

Planning meeting for a Computational Science Program

Dear Colleagues,

We have had some communication with Arts and Sciences and now have a clearer (but not perfectly clear) roadmap for developing a broad based, cross curriculum Computational Science Program at the University. I appreciate all of the ideas, drafts, and information that you provided for our initial formulation of the idea, and your contributions and expressions of interest were very helpful in enabling us to sketch out a way forward. To get going as quickly as possible, we need to hold a meeting, in early December, of everyone who wants to participate in this effort, so that we can build consensus around a plan that makes sense for all the stakeholders. In preparation for that, I thought I would give you, in very brief terms, my understanding of the current situation and the schedule we need to follow to get this program in place in a timely manner.

The major question that we need to address appears to be this: How should we structure this Computational Science program so that it both represents the educational leadership of the University as whole in this critical area, and yet enables participating departments to customize the degree concentrations to fit the special features of their discipline?

Under one approach that Don Cox at Arts and Sciences thought was reasonable, the Computational Science Program would develop a limited specification of core content and academic work that every Computational Science concentration would have to incorporate, but each department would be left free to complete the concentration by specifying discipline specific courses or work tailored to the requirements of their academic field or degree program. Essentially this would mean that the Computational Science Program, through its steering committee, would be responsible for reviewing and approving the plans for Computational Science concentrations of individual departments to insure that they meet the common criteria that the committee develops. Any department that wanted to offer their degree “with a Concentration in Computational Science” would need to lay out a plan that met those general criteria and get it approved by the committee. But those common criteria would be limited to areas of real consensus and make up only a part of the concentration; different departments would be given as much autonomy as possible to customize their concentrations to their particular field. Obviously from the draft plans that many of you submitted, you already have a reasonable idea of what more discipline specific content should be part of your degree concentrations.

Supposing that that approach makes sense, and given the way the curriculum cycle works, to get such a Computational Science Program implemented for 2007-08 academic year, our “working group,” i.e. the representatives of the different departments that want to join the program at the beginning and get their concentrations implemented as soon as possible, would have to meet roughly the following time table:

Dec.

- Group meets and agrees on some initial version of the plan
- Group members take the initial draft back to departments; iterate on the plan via e-mail and Wiki.

Jan.-early Feb

- Updated version of the plan is presented to the Chancellor and/or Dean’s meeting
- Group meets to finalize the plan
- Program plan is presented in a letter to Chancellor/Chancellor’s staff for approval. That approval would transform our working group into the initial steering committee for the new Computational Science Program.

Mar.-Apr

- Catalogue copy is developed by each department that wants to offer Computational Science Concentration
- Concentration plans are reviewed and approved by the Computational Science steering committee as meeting program criteria
- Catalogue copy is submitted to each department. At this point, the catalogue copy would begin the normal process up the hierarchy in order to be approved and included in the catalogue for 07-08.

Given that timetable, I would like to hold a meeting to discuss this approach and, if we have reasonable agreement, to get the process started as described. I have reserved the lecture room C206 of the Claxton Complex on Wednesday December 7th at 2:00 for that discussion. I hope you can join us.

You can find an up to date version of the program description for the Graduate Concentration in Computational Science at: <http://www.cs.utk.edu/~dongarra/comp-sci-1105.pdf>

I look forward to your feedback.
Best Regards,
Jack