Note From The Chair
It’s amazing how fast the time goes – the last thing I remember is Mike Wick announcing me as the new chair. It’s now been two and a half years, and I apologize for the newsletter delay. My only excuse is that we’ve indeed been busy in the Department of Computer Science. Below are some notes on what the department is doing these days, and I hope you find the information of interest.
- Paul J. Wagner, Professor

New Labs

Due to the expansion of Materials Science in Phillips Hall, the CS Department had to move all of our labs to the front of the building. This was a large task that took us over a year. The good part was that we got to design new labs to our specifications within certain space limits. Several labs were co-funded with industry partners who hire our students. We’ve now got:

- P 107 – Marshfield Clinic/Security Health Plan Software Development Laboratory
- P 111 – CS Tutoring Laboratory
- P 115 – CS Teaching Laboratory
- P 122 – Cray Computer Engineering Laboratory

- P 124 – Karlgaard Laptop Laboratory (announced in the December 2008 newsletter)

The labs are designed to provide a professional environment for hands-on CS learning. Most are set up to promote group work, and both wired and wireless connections are available. Next time you’re back at UWEC stop by and see them!

Department Activities and News

While teaching is still our primary activity, there are a lot of other things going on in the CS department. Below are just a few:

- Midwest Instruction and Computing Symposium 2010: the CS department hosted 200 students and faculty from many Midwestern universities and colleges for a conference including paper and poster presentations, a robot contest, and a programming contest. A number of UWEC CS students presented, including Daphne Brinkerhoff, Luke Komiskey, Hannah Miller, Sara Murto, Laura Soderlund, Michael Seaholm, Erin Johnson, and Alex Cobian. The entire CS faculty (Dan Ernst, Joline Morrison, Mike Morrison, Dan Stevenson, Jack Tan, and Paul Wagner) worked on various aspects of the conference.
The department has hosted two visiting scholars from China: Dr. Xiaoying Wang (from Changshu Institute of Technology) and Dr. Mi Zhou, Zhuhai College of Jinan University.

Both the Student ACM (SACM) and the Women in Information Technology Systems (WITS) groups are still going strong. SACM sponsored Android programming sessions this year, while WITS was instrumental in setting up CS tutoring and organizing the annual Internship Mania CS social, linking CS majors with regional employers.

Demand remains high for computer science graduates. In addition to state and regional employers such as Great Lakes Higher Education, Northwestern Mutual, Liberty Mutual, Marshfield Clinic, Cray and IBM, recent graduates have found positions across the US with larger technology companies like Microsoft, VMWare, and Apple.

- A group of students from the CS 321 (Web Design Project) class, consisting of non-CS majors from Art & Design, Communication/Journalism, and other majors as well as CS majors and led by Dr. Joline Morrison, developed new web pages for the CS department that we’ve used since fall 2009. We’ve received lots of positive feedback on the new pages. Check them out at http://www.cs.uwec.edu.

- The CS faculty has developed a number of new or updated special topics classes to supplement the core CS classes. Recent topics include Robotics, Data Mining, Parallel Computing, and (in fall 2011) Mobile Application Development.

- The CS department is starting to offer some classes online. The four web minor courses, including CS 318 (Fundamentals of Web Page Design), CS 319 (Introduction to Web Programming), CS 320 (Web Database Design and Implementation) and CS 321 (Web Design and Development) are all now being offered online. Also in the works is an online version of our first programming course CS 145 (Introduction to Object-Oriented Programming). Dr. Joline Morrison and Dr. Mike Morrison are leading this effort.

Faculty Changes
The only thing that does not change is change itself. The CS department has several major faculty/staff changes, mostly this year. While change is challenging, it also brings the opportunity for new perspectives, projects, and gain. We look forward to new possibilities!

- Dr. Dan Ernst is leaving UWEC CS as of May 2011 for a dream design job at Cray in St. Paul. The department will miss him! Thanks for five years of excellent teaching, faculty/student research, and much other work that benefited the department.
- **Dr. Beth Ernst**, who has been filling in by teaching CS 255 (Algorithms/Discrete Structures) and CS 450 (Theory of Computation) is of course joining Dan in moving west. We thank her and wish her the best as well!

- **Dr. Michael Wick** has been named the permanent associate vice chancellor for academic affairs at UW-Eau Claire. Mike has been in this position with interim status for two years, and well deserves this permanent position. We hope he’ll periodically come back and teach a class or two for the department.

- **Steve Ranis** works for UWEC Learning and Technology Services (LTS), but he has also been our CS system administrator for the last year and half. Steve works with a team of students to keep the CS systems running.

- **Michelle Cicha** is our new academic department associate as of January 2011. She replaces **Judi Mueller**, who retired with 30 years of service to the department. Thanks, Judi! Welcome, Michelle!

- **Dr. Chris Johnson** joins the department this coming fall 2011. Chris has most recently been a lecturer at Iowa State University after getting his doctorate from the University of Tennessee – Knoxville. Chris will start out teaching the first programming course as well as a special topics section in mobile application development. We know Chris will be a wonderful addition to the department.

- I (**Dr. Paul Wagner**) am retiring from UW-Eau Claire effective June 30th, 2011. For transition to my “re-purposing” (I am hoping to keep working in non-profit software development part-time), I’ve been fortunate to get a three month visiting fellowship at the University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand, and will be teaching computer security courses there July through October. I’ll miss the department (but might be back periodically to help out if needed).

- **Dr. Joline Morrison** is the new chair of the CS Department. The department is happy and fortunate to have her organization skills, energy and leadership. If you have any news, feedback, or just want to talk to the department, you can contact her at morrisjp@uwec.edu.

**Opportunities To Help**

There are many ways you can support the CS department. Hopefully it helped you build your knowledge of computer science, land that first job or graduate school position, and prepared you for a career in computer science. If you’re interested in helping the department, there are several things you can do:

- **Make a financial donation** to the UWEC Foundation, Computer Science Advancement Fund. This fund allows us to support special events in a time of shrinking state revenue for the university. Your contributions are much appreciated!

- **Offer to be a speaker** for the CS 396 (Junior Seminar) course, for the department, or for a SACM or WITS organization talk.

- **Provide feedback and ideas** to the department. This can be done formally or informally. The department is always interested in finding out what skills companies currently need, how well UWEC prepared you for your career, what new technologies and trends are working well for you, etc.

Please contact the chair of the Department of Computer Science, **Dr. Joline Morrison**, at morrisjp@uwec.edu, if you’d like to take advantage of any of these opportunities. The department is grateful for your support!

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