

MLS Program Committee Report

February 3, 2016

Submitted by Lindsay Sarin

The MLS Program Committee met on Wednesday, February 3, 2016 to:

- Receive updates on admissions, career focus, renaming the MLS, and the YX specialization
- Discuss two new course proposals
- Discuss the possibility of waiving graduate application fees
- Discuss the possibility of an MLS portfolio requirement

The Committee explored four main topics during the meeting.

1. **FYI Updates**

The Committee heard the following updates:

- Spring admissions: We received thirty-one applications, accepted twenty-two, and nineteen students will be joining the program. These applicants predominantly applied from within the field. Given the number of applicants we will consider establishing a miniature orientation for future incoming classes, though the online session for this current class went very well.
- Fall admissions: We received one hundred forty applicants for fall admission, down from two hundred forty last year. Lindsay has reviewed half of the currently submitted applications, and the new applicant group is representative of the changing public face of the program. They stress the skills that the program is advertising as desirable, such as a technology background and focus on service. Focusing on recruitment and advertising in the future will increase these numbers.
- Career Focus Events: Faith has set up a number of professional development-focused events for the Spring as part of the new Career Focus initiative. These events will include virtual components if they are not completely held online.
- MLS Name Change: The name change proposal has cleared the university. MHEC has been notified, and will likely require an approval process. A press release will follow final approval, and students graduating in December or May of next year will likely do so with an MLIS.
- YX: The Youth Experience specialization is good to go. All courses have been approved, and one is currently being taught this semester in a class of ten students. Eight prospective students have applied for the specialization, and one current student has formally declared YX.

2. **Discuss two new course proposals**

- INST 7XX – Introduction to Web Programming – 1 credit
- INST 7XX – Introduction to JavaScript – 1 credit
- These courses are proposed as specialized skills-based courses. They were offered over the winter term and had ten students enrolled in each. These will hopefully be the start of a series of one-credit skill-focused courses that when taken together can form a suite of “conglomerated electives.”
- The plan is to offer both as non-credit courses in April and May, and then again as one-credit courses during the second summer term.
- Both courses were approved unanimously.

3. **Discuss the possibility of waiving graduate application fees**

- Jeff and Lindsay each receive ten to fifteen requests a year about waiving the \$75 application fee. The Hobsons Connect committee shared similar concerns across a wide number of colleges, and the MLS committee discussed the feasibility of implementing systems to help waive the fee. There were a number of concerns raised over this process that primarily dealt with assessing a student’s need and choosing one qualified student over another. The possibilities of setting aside a fund valued at a couple of application fees and then privately granting students waivers or establishing a “sponsor a student” fund where alumni could donate to pay application fees were discussed, but the committee returned to similar concerns over logistics and implementation. The topic will be brought up at the Recruitment meeting.

4. **Discuss the possibility of requiring an MLS Portfolio**

- Katherine from American University, Lissa, and Faith have been working on developing an MLS portfolio in response to an Advisory Board discussion from the Fall 2015 meeting. The group found that many iSchools do not require portfolios, and many of the programs that once required them have discontinued the requirement.

The programs that have discontinued requiring portfolios largely cited lack of student engagement.

- The proposed portfolio requirement would be built into the MLS curriculum and manifest through specialized projects across the CORE curriculum. Students would assemble components of their portfolio through these CORE assignments, and hand in their finalized portfolio to their LBSC 791 professor. The portfolio would be hosted online in order to give students experience developing a webpage, and to make sure that the portfolios could follow students after they graduate from the program.
- There were questions about how this will impact the existing curriculum for 791 courses, as too much new emphasis on this project could overwhelm the already busy course. The committee also discussed the potential for a portfolio requirement across the iSchool, with programs and even specializations offering up different requirements of their own to build a more cohesive finished product for students. The committee decided that this proposal should be heard by MIM and HCIM programs.

Actions:

- The committee voted unanimously to approve the following courses:
 - INST 7XX – Introduction to Web Programming – 1 credit
 - INST 7XX – Introduction to JavaScript – 1 credit