



UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
The Graduate School
G-1 Communications
Box 353770
Seattle, Washington 98195-3770

Telephone: (206)543-5900
Fax: (206)685-3234

May 19, 2016

To: Harry Bruce, Dean, The Information School

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "David L. Eaton".

From: David L. Eaton, Vice Provost and Dean
Rebecca Aanerud, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs

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RE: Review of the Information School (2015-2016)

This memo outlines the recommendations from the review of The Information School (iSchool) of the University of Washington. Detailed comments on the review can be found in the documents that were part of the following formal review proceedings:

- Charge meeting between review committee, the iSchool, and administrators (May 12, 2015)
- Self-study (September 29, 2015)
- Site visit (October 26 - 27, 2015)
- Review committee report (December 15, 2015)
- Departmental response to the review committee report (February 12, 2016)
- Graduate School Council consideration of review (May 19, 2016)

The review committee consisted of:

Ann Bostrom, Professor, UW Evans School of Public Affairs (Committee Chair)
Randall J. LeVeque, Professor, UW Applied Mathematics
William Aspray, Professor, School of Information, University of Texas at Austin
Gary Olson, Professor, School of Information and Computer Sciences, University of California, Irvine

The Information School (iSchool) offers the following degrees: Bachelor of Science in Informatics, Master of Science in Information Science (MSIS), Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS), Master of Science in Information Management (MSIM), and Doctor of Philosophy.

Council considered recommendations at its meeting on May 19, 2016. The Council recommends the next review be conducted in ten years (2025-2026).

Specific observations and recommendations regarding the program that were called out by the Council include the following:

Program Strengths

The Review Committee detailed several notable strengths of The Information School:

- The Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS) degree, accredited by the American Library Association since 1926, is ranked No. 3 nationally by US News & World Report, and the law librarianship specialty within the MLIS degree is ranked as the nation's top program.
- Enrollments of the Bachelor of Science in Informatics, Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS), Master of Science in Information Management (MSIM), and Doctor of Philosophy programs have continuously grown over the past 8 years.
- A majority of Informatics undergraduate students are engaged in paid summer internships. A high percentage of graduates of the iSchool (approximately 90%) were employed with a high paying job (normally \$50-100K) within three months after their graduation.
- The iSchool set up eight strategic initiatives in line with their vision, mission and core values. The iSchool is committed to “preparing the leaders and innovators of the 21st century global information economy and our commitment to making the world a better place.”
- Many excellent faculty members from a variety of fields were recently hired.
- The iSchool is committed to maintaining and developing the “School of One” philosophy, values and culture.

Program Challenges & Risks

The Review Committee identified several challenges and risks in its review:

- No adequate space is available to support school growth including increasing enrollment and expanding external funding.
- There is a need to improve upon the iSchool's shared governance and to increase the transparency of research administration in order to support research productivity and impact, and to better support junior faculty.

- Several core courses contain overlapping content and should be revised to address this overlap.
- Tensions between research and professional program goals were noted but considered normal by the Review Committee. The iSchool is working to address these tensions, and the Review Committee believes that more could be done to ensure that the research and professional programs reinforce each other.
- Given the large number of assistant professors, the Review Committee suggests the iSchool pay close attention to the quality of the advising that junior faculty members are providing to students at all levels, but especially at the doctoral level, and provide resources to support advising.
- Course content should be diversified to appeal to a wider range of students.

Areas of Concurrence and/or Disagreement

The iSchool agreed with and will act on all recommendations offered by the Review Committee. The iSchool will focus on the quality of the student learning experience while growing the school by:

- Working with the University administration to address space issues;
- Addressing tensions between research and professional programs;
- Revisiting the undergraduate core courses to reduce content overlap;
- Balancing international-domestic student populations in the Master of Science in Information Management (MSIM) day program; and
- Addressing isolation online students may experience.

The iSchool clarified three pieces of feedback offered by the Review Committee:

- The Review Committee noted concern about the shared governance of the iSchool. In particular, the committee felt there was a lack of senior faculty in leadership roles, for instance, only one full professor is serving on the faculty council. The iSchool response stated that the Elected Faculty Council was designed to include one representative from each rank. Additionally, the iSchool noted that senior faculty members are active at other committees at school, such as the Personnel Committee that handles promotions.

- The Review Committee stressed the need for transparent communication regarding faculty development, specifically in the evaluation of newly hired junior faculty from diverse fields with different startup packages. The iSchool responded that the Director of Faculty Affairs at the iSchool is responsible for building and managing faculty development including the faculty mentoring program, promotion policies, faculty benefits and support, etc.
- Another concern is the timing of course offerings. The response was “the iSchool offers classes across all periods of the day, and we will comply fully with the best practices established by [the Time Schedule and Room Assignment Office] as part of a campus-wide effort to optimize use of UW learning spaces.”

Graduate School Council Recommendations

The Graduate School Council commends The Information School on the strength of its programs, faculty, and students. After discussion, the Council recommended the next review be conducted in ten years (2025-2026).

We concur with the Council’s comments and recommendations.

cc: Gerald Baldasty, Interim Provost and Executive Vice President
Patricia Moy, Associate Vice Provost for Academic and Student Affairs, Office of the
Provost
Members of the Graduate School Council
Wesley Henry, Academic Program Specialist, The Graduate School
GPSS President