Graduate CSS Committee Meeting – Minutes

10:00 – 11:00 a.m.

November 5, 2021

Virtually via Zoom

<u>**Attendance**</u>

Faculty: Mohamed Ali, Wei Cheng, Wes Lloyd, Eyhab Al-Masri, Paulo Barretto*, Martine De Cock, Anderson Nascimento*, Juhua Hu, Athirai Irissappane

*=not present for vote

Non-Voting Faculty and Staff: Rachel Long, Raj Katti, Monika Sobolewska, Curtis Black, Victoria Olive

Absent: Ka Yee Yeung, Donald Chinn, Josh Tenenberg (sabbatical)

<u>**Items**</u>

1. **Approve minutes of last meeting: October 15, 2021**

   Moved: W. Cheng

   Seconded: E. Al-Masri

   Eligible to vote: 7

   7 in favor, 0 against, 0 abstained

   2 voting members absent for vote, but arrived later in meeting. 2 additional voting members absent from entire meeting.

2. **Invitation to Grad Faculty to present their research in the TCSS 598**

   The Chair reminded the committee to reach out if they are interested in presenting their reserach in our TCSS 598 course. This is a good opportunity for students to learn more about Faculty's research interests/initiatives and to learn more about which Faculty member might be the best fit for their future individual thesis or capstone research.

3. **BS/MS combined degree***

Monika Sobolewska shared additional information regarding the BS/MS combined degree and requested feedback from the committee. She reminded everyone that there is a similar program in Seattle, but our version would be slightly different (even though we would be required to follow the same guidelines as the Seattle program). This program will benefit both students and the school significantly - The main benefit for students is the time and money saved: this program would allow students to take 12 credits of graduate courses once they are admitted to the combined program (as opposed to the 6 graduate level credits allowed for students in our current undergraduate program), which would allow them to maintain their undergraduate status (allowing them to only have to pay for the cost of undergraduate tuition – the only additional cost for students is the application fee for the combined program). This combined program could also potentially lead to an increase in applications for our graduate programs. For students to be eligible for this combined program, they have to complete a minimum of 90 credits (can't be anything less than 90), and must be in their junior year in the program. Along with this, students must have achieved a 3.6 GPA in a CSS major for the following designated courses: **TCSS 305, 321, 342, 343, 300, 371, 422 -** One committee member recommended not requiring TCSS 422, since most students take it in their final quarter.

Another benefit for students participating in this combined degree program is that they will be guaranteed acceptance into the graduate program once they have completed their undergraduate degree. This means that students will be required to apply **twice** – first, for acceptance in to the accelerated degree program and second, for the MS degree program. Students accepted into the accelerated program are guaranteed acceptance into the MS degree program if they maintain a 3.6 GPA throughout. Along with this, students accepted in this accelerated program will not be required to take the GRE, further saving students' time and money.

One of the graduate advisors raised a question regarding application schedules, specifically asking if this accelerated program would be a one time a year admission schedule, or if students can be admitted multiple times a year. Monika suggested allowing students to be accepted twice a year, as it would give undergraduate students more opportunities to apply. The committee wrapped up this discussion with a straw poll to determine overall interest in moving forward with the accelerated degree proposal. **The results of the straw poll were as follows: 7 in favor, 0 against.**

4. **Ph.D. policies**

Before this meeting, the Committee Chair created a list of questions for the group to consider. The first question was: "For students who re transferring to our Ph.D. program with a master from another program (transferring up to 30 credits), should these students do a master thesis (10 credits) or take 2 electives considering the following cases: The student is coming (a) with a thesis master, or (b) with a non-thesis master." The committee's proposed answer was:

(a) A student who already completed a Master thesis can request to transfer this as 10 credits of TCSS700. If the transfer request is approved (i.e. the already completed Master thesis meets our general standard for a Master thesis in Computer Science), then the student does not have to take TCSS700 again and does not need to write a new Master thesis.

(b) A student who has not yet written a Master thesis is required to complete one while in the Ph.D. program at UWT, because the graduate requirements for the Ph.D. program include 10 credits of TCSS700 Master's Thesis, and to pass this course, students need to write a Master thesis. Comments regarding (b): Students who believe that a graduation requirement should be waived for them can likely apply for this by submitting a request to the Dean (this is how it works for our undergraduate CSS students; a similar procedure may exist for graduate students). Such requests for waivers should be treated with caution while we build a reputation for our Ph.D. program. It was also mentioned that introducing general rules for waiving the TCSS700 graduation requirement for certain categories of students will likely require a change to the Ph.D. program that needs to go through the formal approval process.

The second question brought forward by the Committee Chair: "For these students (described above), are they supposed to submit a proposal before they start their thesis, or do we waive the proposal requirement? The point here is that students come as new UW students for their first quarter and they typically want to start the Master thesis in their first quarter." The committee's comments proposed answer was: Yes, students are required to develop a Master thesis proposal and submit it for approval, which directly supports the Ph.D. program's learning goal of being able to "independently conduct original research by identifying important computer science problems (e.g. performing a gap analysis).." The committee also added that new Ph.D. students are advised to spend their first quarter at SET getting to know the Faculty and their research areas, finding a Faculty advisor, and developing a Master thesis proposal. During this quarter, they may be able to take some elective courses as well that can be used to satisfy other graduation requirements?

The Chair encouraged the committee to consider that we typically accept students that we are familiar with and are fully aware of what research they will be working on as soon as they are admitted. This scenario could have an impact on the committee's proposed answer to this second question, since students admitted to our graduate programs want to begin their individual research as soon as they arrive to Tacoma. Along with this, international Ph.D. students' research is often funded by governments/projects, so requiring them to delay their research due to a lack of a Master's thesis could create some bigger issues in the long run. The Chair also added that it will be difficult for us to require students to write/submit a proposal before they are enrolled in the Ph.D. program (or in this case, before they arrive to Tacoma), and delaying students' research projects could also create issues with tuition/credit allocation. The Chair reminded the Committee to think about these scenarios from a student's perspective: if they are accepted to other schools that don't require them to complete and submit a thesis proposal, they are more likely to go there instead of here. Why would they want to complete extra work BEFORE they are guaranteed admission? One committee member raised the idea of potentially requiring students to complete a Master thesis in one quarter, however, the committee agreed that it's difficult to create a good and thorough thesis in one quarter.

The Committee Chair recommended going through one question at a time in future meetings, in order to save time and to make conversations more efficient. The Committee was also reminded that the ultimate goal of the Ph.D. program is to produce independent scholars who will be able to create and implement their own research agenda.

5. **Graduate committee meetings same day as CSS meeting at 10am**

*Material regarding the combined BS/MS degree prepared by Monika:

https://washington.zoom.us/rec/share/m80I_6eWk_vaO7SsQzNuy0L0fdhOrOk-9yQY_in7mm6w0zPero8JWToHOnyKjUyN.omNOMAYywU6FOI-Q?startTime=1633171656000