

HCIM Program Committee Meeting for October

October 9, 2020

1:00 PM – 2:30 PM

Virtual meeting

Meeting called by:	Bill Kules	Type of meeting:	Monthly Committee Meeting
Facilitator:	Carol Boston	Note taker:	Carol Boston
Timekeeper:	Carol Boston		

Attendees: Bill Kules (2 / 2), Carol Boston (2 / 2), Amy Asadi (2 / 2), Niklas Elmqvist (2 / 2), Ge Gao (2 / 2), Alex Leitch (2 / 2), Jeff Waters (2 / 2), Dustin Smith (1 / 2)

Agenda and related documents [here](#)

Minutes of the Meeting:

Agenda item: (1:00) Adoption of the [September meeting minutes](#) **Presenter:** Bill Kules

Discussion: Some members were not able to access the meeting minutes prior to the meeting, so final approval will be held over to the next meeting.

Agenda item: (1:05) Operational updates: enrollment, orientation, summer teaching grants, [1-credit report](#), working Spring schedule, etc. **Presenter:** Carol Boston and Bill Kules

Discussion:

- For Fall semester, the program welcomed ~45 new students, mostly full-time and from the U.S. due to visa issues associated with the pandemic. Core courses are offered synchronously in the evening; a few international students are joining these courses from their home countries and hope to arrive later for in-person courses.
- Summer work in the program included exploring good teaching methods for remote, distributed teams and ways to incorporate anti-racism in the curriculum.
- Last year's 1-credit offerings were well-received and we look forward to offering more in Spring semester, with some adjustment to the scheduling so that most run 1 hour/week for the entire semester rather than in 3-hour blocks for 5 weeks.

Agenda item: (1:10) [For review and approval] [Program Learning Outcomes](#) and curriculum map **Presenter:** Bill Kules

Discussion:

Thanks to committee members' input, work on the program learning outcomes moved forward, resulting in four broad competencies with five learning outcomes and associated courses from which artifacts for assessment could be drawn. Together these represent not everything people should learn, but the core things. The UX Strategy area is somewhat aspirational and would mean changes in the curriculum to more fully accommodate it.

Following review and discussion, the Committee voted unanimously (with 7 voting members in favor) to approve the following Program Learning Outcomes:

1. Design Competencies

Complete a project from brief through to production designs, using iterative feedback and critique to improve initial work from sketch to aesthetically coherent, professional quality interactive mockups.

2. Research and Evaluation Competencies

Plan and execute an HCI research project by conducting background research, formulating the research questions, choosing the appropriate qualitative and/or quantitative research methods, evaluating the utility, usability, and user experience of the artifact, and making recommendations for improvements.

3. UX Strategy Competencies

Apply an understanding of organizational strategy to the creation of innovative digital products and services and work with internal and external stakeholders to communicate how UX/HCI research, design, and evaluation techniques to enhance the organization's value proposition and advance its mission and goals.

4. Professional Competencies

- a. *Collaborate effectively within and across diverse research and work teams, with others who have diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and/or work styles (whether in person or online/distributed).*
- b. *Write and orally present effectively for diverse audiences, incorporating high-quality, relevant research and promoting the value of multiple, diverse perspectives.*

Conclusion: The Committee believes these Program Learning Outcomes are applicable to both UX industry and research-focused students and will next move to identify courses and course assignments where they can be evaluated.

Agenda item:	(1:25) [For approval] Establish subcommittees to formulate key assessments and rubrics for each PLO	Presenter:	Bill Kules
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Discussion:

The newly approved Program Learning Outcomes are meant to be used to evaluate the program as a whole more than individual student effort; so it is important to identify assignments and create evaluation rubrics within core courses where students would be expected to be demonstrating them.

Proposed subcommittees are:

- a. Alex/Amy/Bill on Design and UX Strategy Competencies (primarily in Interaction Design Studio, Visual Design, and HCIM Capstone courses)
- b. Niklas/Ge/Carol on Research & Evaluation and Professional Competencies (primarily in Thesis/Capstone, UX Research Methods, and Advanced Usability courses)

In addition, Jeff will be invited to weigh in on professional competencies.

The subcommittees' primary goal will be to identify key assignments within each identified course and create a rubric for each PLO to be evaluated according to 3-6 criteria. Carol will distribute relevant course syllabi to each subcommittee.

The Committee approved the subcommittee assignments and plan unanimously, with 7 Yes votes.

Conclusions: Teams should strive to make weekly progress to produce a draft for the November meeting, with final approval in the December meeting. This schedule should let us begin measuring PLOs in some courses by Spring 2021.

