information work.
  - The role of the iSchools is to examine how information and information technologies transform society and to prepare students for careers in the information professions.
  - This work is highly interdisciplinary and collaborative. The iSchool maintains strong collaborative relationships with many units on campus and with universities around the world.
  - The iSchool is increasingly constrained by limited space for faculty and student activities. Each year we refurbish and repurpose parts of our building. For example, in 2012, the SIS library will be absorbed back into Hillman Library and the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor will be repurposed as student / faculty collaborative workspace.
    - SUGGESTION: Chair Al Moyé suggests a visit to the AT&T Foundry in Plano, TX (<http://www.att.com/gen/press-room?pid=2949>) for an excellent example of collaborative, innovative space design. The Georgia Tech Flashpoint program (<http://flashpoint.gatech.edu/>) was also mentioned as noteworthy.
  - The iSchool’s facilities are not competitive with those of the other leading iSchools in the US. Not only is the space inadequate for the evolving mission of the iSchool, but the IS building lacks adequate electrical and HVAC service, has poor environmental and temperature controls, and suffers from chronic water leakage, leading to algae, mold, and mildew growth.

- The BOV advised against expecting a full renovation of the current structure to satisfactorily address the problem, citing issues that were essentially beyond repair and spaces that were already inadequate. They recommended that the University plan for a new physical facility for the iSchool as a priority on the University's master plan.

#### Associate Dean's Report (Weiss)

- The economic cutbacks experienced over the past year have produced an increasingly competitive and challenging environment for research funding.
  - Research-active faculty members continue to struggle to balance the hunt for research funding with the conduct of their research and teaching.
- The development of signature research strengths for the iSchool is an important contributor to success in securing funding. Appropriately conceived, the research strengths will establish focus that attracts new Ph.D. students and research funding without impeding the intellectual freedom of individual faculty members to pursue independent lines of inquiry.
- The faculty remains relatively thin in its senior ranks (e.g., professors and endowed chairs) although Dr. Peter Brusilovsky was recently promoted to full professor and we anticipate a couple more promotion cases in the near future.
- Ph.D. students are fundamental to the success of the iSchool's research program, but no new Ph.D. students entered the LIS program this year. A more proactive recruitment campaign is underway among the LIS faculty to identify candidate Ph.D. students for the fall 2012 term.
- The Dean has supported a visiting scholar for the last three years to assist faculty in developing collaborative research initiatives. This remains a work in progress. The first visiting scholar received a one-year appointment, which proved to be insufficient to achieve the desired outcomes. The second visiting scholar is currently in the second year of his appointment. An outcomes assessment will be conducted at the end of the second year to determine the future of this initiative.

#### SIS Council Chair's Report (Hé)

SIS Council was created as the primary faculty governance forum during the reorganization of the school in 2006. It provides an open platform for school-wide discussions and also serves as the budget and planning body. Meetings are open to all faculty members. This year, the Council is merging select SIS Council meetings (September, January, and April) with the Dean's all-faculty meetings in an effort to engage more of the faculty in the functions of SIS Council.

The SIS Council establishes priorities for faculty recruitment as positions become available. Another topic of interest is online teaching, especially for programs without current online course offerings that are considering adding them.

SIS Council will also facilitate consideration of the use of the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor freed up by the departure of the IS Library.

- The BOV asked about tenure and promotion procedures in the School.
  - ANSWER: Tenure and promotion guidelines are consistent School-wide. A “first tier committee” is composed of University-wide disciplinary experts who assess the scholarly contributions of the individual. A “second tier committee” is composed of senior faculty in the iSchool who situate the assessment of the first tier committee in the context of the iSchool and make a recommendation to the Dean. The Dean conducts an independent evaluation, taking into account the findings of the first and second tier committees, and forwards his assessment to the Provost. The Provost conducts her own independent review and submits her assessment of the candidate’s credentials to the Chancellor, who makes the final decision regarding promotion and/or tenure.

