

## **MPS-GIS committee meeting**

Paul Torrens (chair), Jack Ma, Jonathon Resop, Eunjung Lim, Vivre Bell, Kristen Bergery  
Wednesday, October 1, 12:30 to 1:00 p.m.

### **1 MPS-GIS director's update**

Enrollment numbers have dropped, due in part to changes in the way that the University handles visas for international students. 50+ students have been accepted into the program and 36 have registered, with some deferred until the Spring. Compared to two years ago, this enrollment is lower. We are seeing more UMD students, particularly from ENSP and the DoGS. The MPS-GIS team has begun a student survey. We discussed options for development, e.g., mechanisms for reaching out to alumni, retaining alumni interest in the program. Currently, these activities have been limited to mailers. Perhaps more could be done to engage alumni at professional meetings and social events in the D.C. area in particular.

### **2 Visa issues**

The way that the University handles visas for MPS-GIS students are challenging because of the differential between the quarter system (MPS-GIS) and semester system (UMD). We may be turning away potential students because of this. The solution seems to be to move MPS-GIS to a semester system, which will take time.

### **3 Expansion of the MPS-GIS program**

We discussed opportunities for expanding the MPS-GIS program, with the view that we might do more with the resources that we have invested, at-scale. Currently, debate about this has been limited to offering tracks within the existing MPS-GIS structure.

### **4 GIS professional certification**

Jack has discussed GISP with the certification bodies. They are unwilling to provide a discount for our students. They are also requiring four years of professional work experience as a component of GISP certification. This seems problematic as it excludes most of our students. It is an open question as to whether we even need to “play along” with GISP: a Master’s degree from UMD surely trumps a certificate from a third party.

### **5 Lecturer allocations**

With one new lecturer and another lecturer coming, we may need to revisit allocation of non-MPS-GIS lecturers to the program. Ideally, MPS-GIS should be self-sufficient with staffing. Lecturers will now also be in demand for new courses in the Department and short courses offered by the GIS Center.

### **6 TA allocations**

Currently, the “best” GIS TAs are being earmarked for MPS-GIS, which in some cases is leaving no GIS TAs for our undergraduate courses and we are having to employ undergraduate TAs and

graduate TAs with no prior GIS experience. This is not sustainable moving forward. Torrens asked the MPS-GIS team to be clear about their TA needs ahead of the incoming graduate applicant review so that we can identify incoming students that might server as TAs from that pool. This may be helpful until we develop a new stream of GIS students alongside the new hires.

## **7 GIS Day**

We will offer an open tour of the Geosimulation Research Laboratory as part of GIS Day. Jon Nordling and Michael Humber will also be doing some GIS tutorials.

## **8 Proposed MPS-GeoInt**

The GIS Center is considering developing a new MPS program focused on Geospatial Intelligence. This has come as a product of requests from the US Geospatial Intelligence Foundation about doing more to offer coursework for the GeoInt community, as well as growing competition from Penn State and George Mason, who now both have programs in this area. This would potentially provide additional revenue for the Department, leveraging resources that we already have (core set of courses from MPS-GIS, existing lecturers and new lecturers from the GIS Center, existing IT infrastructure). Jack sees this as competing with the MPS-GIS program and he is concerned that it will reduce enrollment in MPS-GIS. Torrens sees this as drawing students from PSU and GMU rather than from our own program, and sees an opportunity to build capacity in a new area with minimal investment.