

# **Proposal for Undergraduate Committees in the Institute of Technology**

**Approved November 19, 2010**

1. The current "Undergraduate Committee" in the Institute of Technology will disband. In its place will be three committees, one for each major degree program (the CSS, ITS, CES). The intent is that as new major degree programs are developed a new committee that stewards it will be created.
2. Each of these committees will concern itself with the undergraduate program of the associated degree. This might include (but is not limited to) such things as evaluation of new courses, changes to existing courses (including syllabi, course topics, formal assessment), admission requirements, and graduation requirements. In addition, each committee will serve as the search committee for any faculty positions for which the new faculty member will teach primarily in that degree program.
3. Every faculty member (whether full- or part-time) and staff person in the Institute is eligible to be a member of any of these committees. For purposes of establishing a quorum, people will sign up to serve on these committees at the start of the academic year. Any eligible person can join a committee at any time by notifying the committee with a message on its email list (see below).
4. Each committee should contain at least one member who does not teach in the degree program.
5. At least one student in the major degree program will be a member of the respective undergraduate committee (e.g. a student majoring in ITS will serve on the ITS committee).
6. Each committee will have a chair that is elected by the committee at its first meeting of the academic year. The chair will serve for the academic year. The duties of the chair are limited to facilitating the work of the committee. The chair has no other special powers or duties.
7. Each committee will have a regular meeting time and location that is determined at the beginning of each academic year and distributed to all eligible members in advance of the first meeting. In addition, there will be joint meetings of the CSS and CES committees when issues related to common curricula arise.
8. Agendas of each meeting will be available one week in advance of the meetings, though these might require updating at the meetings if there are any late-breaking items to add. Minutes will be recorded and posted in a website accessible to eligible members that is linked from the Institute webpage. Minutes will be posted within 2 work days of the end of the meeting.
9. The chairs of each of these committees will communicate regularly with one another to increase awareness of the cross-program impact of issues discussed within these committees.
10. All email communication pertaining to committee business will be carried out on an archived email list. Anyone eligible to serve on the committees can join this email list and view the archives. The chair of the committee and one other committee member will be list administrators.
11. All decisions are subject to approval by the voting faculty of the Institute of Technology.

## Rationale

The motivation for this proposal is to increase the efficiency and the transparency of the undergraduate committees in the Institute. This is especially important given the coupling in curricula and in faculty across the different programs.

Currently, the only formally constituted committee for the undergraduate programs is called the Undergraduate Committee: members are drawn from all major degree programs at the Institute, membership is published and disseminated, there is an archived email list that anyone can join, meeting times are scheduled at the beginning of the year, there are published agendas and minutes, and there is a designated time in the full faculty meeting for reports.

When this committee was set up, the thought was that this would be where the curriculum of ALL undergraduate degree programs are discussed. In practice this does not happen. During the 2009-10 academic year (and this is representative of previous years), with one exception every item was about the CSS curriculum. Not a single item from CSE or ITS was discussed. And that is because there are informal committees for discussing these issues, none of which are brought to the undergraduate committee. What this means is that the undergraduate committee is the de facto CSS committee, since there IS no informal group where these meetings happen. And the transparency, information flow, and interaction needs to be symmetrical for all programs.

The proposal above in essence changes the undergraduate committee to what it actually is: the CSS committee. And it says to formalize the CSE and ITS committees so that they are equally transparent: scheduled meeting times, documented minutes and agendas, archived email lists of discussion. In addition it adds new mechanisms for dealing with the cross-program coupling:

1. At least one person from outside the degree programs should be on the corresponding committee,
2. Regular discussion amongst the chairs,
3. Agendas and minutes are publicly disseminated so that all faculty can be aware of what is going on in all programs and can attend meetings if there are items of interest for that faculty member.
4. All decisions of the committees are brought to the full faculty.

The general theme here is letting a smaller number of people (and those with the content expertise) work on program-specific issues and then have the issues bubble up to the full faculty, but not before committee chairs (and all faculty) have had a chance to become aware of the issues after they have been looked at by the "lower" committee. Large issues would need input from the entire faculty and probably bypass the committees altogether, although in this case communication among all faculty will be important so as not to use valuable faculty meeting time until the issue have been clearly defined.