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January 4, 2018

To: Michael Bragg, Dean, College of Engineering

From: David Eaton, Vice Provost and Dean

Rebecca Aanerud, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Planning

RE: Review of the Department of Human Centered Design and Engineering (2016-2017)

This memorandum outlines the Graduate School's final recommendations from the Department of Human Centered Design and Engineering academic program review. 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 and administrators (December 12, 2016)
- Self-Study (April 3, 2017)
- Site visit (May 15-16, 2017)
- Review committee report (July 14, 2017)
- Department of Human Centered Design and Engineering response to the report (October 31, 2017)
- Graduate School Council consideration of review (January 4, 2018)

The review committee consisted of:

Brian Johnson, Associate Professor, UW Department of Architecture (Committee Chair)

James Coupe, Associate Professor, UW Department of Digital Arts and Experimental Media

Gerhard Fischer, Professor Emeritus, Department of Computer Science, University of Colorado at Boulder

Bonnie Nardi, Professor, Department of Informatics, University of California Irvine

The Department of Human Centered Design and Engineering offers the following degrees: Bachelor of Science, Master of Science, and Doctor of Philosophy.

Members of the Graduate School Council presented findings and recommendations to the full Council at its meeting on January 4, 2018. A summary of this report, composed by Graduate School Council Members, is attached to this document.

Graduate School Council Recommendations

The Graduate School Council commends Department of Human Centered Design and Engineering on the strength of its programs, faculty, and students. After discussion, the Council recommended the following:

- 4-year interim report (2020-2021) addressing the following through an updated strategic plan:
 - Plan for facilities
 - Departmental identity and vision
 - Curriculum structure and execution
- Full academic program review in 10 years (2026-2027)

We concur with the Council's recommendations.

cc: Gerald Baldasty, Provost and Executive Vice President
Patricia Moy, Associate Vice Provost for Academic and Student Affairs, Office of the Provost
Janice DeCosmo, Associate Dean, Undergraduate Academic Affairs
David McDonald, Chair, Department of Human Centered Design and Engineering
Wesley Henry, Associate Director, Academic Affairs and Planning the Graduate School
Academic unit Review Committee Members
Members of the Graduate School Council
GPSS President

Attachment

Graduate School Council Discussion
Academic Program Review

Academic Unit Name: Department of Human Centered Design and Engineering.

Degrees/Certificates Included in the Review: Bachelor of Science in Human Centered Design & Engineering (2 degree options: Human Computer Interaction and Data Science); Master of Science in Human Centered Design & Engineering; Certificate in User-Centered Design; Doctor of Philosophy in Human Centered Design & Engineering

Program Strengths:

1. In 2008-09, the Department of Technical Communication changed its name to the Department of Human Centered Design & Engineering in response to ongoing shifts and trends in the field at large. This was clearly a watershed moment for the unit and entailed a number of changes (e.g., curricular, new appointments, etc.) that have successfully strengthened and enhanced the Department in the areas identified below.
2. The Department enjoys a ‘strong sense of community and collegiality,’ enhanced by a ‘non-hierarchical internal structure and a broadly collaborative approach to governance and teaching’ (in the words of the Review Committee report). Faculty and students alike express a high level of satisfaction with the current state of the unit.
3. The Department is marked by a strong and growing scholarly research profile; faculty and students have consistently secured a number of international, national and local awards. This is consistent with the Department’s stated goal of a ‘national leadership role.’
4. Enrollments have steadily increased in the last decade, a trend that shows no signs of abating, and students exhibit strong attachment to their programs. While the Department has responded proactively to the demand, accommodating student demand may prove to be a challenge (see below).

5. A distinctive characteristic of the Department is how proactive it is with respect to a broad array of issues: diversity, funding issues (the Department is in relatively good shape financially), the desirability of collaboration with other units and programs on campus and locally, the needs of its undergraduate and graduate students, responsiveness to an ever-changing and critical field, etc.

Challenges & Risks:

1. A chief and pressing concern, expressed in strong terms in both the Self-Study and the Review Report, centers on problems of space. As detailed in the Self-Study and reiterated in the Response, the unit is ‘in a worse situation than...during the 2007 review,’ a situation so dire as to have ‘serious and critical impacts on the ability of the department to carry out its educational and research missions.’ The Department has even considered moving the entire unit to off- campus space, but decided not to move because the downsides of moving currently outweigh the benefits of space.
2. The Department lacks a cohesive identity based upon a unifying vision for the role it should best play in accelerating student development and contributing to the evidence basis of the discipline through research. The construct of Human Centered Design and Engineering is not well understood, nor are connections to related disciplines. Similarly, some students, alumni, and recruiters are unclear that the curriculum structure, course staffing, and classroom execution are the most prudent for the Department.
3. As mentioned above, the Department has experienced a dramatic rise in enrollments (doubled in the last ten years), and this is obviously a double-edged sword. As the Review Committee Report cautions, ‘Whether they can or should continue to scale up enrollment remains one of the challenging questions.’ The Department is sensitive to the challenge and is strategizing about ways to address the problem of access.
4. Communication quality back to Department administration, both from students and from part-time faculty could be improved.

Areas of Concurrence

1. There is considerable concurrence between the report of the Review Committee and the Department's response. One suggestion by the Review Committee was the implementation of a 'Strategic Planning Process', a suggestion the Department has fully taken on board.