

MLS Program Committee Report

April 27, 2016

Submitted by Lindsay Sarin

The MLS Program Committee met on Wednesday, April 27, 2016 to:

- Vote on MLS application and deadline changes
- Vote on making Inclusive Technology Design a permanent number course
- Vote on a policy for enabling transfer between iSchool degree programs
- Hear updates on the MLS Program Coordinator search
- Discuss enrollment priorities for 2016-2017
- Discuss the 2015-2016 MLS Committee projects/priorities in retrospect
- Discuss the Re-Envisioning the MLS initiative

The Committee explored five main topics during the meeting.

1. **MLS application and deadline changes**

- The spring application process went very well this year. A proposed move of the spring application deadline to two weeks earlier can give applicants more time to register and the program more time to process applications. This should make things easier for both the MLS Committee and the Program Coordinator.
- Last year the program moved the preferred/best consideration dates up to align better with other programs in the college, but the December 15 – January 15 window does not make sense given the limited time limitations during those weeks.
- If the committee maintains interest in changing these deadlines the graduate school will accept submitted changes for the next couple of weeks.

2. **Giving Inclusive Technology Design a permanent course number**

- Inclusive Technology Design is currently offered as a special topics course. There are no major changes to the scope or content of the course other than giving it a permanent course number.
- Paul motions to vote, Jeff seconds, and the motion passes.

3. **Transferring between iSchool degree programs**

- There has been an increase of students who are accepted into one program but decide to switch to another. This number was higher for this year than it has been previously. Currently the formal process is simply to request permission to change the students' designation from the graduate school, but a formalized process on the iSchool's end would be helpful.
- If a student wants to switch they can contact their original program coordinator and then complete a form for the receiving program. That program can review the student's transcripts and an essay explaining their rationale for the switch. If approved they can meet with their new program to discuss course planning.
- This primarily impacts HCI and MIM students, but it can involve the MLS program as well. It is highly recommended that interested students take these steps during their first semester, since starting the process later could delay their graduation. This can serve as the iSchool's internal policy until the graduate school develops its own.
- The committee's discussion involved the mechanics of requiring students requesting the transfer to meet with an advisor, the extent to which this would be required work for the program coordinators and directors, and points of no return in each individual student's program of study. Jeff made notes of these discussion points and will bring an amended presentation to MIM and HCI.

4. **Review of 2015-2016 actionable MLS committee projects/priorities**

- YX has been approved, Mega has been presenting about it at conferences. She was awarded an IMLS grant and admitted 8 students for the fall. The next step is to identify strategies for promoting the program, to take place next year.
- Diversity and Inclusion is hosting its conference on October 20-21.
- The committee decided not to move forward with previous plans to work with Tahirah and the university libraries. After seeing the proposal the committee decided that it was not a good idea to sign on in a formal capacity and wanted to see a proof of concept before signing on.
- The committee is continuing to develop diversity recruitment standards and will carry this work into the next year.

- The Re-Envisioning the MLS initiative was discussed in the state of the college. We are working with the communications staff to build up web content and drive up recruitment. We have a new recruitment video, but further production has stopped while the websites are restructured.
- Career Focus went well and we had more programs than we have ever done before. The initiative has been successfully branded, we've circulated feedback forms, and are working on a summary report. More information will be circulated as it becomes available. Moving forward will hopefully see more college-wide programming.
- CORE course changes will take place next year as the committee did not have time to address it fully this year.
- Program name change is still with MHEC. There is currently nothing more that we can do about it and timelines are currently not clear, though we have done everything that we can at this stage.
- A draft has been created for the program's new prospective portfolio requirement. The committee recommends developing an implementation plan and reviewing the requirements over the 2016-2017 academic year.
- The field study consolidation project has drafted a combined syllabus, but is currently not ready to be reviewed by the committee. This will continue to be developed over the summer and should be ready for review by fall.

5. Enrollment priorities for 2016-2017

- The current campus climate means that a holding pattern is not an admirable strategy. If the program wants to increase visibility it needs to showcase elements that it can brag about (program stats, alumni placement) or demonstrate growth. The program's goal should involve improving the quality of incoming students and the current student experience.
- Strategy for growing the size of the program and increasing the overall program quality:
 - Having a school media staff member again
 - YX looks like it can be a strong option for boosting interest, enrollment, and student quality
 - Improve online teaching – We need to decide what we want to do online and excel at doing it.
 - Develop a cohesive recruitment strategy for all of the iSchool programs
- The problems that we are currently facing:
 - Applicants are high in quality but low in number
 - Requiring students to fit program goals and priorities decreased our overall number of admits this year
 - Hazines in identifying what will be online and what will remain in person
- Strategies for impressing the university:
 - We currently circulate a Placement Survey that indicates an extremely high placement rate
 - We have a high number of students earning fellowships
 - Many other options if we intentionally develop marketable elements of the program
- In many ways this comes down to being deliberate and intentional about collecting data from our students and then showcasing it. We are already collecting a lot of data, so being more deliberate about developing it into marketable bytes about the program can go a long way. This is highlighted when entities such as the DCIC and MLS program do not collaborate as highly as they can.

Due to time constraints the committee was unable to explore the remaining topics on the agenda. As this was the final meeting for the 2015-2016 academic year the committee agreed to discuss the remaining topics as needed via email.