

Educational Stewardship Committee

Report on Changes to the Bachelor of Science (BS) in Computer Science and the BS in Computer Information Systems Curriculum

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Beginning this Fall, the Computer Science Department implemented changes to the BS in Computer Science and the BS in Computer Information Systems. These changes included removal of the Fine Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences distribution requirements (18 credits) and a requirement for a minor from the BS in Computer Science, and removal of the Fine Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences distribution requirements (18 credits) from the BS in Computer Information Systems. Changes to required courses were also made, the most substantial of which was including additional Computer Science Courses (both majors), and adjusting Business Administration course requirements (Computer Information Systems only).

The removal of the distribution requirements and minor requirement from the BS in Computer Science, and the removal of the distribution requirement from the BS in Computer Information Systems were brought to the attention of the Educational Stewardship Committee (ESC). The ESC's assessment resulted in conclusions and recommendations to 1) the Curricular Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate; and 2) the Provost, respectively.

1. The ESC observed that the changes to the BS in Computer Science appeared substantial enough that they should have been reviewed by the Curricular Affairs Committee (CAC) under the normal procedures for Substantial Revisions to Academic, Scholarly, or Service Endeavors (formerly Appendix B). The matter of whether the changes were made in violation of these procedures was referred to the CAC.

Upon review, the CAC agreed that the changes to the BS in Computer Science should have been reviewed by the CAC under the normal procedures for substantial revisions to existing programs. The Chair of the Computer Science Department, Margaret Eppstein, was asked to provide a memo to the CAC describing and justifying the changes. The memo indicated that the changes were made to address curricular gaps, and to better prepare students for careers or graduate school in computer science. With the addition of six credits of Computer Science courses, the Department felt that they no longer had room for the Fine Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences distribution requirement, or the required minor for the BS in Computer Science, because they wanted to keep the total credit requirements to 120 in order to make it possible for CS majors to graduate in four years. The memo indicated that the Department felt that the University-wide General Education requirements provided breadth in the curriculum, and removal of the distribution requirements allowed the students more flexibility to choose courses within their areas of interest as free electives. The Department also felt that the increase in

Computer Science credits brings them more in line with the requirements for BS in Computer Science programs at other institutions.

Given the justifications and the fact that the changes were published in the 2016-2017 Catalog, and thus binding for students entering UVM this year, the CAC agreed to waive a full review and allow the changes be shared with the Faculty Senate according to the normal procedure for substantial changes to existing programs. Laura Almstead, the CAC Chair reported these matters to the Faculty Senate at its meeting of November 28, 2016.

2. The ESC determined that the changes in the degree requirements for CS students were not communicated in advance to the other academic units or the Provost's Office. Although it is the prerogative of academic units to make changes in their degree requirements (subject to review by the CAC when appropriate), this case made clear the heightened need for advance communications, especially when the proposed changes are significant due to the potential impact on the other academic units under the system of Incentive-Based Budgeting. Advance communications prevent surprises and allow the affected units to plan accordingly.

The ESC recommended to Provost Rosowsky that he take measures to make the deans aware of the need to communicate planned changes in degree requirements and the reason(s) for the planned changes. Provost Rosowsky acted on the recommendation by discussing the matter with the deans during the December 15, 2016 meeting of his Academic Leadership Council.