Response to the Computer Science Graduate External Team Report

Thank you to external team for their review of our graduate programs. Each recommendation is addressed following the organization of the external team report.

I. Regular Maintenance and Support of Servers.

The department appreciates the feedback concerning the importance of both replacing servers and the maintenance of servers. We are in agreement with the need to keep servers inline with the needs of the program. For each numbered recommendation:

1) We believe the server room has adequate power and cooling. However, this room has been used by other units for storage of their equipment. This can lead to system compromise and failure as noted in the report. As the new college is gaining more space, we will work with all involved to have our dedicated space for our server room.

2) We were part of a very large college with very diverse resource needs and priorities. As our new college is focused on technology, we should be able to expect more adequate resources (both equipment and personnel) for our critical infrastructure. The department is currently in the initial phases of a plan for equipment replacement taking into account current and future infrastructure needs and the expected usefulness of the current equipment.

3) Assessment of infrastructure needs has begun (noted above) for the department. Along with this, internal and external funding for equipment will be part of the planning.

4) & 5) The department will have the opportunity to provide input when searching for the LabOps position. Hopefully, the skill set will include expertise in areas that support both our undergraduate and graduate programs. Once the LabOps position is filled, we will have more support in developing our hardware replacement plan. We will also look into cloud and other lab services available, on campus and industry based.

II. Enrollment in Digital Forensics and Information Security Graduate Programs

The department recognizes the importance of growing the enrollment in our graduate programs. We are and will continue to explore means to showcase our department for recruitment purposes.
1) We realize the importance of recruiting for our programs. We have high quality programs and we should be able to recruit students. We will try to use all the resources we can utilize to recruit students for our programs. This will include the office of the vice provost.

2) We will ask for professional recruiting help from the administration. Any help in this regard should help our numbers. We will explore what financial resources are needed for the hiring of a recruitment and placement consultant. If the department budget allows for such a hire, and the expected increase in enrollment is significant, we will bring this issue to the entire faculty for consideration.

3) We will get marketing help to develop our new brochures and flyers. We will try to highlight our better quality of education, compared to our competitors, in our print and web pages.

4) We have already increased our marketing efforts to our own undergraduate students. We plan to further increase these efforts through classroom visits for the required sophomore, junior, and senior-level classes, as well as during freshmen orientation; increased e-mail announcements; and by emphasizing the SFS scholarship option for the students in the 5-year program. We will explore targeting other majors for our regular graduate program.

5) Offering short courses is a good idea, but with faculty course load and staff shortage, it may not be possible in near future.

6) During the coming semester and/or academic year we will work on assembling the requested data for CS graduate programs. If at all possible, we will work closely with the graduate school, who have already assembled some general data on the subject.

7) We currently stay in contact with most of our alumni (we lost contact with few) and we ask them for recruiting help, couple of times a year. More close contact with alumni is very important, but is time consuming and out of the expertise of faculty. Exploring ways to connect with alumni that is not faculty resource intensive will be explored.

8) Given the already low number of GA positions we can offer to our students currently (we can offer 3 positions per starting cohort and need to alternate between 2 out-of-state/1 in-state and 1 out-of-state/2 in-state combinations), we feel that we cannot dedicate a whole CS GA line for the purpose of marketing and recruiting. We will, however, approach the College of Business to see if maybe a “trade” of GA lines would be feasible, where CoB would support a CS student, and we could support a CoB student.
III. Continuous Improvement

1) Enrollment growth plans are important and should be bound by enrollment projections. The need of faculty FTEs for the undergraduate and graduate programs is carefully monitored. While enrollment numbers fluctuates for any given semester, enrollments in the undergraduate and graduate programs are carefully monitored and projected. Currently curriculum changes are being made in the undergraduate program to help stabilize enrollment fluctuations, e.g., developing a course to help freshmen understand the Computer Science major so major selection is more informed. The undergraduate program is reaching a significant enrollment point in that additional sections of required courses may be needed to accommodate our majors. Faculty lines have and are being requested as our projections indicate more faculty are needed to support our programs. The faculty teaching loads have been just recently reviewed by the entire department and decisions made concerning online teaching loads. The use of adjuncts is also considered as part of our planning and scheduling of courses. Adjuncts for the online program are in some cases easier to identify in that the recruitment of adjuncts is not limited to qualified instructors in the area. The department will continue to work on resources to meet the projected needs and will work on enrollment growth plans.

2) The Dean will be included in the enrollment growth planning and development.

3) We are meeting with CARS in January 2013 to improve our assessment plan.

4) We will use the assessment data in our recruiting material.

5) We will work with new vice provost’s office in building stronger relationship with our alumni and use this relationship in recruiting students and possible funding for the programs.

6) When we are implementing Phase II of the Digital Forensics curriculum and design new courses and re-design existing one, we will most certainly take the FEPAC guidelines into account. From a preliminary glance at the guidelines, however, it seems that the requirements for ‘forensic biology’ may not be compatible with the goals of our program. An accreditation through the DoD Center of Digital Forensics Academic Excellence (DoD CDFAE) is likely a more feasible approach.