#### Acting LIS Program Chair’s Report (Weiss)

- The LIS faculty complement has been substantially reduced due to two recent deaths, two medical leaves, and two resignations. Following completion of a 2-year appointment, the LIS Program chair also stepped down in August. The Dean appointed the Associate Dean to serve as Acting LIS Program Chair until the faculty could elect a Chair. The current weakness in the faculty ranks comes at a particularly unfortunate time, as ALA program reaccreditation is scheduled for 2013.
- As reported by the Dean, the LIS program is planning to move the FastTrack program from its current Panopto platform to take advantage of the University’s newer Pitt Online infrastructure. The initial courses under Pitt Online will be offered in September 2012.
- The LIS program experienced a nontrivial decrease in enrollment this fall. Analysis identifies several factors that played a role in this decrease – the graduation rate was on the upper end of what we typically see, while the application, acceptance, and yield tended in the opposite direction. We don’t know yet if this is a one-year event or a long-term trend. The decrease actually brings the LIS enrollment levels into better balance with the rest of the school, so it isn’t necessarily a bad thing unless it continues unabated. Overall, the iSchool strives to assure that we have the resources to support natural but unpredictable swings in enrollment across the programs

#### GIST Program Chair’s Report (Munro)

- Notable recent changes in the graduate IST curriculum include:



- Artificial Intelligence course offerings have been dropped due to a faculty retirement (Metzler)
  - A new course in Social Computing is being taught by one of our graduates.
- Overall, enrollments in the Masters' program, after rising steadily for several years, are leveling off at a reasonable and sustainable level. Ph.D. enrollment has always been and continues to be strong.
- Roughly half of the IST students follow one of the tracks introduced a few years ago (this year ~70 have not selected a track, 57 are in tracks).
  - 24 are in the Database and Web Systems specialization
  - 27 in Information Security specialization
  - 4 in Telecommunications and Distributed Systems specialization
  - 2 in Geoinformatics specialization
- Placement for graduates continues to be very good – graduates are getting good jobs with good salaries.
- Among the issues the program is addressing, the following deserve mention:
  - We are increasing the role of adjunct instructors. Two new adjuncts from CERT (the CMU Computer Emergency Response Team) are teaching the software engineering course.
  - We intend to increase the use of adjunct instructors from industry in order to supplement the education we provide our graduate students in state of the art theory with exposure to contemporary industrial principles and practice.
- BOV QUESTION: Where does social media fit into the curriculum?
  - ANSWER: GIST addresses topics related to social networking and social media in a few courses but does not offer an official track in this area. LIS courses also deal with some of these issues. If there were an appropriate impetus, a focus on social media could be developed by leveraging relevant iSchool courses with related courses around the University.

### Telecommunications Program Chair's Report (Tipper)

- Over the last five years, the Tele program has developed and supported a BSIS program specialization (Networks and Security) and two MSIS tracks (Security and Network Distributed Systems). A new collaborative course with LIS will be offered in the spring. While not all Tele faculty enthuse over these initiatives, some faculty do welcome the opportunity to collaborate across programs
- The job market for graduates of the Tele program remains quite strong. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics in their "Projections data from the National Employment Matrix", the 2<sup>nd</sup> hottest job is "Network Systems and Data Communications Analysts." An increase of 155,800 such positions (an increase of 53%) is projected from 2008 to 2018. A challenge for the Pitt iSchool is that the demand is greatest for undergraduates with US citizenship. The current Tele student population is largely composed of international graduate students, so there appears to be a very substantial recruiting opportunity for the undergraduate specialization.

- The BOV congratulated David Tipper for the notable progress in the Tele program.

### Undergraduate Program Chair's Report (Perkoski)

Bob Perkoski, the chair of the undergraduate program, reported that enrollments have rebounded from the dot.com bust, increasing from a low of 88 a few years ago to 149 this year. He indicated a stable enrollment of 200 as an aspirational target. The marketing message to potential students focuses on (employment) outcomes, and that seems to be effective. About 90% of BSIS graduates seeking employment report success within 6 months of graduation. A recurring recruiting challenge is the deficiencies of our physical building. We counter this with a strong expression of what Pittsburgh has to offer (but this is, frankly, a bit of a hard sell when students consider their alternatives).

The undergraduate program (BSIS) has creatively explored augmentations to the program that would make it visibly attractive to contemporary students. Two student cohorts have emerged through this analysis:

- Graduates with degrees for which a second degree related to information technology would enhance their employability, and
- Current undergraduate students in disciplines such as Art, Technology, and Media (ATM) or health-related disciplines that are becoming increasingly dependent on digital technologies.

### Chief of Staff's Report (Brandon)

The Dean praised Ms. Brandon for exceeding expectations in the conduct of her job during her first year. The BOV also commended her for helping to move the iSchool in a direction they have been advocating for years. Among her notable achievements, Ms. Brandon has:

- Emphasized customer service and the importance of meeting deadlines
- Instituted cross functional training to build staff resilience
- Encouraged the staff to take on more responsibilities, e.g., evaluation of international applications and credentials
- Challenged the staff to "execute with excellence"
- Streamlined administrative processes
- Protected the budget, moving resources around to meet critical needs; the iSchool came in within budget this year
- Increased professional development for our students; the iSchool now conducts a monthly seminar on topics such as how to market yourself correctly on social networks.
- Worked on building community within the iSchool. This starts from the bottom up and not the top down. We are trying to generate the opportunities for collaboration among

the students across programs. This started with a unified iSchool orientation and seems to be getting positive results.

