

Undergraduate Information Science Report

Board of Visitors

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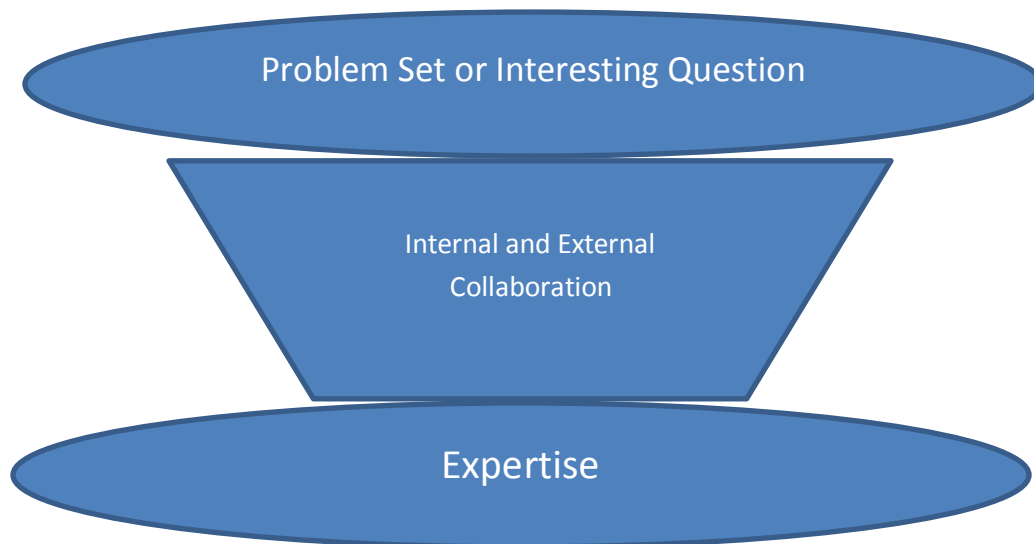
The undergraduate program reached its enrollment goal this year. Currently, we have approximately 170 students which is a 14% increase over Fall 2014. Again, these students have completed at least 55 credits in order to be accepted into our two year program. They include students from Arts & Sciences and transfer students from other institutions.

Undergraduate Teaching Assistant Program

The UTA program has been a great success and continues to attract some of our best students. These UTA students hold office hours and assist students in our INFSCI 0017 JAVA class, INFSCI 0010 Intro class, and INFSCI 1059 Web Programming class. Students who enroll in Information Science classes find UTA students approachable and knowledgeable. These UTA students provide assistance to other undergraduates through office hours, messaging, e-mail and through cell phones. Because the UTA's are available at both fixed times and at other times students can always find help. Also, these students serve as role models for new freshman who may not have thought about Information Science as a field of study.

Curriculum

There are some exciting curriculum developments that add breadth and depth for our students. In particular, we have continued to focus and develop opportunities for students to engage in faculty led project based work. Faculty members oversee teams of students who collaborate to solve real-life problems. I will talk more about this framework during my presentation but it has been a sound philosophy and guiding principle.



Here are some working examples:

City of Pittsburgh:

This semester we are leading a group of four undergraduate students with the City of Pittsburgh, Department of Innovation and Performance. The City of Pittsburgh Help Desk is responsible for handling incoming technology questions and problems for all city employees. The students are tasked with doing an assessment of their operations with the ultimate objective of delivering a set of recommendations to improve:

- Quality
- Service and performance levels
- Training and education
- Increasing operations to 7X24 (currently they operate from 6AM - 6PM)

Game Design Course: Drug Development:

This semester we are teaching a small upper-level team based class in game design. The course has a small software development team that is working with stakeholders from the School of Pharmacy in designing and implementing a drug development simulation game for Pharmacy students. There is a current course in the Pharmacy department that uses a pen and paper system for following drug development from molecule selection to clinical trials. This game would enhance the experience for both instructors and students.

There are other projects including work being done with the Dental School and School of Medicine that will be highlighted during the undergraduate presentation.

Another major development has been our expansion of course offerings focused on students who have targeted project management or more people-oriented areas. In particular we are offering two courses this Fall:

Decision Making in Dynamic IT Marketplaces: Changing forces in the marketplace, along with the emergence of cloud computing and smart devices, have dramatically changed the "IT landscape". These changes are having a profound impact on the industry creating extraordinary opportunities as well as unprecedented challenges for IT professionals. Learning to successfully navigate through this new landscape requires strong skills in problem solving, decision making, risk management, and consultative selling.

IT Management: This course was designed to help you develop key workplace skills essential for IT professionals. You'll learn how to work effectively with people within and outside of the IT organization; understand and navigate organizational culture; apply techniques for successfully managing people and projects; and engage in professional development activities including writing a resume and cover letter, preparing for interviews, and preparing to deliver short presentations.

In the Spring Term, we have developed a new course:

Going Digital: Transformation & Change: A rapidly changing technology landscape is disrupting traditional business models, forcing organizations to develop new digital strategies that not only strengthen capabilities and drive growth, but also provide a significant competitive advantage. In today's marketplace, business analysts and IT consultants are uniquely positioned to help organizations integrate digital initiatives to solve their most pressing business problems. This course is designed to build skills that enhance critical thinking, problem solving, communication, and presentation capabilities. The course is taught through a combination of lecture, class discussions, case studies and team based projects.

Lastly, we have focused on providing additional support for our introductory programming classes by adding recitation sessions where students can ask questions and probe more deeply into the topics of the week's lecture.

CS/IS Merger

And, of course there is much work being done in regards to the CS/IS merger. Currently, the undergraduate program of CS and the undergraduate program of IS are being examined in order to find a common core of skills and courses. We have made some preliminary progress in identifying courses that are similar or that can be adapted between the two programs. In addition, we are examining the set of general education classes looking for parallels. The focus is on finding synergies between both areas and the preparation of students across a continuum of skills and abilities. More details will follow at the Education and Curriculum committee presentation.