

CSS Grad Committee Meeting – January 10, 2025

Virtually via Zoom

3pm – 4pm PST

Attendance

Voting Faculty (13): Wei Cheng, Wes Lloyd, Martine De Cock, Juhua Hu, Ka Yee Yeung, Mohamed Ali, Damiano Torre, Donald Chinn, Dongfang Zhao, Eyhab Al-Masri, Paulo Barreto, Zhi-Qi Cheng, Wei Cai

Non-Voting Faculty and Staff (4): Kira King, Raj Katti, Rachel Crook, Aubree Steffens

Items

1. Approval of Oct. 1, 2024 meeting minutes ([Graduate Meeting minutes 10012024.docx](#))

Kira clarified that the Dean made a decision that staff members could no longer take minutes during program meetings.

Martine expressed concern that, because of the ransomware attack on the cssgate server, the school has lost many years of meeting minutes. The GPC said that this issue is separate from approval of the Oct 1 meeting minutes and should be discussed separately. It was not discussed further in the meeting.

Martine said that she wished to abstain from approving the Oct 1 meeting minutes because they lack detail. The CSS chair has responded to comments that Martine raised previously about the Oct 1 meeting minutes; however, the minutes themselves have not been updated.

Moved: W. Cheng

Seconded: K.Y. Yeung

8 in favor, 0 against, 5 abstain

2. Approval of Dec. 3, 2024 meeting minutes ([Graduate Meeting minutes 12032024.docx](#))

Moved: W. Cheng

Seconded: E. Al-Masri

10 in favor, 0 against, 3 abstain

3. Carwein PhD Fellowship/Graduate Merit Updates

The Grad Advisor shared the awardees for both the Carwein-Andrews PhD Fellowship and the 2024-25 Graduate Merit Funding.

For Carwein, 3 PhD students were awarded - each student will receive a total of \$13,333 (\$6,666.50/quarter) in Winter and Spring 2025. The Grad Advisor thanked the Dean and Associate Dean for their help reviewing all Carwein applications this year.

For the Grad Merit funding, four Master's students were awarded \$2,578 (\$1,289/quarter) for Winter and Spring 2025 – we originally nominated 5 students, but 1 student is fully funded from an outside source, which made them ineligible. Students whose first quarter was Autumn 2024 were eligible for this funding, as long as their first quarter cumulative GPA is 3.0 or above. Three PhD students also received merit funding - \$897 total (\$448/quarter) for Winter and Spring 2025.

4. Top Scholar Updates

The GPC shared that the application for 2025 funding was submitted on January 8, 2025 to the Graduate School, with a request for funding to support 3 new graduate students starting Fall 2025. The funding model we requested is one research assistantship quarter, awarded for every 2 matching quarters funded by SET.

5. MS thesis/capstone proposals

Received 1 thesis proposal at the end of the Autumn quarter.

6. Faculty Search Updates

Updates were shared by the faculty member chairing these searches – first-round interviews concluded December 11, 2024. 122 applications were received by December 16, and 50 were reviewed during the holiday break. Seven candidates from the first round of interviews were shortlisted for second-round Zoom interviews. Second-round interviews are scheduled to be completed by January 24, 2025. The final report will also be submitted by this date.

7. New Program Updates (MS in AI Foundations and Applications)

Updates were shared by the faculty member coordinating this new program, who is currently preparing 3 key documents required for program approval. Discussions have also begun with SET leadership (Dean + Director of Operations) to finalize funding and delivery logistics. The target PNOI submission to the Office of Academic Affairs is March 19, 2025.

8. GTA Allocations and Team Meetings

The GPC shared that 8 students were offered GTA positions for Winter quarter 2025. The course selection for these new GTAs were based on core course needs, class enrollment, and student preferences. Assignments were communicated to the students in their offer letters.

The GPC suggested scheduling the GTA meeting on the same day as the PhD student meeting. Ideally, these would be back-to-back sessions on the same day for better focus and attendance.

9. PhD Seminar planning

The objective of the PhD student meeting/seminar is to enhance PhD student success by addressing key topics, such as: writing research publications, preparing research proposals, career paths in academic and in industry, etc. One faculty member mentioned that it could also be helpful to schedule faculty and alumni panel discussions for current PhD students.

There is one seminar planned for Winter quarter, with a focus on student motivation and engagement.

The GPC asked for faculty to volunteer to present or contribute to these meetings/seminars. It was recommended that alumni like A. Nascimento (who has experience in both academia and industry) should be invited to a session to provide broader perspectives for our students.

10. Student Preparedness in TCSS 543

2 committee members shared concerns about students' insufficient foundational knowledge in TCSS 543 (Advanced Algorithms). Last quarter (Autumn 2024), there were challenges with students lacking prerequisite knowledge, leading to high failure and drop rates. The committee discussed some solutions, including stricter admissions screening, particularly for Graduate Certificate in Software Development Engineering (GCSDE) students, and encouraging preparatory courses like TCSS 343 before registering for TCSS 543. The GPC also requested to begin conducting annual demographic surveys of incoming cohorts to track trends in student backgrounds.

The committee discussed how the GCSDE may be a better fit as a pathway towards the M.S. in Information Technology (MSIT) program, and to consider only allowing the top percentile of GCSDE graduates to be admitted to the MSCSS program.

11. Committee Meeting Scheduling for Winter Qtr 2025

CSS Grad program committee meetings will follow CSS undergrad faculty meetings at 3pm to minimize scheduling conflicts.

Upcoming meetings: February 7, 2025 at 3pm; March 7, 2025 at 3pm