### The iSchool Inclusion Institute (Depew)

The inaugural class of i3 was held this past summer in June. The initiative is funded by a \$600K grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Twenty-one undergraduate students participated in the 4-week crash course that introduced them to graduate study and careers in the information sciences. The objective is to increase the number of students from underrepresented segments of society who become faculty members in iSchools. The program included presentations from 35 faculty members and staff from 12 different institutions. The students are now working in teams of 5 – 6 on yearlong research projects, each guided by a faculty mentor. Several of them have already expressed a desire to pursue graduate study at Pitt, and a few are already considering PhD programs. As financial aid is crucial to these students' ability to pursue graduate work, efforts are underway to generate scholarship funds from a variety of sources.

- SUGGESTION: The BOV recommended recruiting additional mentors from industry to acquaint participants with research opportunities that await those who choose not to pursue careers in academia. Industry is also a good potential source for scholarships and internships for graduate students. The i3 participants should also be encouraged to become recruiters and ambassadors for the program.

### Collaborative Engagement with the iSchool: Patrick Manning (History program)

Prof. Manning discussed the collaborative World Historical Dataverse project. Its goal is to collect historical data on a wide range of variables and to assemble them into a large archive that would enable historical research that is impossible through conventional means. He indicated that this data is difficult and expensive to collect, with little in the way of uniform metadata or even units of measure. The World History Center has been collecting such data over the last 3 – 4 years and is involves a substantial number of collaborators through the Center for Historical Information & Analysis (administered at Pitt). A typical project for the Center is the collection and analysis of historical data related to disease patterns, leading to correlative analysis of climate data. Incorporating demographic data provides a more in-depth look at relationships and trends. This project has yielded new collaborations among distinct disciplines that don't traditionally interact. A new *Journal of World Historical Information* is under development. The BOV suggested Prof. Manning explore the potential interest of private foundations in this project (e.g., the Heinz Foundation, Hewlett, Gates, Rotary, and Buhl).

## Notes from BOV sessions held Tuesday, Nov. 1, 2011

Ron Larsen introduced the morning session, recalling that last year the Board observed that the iSchool's quantitative measures (e.g., enrollment and funding) were strong and that we should focus on what the iSchool's vision and strategic direction should be for the next five years. The School has been addressing this issue and some progress has been made, but we are not done yet. That discussion will continue today and will engage Board members, faculty, PhD students, and staff. Michael Eisenberg, the founding dean of the iSchool at the University of Washington, will facilitate the discussion.

In introducing the session, Mike provided background and context from other iSchools, most notably Syracuse.

- His introduction was designed to establish where we are as a field in terms of the iSchools today, using Syracuse as a model. The original group of iSchools has grown from 8 in 2003 to 32 in 2011, and is still growing. The iSchool group is now international, with members in Europe and Asia. He encouraged us to stop using the term "SIS" and start using the term iSchool to refer to our school. Founded in 1970, the Syracuse School of Information Studies' enrollment has grown from 113 to 1394. It has become a powerhouse on the campus, with 45 faculty members. Initially occupying 9000 square feet on the edge of the campus, its current facilities on the central quad measure 35,673 square feet. Its budget has grown from less than a \$1M to over \$11M.
- Mike characterized the iSchools' "common, binding perspective" as viewing the world through "information-colored glasses," observing that information is the lifeblood of society. He noted the 3-pronged emphasis of the iSchools on people, information, and technology.
- The iSchools explore the *science* of information and its use, addressing a broad range of issues from human behavior and information system design to public policy, ethics, and economics. They engage academic perspectives from a wide variety of disciplines, including electrical engineering, computer science, management, communications, social sciences, and library science.
- In order to be a significant force on campus, the iSchool's programs need to attain a critical mass on all levels; it needs broad visibility on campus and in the broader community; it needs to attract many students, engage diverse faculty, have significant support staff, attract a significant level of research funding, expand its endowment, and develop state-of the art facilities, technologies and space.
- Academic programs in the iSchools
  - Undergraduate programs typically include degrees in informatics, information systems, and information management & technology
  - Master's programs are available in fields such as library science, library & Information science, information management, information systems, telecommunications, and information science

