

October 31, 2017

To: Dr. David L. Eaton, Vice Provost and Dean
Dr. Patricia Moy, Associate Vice Provost for Academic and Student Affairs
Dr. Janice DeCosmo, Associate Dean, Undergraduate Academic Affairs

From: Dr. David W. McDonald, Chair, Department of Human Centered Design & Engineering

Re: Response, Ten-Year Departmental Review Report for 2017

Dear Dean Eaton, Associate Vice Provost Moy and Associate Dean DeCosmo:

Speaking for the Department of Human Centered Design & Engineering (HCDE) as a whole, I thank you and the committee for the thoughtful review of our department. The review committee consisting of Prof. Brian Johnson, UW College of Built Environments (Committee Chair); Prof. James Coupe, UW Center for Digital Arts and Experimental Media; Prof. Bonnie Nardi, Informatics, University of California, Irvine; and Prof. Gerhard Fischer, Computer Science, University of Colorado at Boulder was diligent and deserve acknowledgement for their thoughtful consideration of HCDE, its history, its current state, and the trajectory that the revitalized department has established.

We received the report in mid-July and shared it with faculty and staff as they came back from the summer recess. In the coming months the report will be made accessible to students, alumni, and other stakeholders who participated in the review process, along with our response.

The strengths identified by the review committee resonate with both the faculty and staff and is simply part of the HCDE culture--a culture that students, staff, faculty, alumni, and our external constituencies appreciate and affirm through their support and participation in the department. Likewise, the list of five concerns provide important feedback for the department to consider. In particular, the curricular concerns provide some concrete feedback upon which the respective BS, MS, and PhD curriculum committees can act. Given the faculty's interests in addressing the broader industry needs and the students needs in our curriculum, I am confident that the respective curriculum committees will begin to unpack these concerns and devise innovative curricular solutions.

The report made only two specific recommendations. I respond to each of these in turn. One of the five concerns, "space," is clearly a contentious issue all over campus and is a point of focused collaboration between HCDE and the College of Engineering (CoE). Space concerns expressed during the prior Ten-Year Review in 2007 paved the way for HCDE to move into Sieg Hall, a move that provided a consolidation and a small expansion of space for the department. Given the department's continued growth, using assignable square foot per person as a comparison metric, we are currently in a worse situation than we were during the 2007 review. The faculty, staff, students, alumni all recognize that this problem is having serious and critical impacts on the ability of the department to carry out its educational and research missions. This is why the first recommendation by the review committee is focused on space. Simply, the committee recognizes that resolving space issues on campus takes time and continuing to delay will only make the situation worse.

HCDE departmental administration has considered the impacts of acquiring space off campus. The faculty are reluctant to divide the department along any of the potential intellectual, research, or teaching lines. HCDE has a collaborative culture that is identified as one of the departmental strengths. Further, the faculty see any type of division as ultimately undermining the educational and research mission of the department and have thus far been willing to continue to work in ever smaller space to accommodate growth. The tipping point, however, may be near. Since the completion of this Ten-Year review in May 2017, the department has hired two new tenure-track faculty, and plans to hire two new career lecturer/sr. lecturers. While it seems a waste of resources, there is a potential fiscal path that would allow the entire department to move to off campus space. But that is an extreme solution that would not serve the long term needs of the department, CoE, nor the University with regard to the research and education that HCDE provides. That solution also puts the entire burden of solving space problems on the department, a solution that the University has placed on few if any departments. HCDE stands ready to work with CoE and the University to solve the space problems of the department--and we realize that solutions take time to evolve. But the situation is critical and waiting longer to begin discussions is not the way to begin a solution.

The second recommendation was to initiate a strategic planning process so as to develop a strategic plan for the department. This is important guidance. Even before May 2017, when the review committee was meeting, the HCDE faculty were beginning to feel the need to develop a clearly articulated departmental strategic plan. Discussion of the need and what might be included in the plan mostly took the form of hallway discussions. With the launch of the 2017-2018 Academic Year, the department has

already started to address this recommendation. Beginning with the autumn 2017 off-site retreat, the faculty began the first part of a broad-based strategic planning process with a focus on research strategic visioning. The plan is to iterate over research, curricular, and organizational strategic foci and to include a range of departmental stakeholders. As part of this work, we will be reflecting on and figuring out how to address concerns raised in the decennial review about departmental identity, curricular emphasis and offerings, and channels by which students can communicate with the department. The goal is to have a complete draft strategic plan by the end of the current academic year. The envisioned timeline should give the broader HCDE community appropriate time for “departmental discussion and soul-searching” as recommended by the review committee.

We reiterate our thanks to the UW Graduate School for managing this process. We recognize that as a department we do this once every 10 years, but the UW Graduate School is doing many of these per year. We also thank the committee members for their diligence, attention to detail, and the well considered feedback present in their report. The report will provide guidance to the department decision making processes for the coming years.