Agenda item:	(1:40) [For discussion] Alternative sequence for first-year core courses - slides (Amy Asadi)	Presenter:	Amy Asadi
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Discussion:

- Because the most competitive UX summer internships open by mid-Fall, first-year HCIM students who wish to apply to them need strong portfolio pieces illustrating an end-to-end process from brief to design, ending with an interactive prototype. The current structure of courses for the first semester--HCI fundamentals, UX research, programming--makes it hard for students who don't already have UX experience to be competitive.
- Our aspirational and peer programs (Georgia Tech, CMU, GW, Indiana) offer an end-to-end course in the first semester.
- Amy suggested that the Committee consider a scheduling change to put the required Interaction Design Studio in Fall and Programming in the Spring and set up a project that would span UX Research and Interaction Design so students could gain an end-to-end portfolio project in Fall semester. Students could then code the project in INST 630 in the Spring.
- Bill invited the committee to consider pros and cons.
 - Alex (Interaction Design Studio) suggested that this could increase the gap between those who enter the program with visual design skills and those with no training in graphic design because Interaction Design Studio now runs concurrently with Visual Design and students make definite gains as a result of having both courses. They noted some students don't have any training in visual design basics, drawing, or design patterns at all. Further, Visual Design offers students a valuable exposure to critique if the class is run as an agency is run.
 - Amy suggested that a possible way to address that gap would be to offer a 1-credit basic course in visual design in parallel with a Fall Interaction Design course, or even moving that 1-credit to the summer before students begin the program.
 - Carol noted that if we do have a small Spring start cohort this year, we can experiment with the sequencing of Interaction Design before User Research.
 - Bill concurred that efforts should be made to help students develop more robust portfolios after their first semester, though there is not likely an optimal or perfect solution, but rather what works best for most students. It's also important not to change what's working well. As we grow the program, we could offer multiple sections of the core course (both INST 710 and 711 in Fall AND Spring). This would also support PT students better.
- In the short term, it could be beneficial if INST 711 to be offered in Spring 2021 could be retooled to introduce a corporate-style portfolio project in the early weeks. Amy, Bill, and Alex will meet to review the syllabus to see what is possible.

Conclusion: The Committee will continue to explore proposals for resequencing coursework in the coming year to bolster student portfolios and increase their competitiveness for the earliest internship deadlines.

Agenda item:	(2:10) [For discussion] Proposal to make Advanced Usability and Visual Design required courses and remove INST 717 Internship Practicum as a summer requirement	Presenter:	Bill Kules
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Discussion:

- The Committee previously voted to remove INST 717: Internship Practicum as a required course because it didn't add substantively to the student experience of holding an internship. We will move that forward to PCC and beyond when we have had a chance to consider whether a different core course should replace it.
- Core courses for HCIM are currently INST 630 (Programming), 631 (Fundamentals of HCI), 710 (UX Research Methods) OR 808 (doc research methods), 711 (Interaction Design) AND two semesters of Capstone or Thesis. That is 18 required credits in a 30-credit program.
- Making current electives INST 702: Advanced Usability and INST 728T: Visual Design required would reduce the number of electives and the flexibility of the program--leaving just 6 credits for electives; however, these skills do seem essential for UX positions.
- One unknown is how this requirement would potentially affect students hoping to pursue PhDs. Would it be more beneficial to students seeking industry roles?
- There are also additional areas that are known to need more emphasis in the curriculum, including user analytics, task flows, and information architecture, so some attention should be paid to where these are included.

Conclusion:

This item will be added to a future agenda for more consideration in relation to the overall course sequencing issue.

The next HCIM Committee meeting will be held on Friday, November 13 from 1 to 2:30 p.m.

Action items	Person responsible	Deadline
<input type="checkbox"/> Carol will route syllabi for courses in which PLOs will be evaluated	Carol	October 12
<input type="checkbox"/> Two subcommittees will review syllabi and work on identifying assignments and creating rubrics for their PLOs	<i>UX Design & UX Strategy Competencies</i> - Alex, Amy, Bill <i>Research/Evaluation & Prof Competencies</i> - Niklas, Ge, Carol (with Jeff reviewing Prof Competencies as well)	Draft due Nov 6 for Nov Comm meeting; final reports to be approved at December meeting
<input type="checkbox"/> Bill, Alex, Amy, and Carol will review INST 711 syllabus for potential to add an early portfolio enhancing project and further discuss alternative course sequencing	Bill, Alex, Amy, Carol	November 6 to make recommendations at the November Comm meeting