- Doctorate – In addition to the research Ph.D., there is growing interest in a professional doctorate. The Pitt iSchool should look seriously into such a degree (i.e., one that is not centered around research), perhaps in collaboration with other iSchools.
- Research at iSchools is broad based and inclusive; it is both theoretical and applied; it is collaborative, with teams composed of faculty in the School, across campus, and with colleagues globally; research engages students at all levels
- Mike noted the following as representative of iSchools attributes:
  - Big tent (inclusive)
  - Collaborative and collegial
  - At the center of campus life
  - Innovative & entrepreneurial, with high standards and expectations
  - Highly visible
- The rise of the iSchools has been enabled by technologies that have become much more powerful over the last 20 years, and will continue to become even more powerful over the next 20 years.
- The implications for higher education include:
  - Recognition that the iField is thriving and expanding
  - Critical mass is important
  - LIS is an essential part of most information schools, with implications far beyond traditional libraries
  - New opportunities continue to be discovered

Following Mike’s introductory remarks, the following points came up in the open discussion:

- Other (non-iSchool) programs overlap some iSchool interests (e.g., informatics and GIS); we need to find ways to collaborate with these programs rather than competing with them.
- An undergraduate minor in “Informatics” provides valuable service to the university community and provides both visibility and recruitment opportunities for the iSchool.
- Purposeful marketing of the iSchool brand through an NPR-style national campaign is important
- The “iPitt” brand should belong to the iSchool at Pitt.
- A distinguishing feature and strength of the iSchool at Pitt is that it is perceived to be more “techy” than other iSchools.
- It is important for the iSchools to have a clear and understandable way of defining ourselves to the world, but each iSchool does not have to be the same as the others.

With that as background, Mike introduced the workshop part of the program. The first step is to “put everything on the table.” Then, assume that one “dream” could come true; how would

you pitch it to the Provost in 15 minutes? Six break-out groups would then address this question.

Observations:

- Strengths
  - Diverse faculty interests
  - The “techie” iSchool
  - Wide range of academic programs
  - Solid reputation
  - Scope of the faculty
  - The Pitt brand
  - Demand in undergraduate program
  - Professional school in a research university – a research focused professional school – balance between both
- Concerns
  - How to create a shared vision?
  - The physical facilities are not competitive with peer iSchools and suffer chronic deficiencies in environmental controls
  - Master’s programs – the issue of whether to move toward a unified degree structure (such as Michigan) needs to be settled. The Michigan situation may be unique.
  - The LIS faculty composition is currently depleted from recent deaths and illnesses
  - The teaching load is greater than some of our competitors
  - Can we achieve greater efficiencies in our teaching programs? Why do we have rolling admissions? Do we need all of our electives? Is the doctoral program too lengthy?
  - What is our brand? How can we improve our visibility and clout?
- Opportunities
  - The school has a strong reputation
  - The iSchools are expanding
  - The Pitt iSchool includes unique expertise in technology
  - Pittsburgh as a city is a marketable strength
  - Faculty openings provide strategic hiring opportunities
  - Academic programs have room to expand
  - Research – definition of signature areas
  - Outreach – private and public sector

Candidate considerations for a strategic plan:

1. Faculty load – need more time for research

2. SIS is a professional school in a research university
3. Build on strength in technology areas
4. Collaboration – team up with strong partner on campus
5. Consider the viability and desirability of a single Master’s degree
6. Visibility – brand – clout
7. Get on the Universities Master Plan for Facilities
8. Consider a single PhD degree
9. Develop joint Masters degrees with other Pitt schools
10. Expand the number of doctoral seminars, particularly in research methods
11. Identify and build signature research areas
12. Increase and diversify research funding
13. PhD concerns (12-month per year commitment; 3- year funding; increase collaboration across programs and with faculty members)
14. Find ways for all programs to grow together- within and external
15. Reduce the total number of courses and place greater emphasis on the research – more flexibility
16. Pursue opportunities for technology transfer more proactively
17. Embrace and highlight the unique strengths of the iSchool
18. Raise the quality standards for the School’s undergraduate program
19. Consider new approaches to fund raising and financial aid (consider new financial models)
20. Systematize and integrate the various diversity initiatives – gain institutional buy-in / seek diversity in all admissions
21. Offer a 2 year Masters in Information Management that captures the transdisciplinary ideals of the iSchool movement
22. Develop a strategy for online learning for all programs
23. Eliminate the current version of the blended learning model
24. Rethink staffing – allocations & numbers to advance the School’s strategic plans
25. Consider expanding the undergraduate curriculum to 3 years BS and develop a well-articulated BS/MS sequence; consider a structure analogous to the 3-2 programs of engineering.
26. Resolve differences between requirements for graduate degrees across the programs
27. Recognize the iSchools’ common mission and grand challenge. The entire world operates on information; information is critical to all that we do
28. Develop expertise around one of the biggest emerging challenges – *big data*
29. Leverage the ACC brand – it has more iSchools than any other conference.
30. Tie the vision and mission to Pitt’s 9 University goals

Each breakout group was asked to imagine that they could solve one major issue with a magic wand. How would they describe it (and sell it) to the Provost in 15 minutes or less?

