

June 12, 2006

Alison Galloway
Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
Kerr Hall

Dear Alison:

The Committee on Educational Policy lends its unconditional and enthusiastic support to the proposal from the Department of Computer Science to establish a B.S. program in Computer Science: Computer Game Design. The Committee on Planning and Budget recommends that the degree “be approved expeditiously, so that it can be offered in 2006-07.”

The program is a well-designed interdisciplinary program that will provide students with a clear career path, either in industry or graduate school, is on the cutting edge of technology development, capitalizes on exceptional existing strengths within Computer Science and the Arts, and is clearly supported by the Department and Dean. The recent hiring of a nationally-recognized junior faculty member will help to ensure the success of the program. We are impressed with the creativeness of the Department and their leadership in the area of undergraduate education by developing one of the first such programs in nation, and the very first in the University of California.

CEP had one concern, and has separately commented on the proposed catalog copy directly to the Department. Campus general education requires that all students complete a writing-intensive (W) course that teaches the paradigms of writing in a discipline. Computer Science does not presently offer such a course. CEP is encouraging multi-course W sequences within majors as an effective means of training students in disciplinary writing for their specific discipline. Because of writing required for the software engineering component of the major, this could be an effective strategy. Computer Science has indicated it will give careful consideration to the W requirement when formally proposing the Game Design Studio course sequence, and that at present such a designation appears to make sense.

In the attached letter, CPB comments about (1) the dependence on equipment donations and whether or not the School of Engineering (SOE) will cover the laboratory equipment of such cannot be secured; (2) the sensibility of the planned TAS funding by SOE of Film and Digital Media courses should there be a significant impact on the FDM curriculum; (3) that approval of this degree program “should not be viewed as endorsement of the plan to grow Computer Sciences by 9 FTE”; and (4) that little evidence is provided in support of the statement that the new major will help attract a more diverse student body, that “active and serious attention” will need to be paid to this issue, and that the diversity of the student body should be one measure for gauging the success of the program.

CEP sees the development of this program as particularly important to addressing the recent (nationwide) drop in computer science majors. The adjustment of the curriculum to fit the current needs and interests of students should provide a means of reversing the trend of the last few years. CEP also applauds the plans to seek accreditation for the program.

CEP is independently aware of the high level of interest and excitement the program is generating among prospective students. Office of Admissions staff have interacted with enthusiastic, top community college students who have decided to transfer to UCSC just because of the development of this new major.

CEP joins with CPB in most strongly encouraging approval of this program so that it will be in place for next year's admissions materials and efforts. If we could receive your decision by Friday, June 16, this new major could included in the 2006-08 hard-copy general catalog. Please notify me directly if that date will not be possible.

Sincerely,

/s/

Richard Hughey, Chair
Committee on Educational Policy

cc: CPEVC Kliger
CPB Chair Koch
Acting Dean Issacson
Acting Dean Miller
Dept Chair Lord
Dept Chair Pohl
Principal Analyst Moses
Assistant Professor Whitehead
Attch: CPB letter