HCIM Committee--March 2018 Meeting

Tuesday, March 27, 2018

Attendees: Chair Niklas Elmqvist, Bill Kules, Tamara Clegg, Chris Robeck, Lindsay Sarin, Jeff Waters, Carol Boston (recorder)

I.   Admissions Report—Jeff Waters

- All acceptances have gone out. However, students who were rejected have not yet been notified due to a snag with the Grad School. They should get notification by Friday.
- 29 students have fully accepted their offers of admission already (including 6 deferred from last year.) International students have a firm deadline of May 15.

II.   HCIM Student Travel Awards

Following review of applications and discussion, a decision was made to grant the $500 awards to the two students who are first authors of papers: Alisha @ CHI and Biswaksen @ a visualization conference in Italy.

III.   CHI Bird

Bill will share some of the data from the affinity diagrams about program direction at the CHI Bird Curriculum meeting involving three facilitators over 1.5 hours. He will also be looking for ideas from other programs. Committee members encouraged him to seek more information about how other programs find part-time professional industry instructors.

Eun Kyoung will be moderating a session with Michael Smith (new director of HCI program from UWashington, who graduated from their iSchool and came back to run their program after 5 years in industry, bringing a network of clients and other resources). She hopes to learn much more about industry-program partnerships from the experience.

There may be potential for the HCIM Program to develop closer partnerships with other units across campus, including BSOS and the Art Department, and strengthen the pool of instructors/TAs for our program in the process. We should bring back our talented former students to be part of 1-credit course as part of a tiered-engagement strategy that would lead them from participating as panel members, then guest lecturers, then step up to adjunct.

IV.   Staffing Issue – Lindsay Sarin
- Bill and Lindsay have begun discussing the great need for a visual design instructor. Eun Kyoung is the only current faculty member qualified to teach this.

In Fall 2018:

- Eun Kyoung is teaching a health informatics elective; Tammy is teaching in undergrad.
- Bill could teach the INST 710 UX Research Methods class if someone else could teach programming.

In Spring 2019: UX design studio course and visual design course will need instructors.

Committee would like to talk with Keith/Brian about professional track faculty (visual, UX, and UX research methods). Bill will provide a description of skills such a person would have; if deans agree, it will be posted.

Next year, the Committee should look at revising INST 630: Intro to Programming for the Information Professional. INST 710 ad 711 will embed some service design.

V.   HCIM Revisioning –Bill Kules

To summarize the key issues from the March revisioning retreat, the Committee reviewed key points from brainstorming artifacts:

- Students want a program with industry partners so they develop practical and industry skills. They would like a master's program that provides training for a job and help finding a job. Some of them are so concerned about the job market and their employability that it affects their ability to focus on their courses. Most of our current faculty don't have recent practical industry skills.
- They need to produce good deliverables from the start, so the program should help them build a comprehensive portfolio from Day 1.
- Core competencies include user research, user experience, visual design, interaction design, and critique. Students also need to know current trends and tools and have soft skills such as teamwork and communication as well as the ability to sell the value of/evangelize on behalf of UX.
- Students want buddies with experience to help them learn while in the program, and a network of professionals and faculty to help them afterwards. They value a strong, diverse community.
- Structure of courses needs some attention so there is coherence and development of deep skills vs. overview. There should be stepwise training so students step into successively larger problems. Project-based learning allows them to put concepts into practice
- UMD needs a clear reputation—right now, the reputation is that it is a cheap program; it serves international students; we have senior people…but they are leaving. So—how do we make our case? There could be a niche in serving part-time industry professionals, but class times and structure would have to change to accommodate them.

Hot ideas for the future:

- Start portfolio on Day 1 and every single assignment contributes
- Drive soft skills throughout every course (critique, project management, communication)
- Every course taught in work setting (blue sky)
- UX design + X (different discipline)
- Student plan on Day 1 re: getting their dream job (at Google). Where do you want to be? What's the plan to get you there (maybe over time rather than immediately)
- Career coaches, buddies, networking (onboarding intentionally)
- Mirror/adapt best practices
- Run program like company—help students understand what they are getting into
- Emphasize academic research and practical skills and take advantage of both through HCIL-HCIM connections (research projects could pull in students for short time)

- Go deep into theory and real-world context
- Have UX professional in residence
- Create in-house shop—UX consultancy. Like a Capstone on steroids (doing this at CMU and UWashington). Other models are culinary schools, beauty schools…

Initial visions developed to date are:

- All curriculum running toward a job. (Did this vision as a group).
- Soft skills run through whole curriculum (Did as small group following retreat).
- Coursework paired with work experiences (Did as small group following retreat).

Committee members walked through them, including pluses and minuses and design ideas.

Other visions that arose at retreat that could also be developed were: onboarding, cross-disciplinary relationships, running the program like a company, using guides, buddies, and mentors, and bringing industry people into the program. These will be considered by small groups in the next month, using +/-/DI again. The goal is to pull out commonalities across four to five more visions so that 3-5 key concepts emerge.

After that, the Committee will start sharing these around the iSchool, including possibly at the Assembly meeting in May. These key concepts could drive future hires, selection of applicants, course revisions, etc.

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