### Breakout Group Reports

- Group 1
  - Stronger base - build a stronger undergraduate base
  - Develop strong signature research areas - collaborations
  - Facilities – move the iSchool to part of Hillman Library – the iSchool needs NEW SPACE near the center of campus
- Group 2
  - Develop a strategic plan for getting the iSchool into a NEW BUILDING
  - Invest in the vision of the iSchool being central to all other programs on the campus
  - Strengthen the undergraduate program, and consider the feasibility of establishing an informatics minor or certificate program to strengthen the curricular linkages with other schools on campus
  - Establish the centrality of the iSchool to the University
- Group 3
  - Two themes – one short term and one long term
    - Reapportion time allocations to better support the conduct of research by faculty and PhD students.
    - Tactical moves in this direction can be made by bringing in **professors of practice**, course buy-outs, building up the BS program which buys time for the Masters programs (in terms of financial support)
    - Provide the physical facilities that foster (rather than impede) collaboration – the School needs a NEW BUILDING
- Group 4
  - Potential students are increasingly discriminating – the current iSchool is not appealing – the School needs a signature NEW BUILDING near the center of the Campus that will attract students, collaborating faculty, and industrial partners
  - We need something that will attract people and that will lead to collaboration within the school and without.
  - The current facilities are unsafe
- Group 5
  - The School needs a NEW BUILDING – while the school is growing in both size and reputation, there is no room to grow the faculty, to provide facilities such as design labs, and collaborative spaces for students and faculty. The School needs to be closer to the center of campus and should, ideally, have a faculty complement around 45.
  - Approve a feasibility study and work closely with Institutional Advancement to secure commitments to fund the construction of new facilities.
- Group 6



- The iSchool is a fundamental part of the University infrastructure – with increasing returns from investments in the technical infrastructure as well as the physical structure, building community (social aspect) as well as facilities.
- The School needs to be positioned closer to the center of the University, justified by a grand vision of its centrality to the life of the University
- It needs better facilities to support interdisciplinary activities, with communal support for collaboration (including grant writing)
- Facilities, such as laboratories that support active engagement of students at all levels in research improves the overall quality of teaching and preparation of students
- A NEW BUILDING needs to be a priority.

## Discussion

It is increasingly apparent that the current facility is a major impediment to the iSchool's progress. An appropriate space for the School should reflect the increasing importance and centrality of information in society. Such a building could easily become a showcase for the Pitt's view of the information society. Leading with the program vision, within the iSchool context, is a good way to portray the need for a new building.

While more appropriate physical facilities are very important, the School should also seek efficiencies and improved effectiveness in the programs that enable research and instruction. Eliminating rolling admissions, for example, could regularize the teaching schedule, reducing the need for introductory courses to be offered every term. The School might also consider increasing its admission requirements and trying alternative teaching styles that take fuller advantage of online techniques ("flip classes" were mentioned, where students are expected to have watched the lecture before coming to class and class time is fully devoted to interaction).

Only one iSchool (Michigan) has been successful in developing a single, unified Master's degree, and this took years and a \$10M Kellogg grant to achieve. While such an endeavor may not be feasible at Pitt, the School should consider bringing the IS and TELE programs under one umbrella, keeping the LIS program distinct.

There is growing interest among information practitioners in a professional doctorate. The Pitt iSchool might consider if a School-wide initiative in this direction would be beneficial. It is also a topic that could be more broadly addressed by the iSchool consortium, with a professional doctorate being offered in cooperation with other iSchools. Employers should also be consulted in developing such a program.

Concluding thoughts:

The School should develop and articulate a big vision that the Provost can understand and embrace. It should lay the groundwork for moving to more appropriate facilities, where it can grow. The School should adopt the brand of the iSchools more aggressively, and down play (or change) its current official name. This will help both the School and the iSchools globally in establishing brand identity and recognition.

In closing, Mike Eisenberg opined that *information is the new liberal arts*.

Following this workshop-style session, the Board of Visitors convened in a closed session and presented its findings to the Provost.