
Toward the Future

9.1 Overview

As the only accredited library education program in a unique island state, we currently provide over 70% of the professional work force in school, public and academic libraries in Hawai'i. At a time when there is a worldwide shortage of underrepresented ethnic groups in our profession, over 50% of our student population is comprised of Asians, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islanders. In short, our Program fills a critical need for Hawai'i's own economic future at the same time that it serves a global need for professionals representing ethnic minorities.

The 1997 merger of the School and the ICS Department marked a critical milestone in the direction of the LIS Program. It has produced among faculty and students an introspective discussion about bringing an information perspective to the intersection of computer and information sciences. Computer scientists in the Department focus on the scientific and mathematical principles underlying the use of computer systems and the design of emerging technologies. LIS faculty members complement these interests with research and teaching that focus on the social and psychological impact of information technology, knowledge of information resources and access to information, and understanding of users and uses of information. Together, the CS and LIS faculty are seeking new paths to collaborative teaching, research, and service. As indicated in previous chapters, the merger has already borne promising fruit including a cross-over arrangement of CS and LIS courses, cross-teaching of selected courses, collaborative partnerships with the Hawai'i Department of Education, joint grantseeking, and strategic planning as a department.

The LIS Program is prudently mapping its strategic goals, mindful of the changing nature of the local and global communities and faced with the fiscal realities of the University. We are presently midway through our first five-year improvement plan. Specific activities and time lines addressing the goals are summarized in table format on the following pages. They provide a big picture view of actions accomplished and activities still in progress. Specific initiatives receiving attention at this time are summarized below.

9.2 Curriculum and Teaching

Results of various surveys and focus group sessions indicate that a majority of our graduates continue to find jobs in traditional library settings. This has reaffirmed the Program's need to provide a solid grounding in topics such as children and youth services and collection development and information access. At the same time, we are acutely aware of the demands of a multimedia-oriented culture, and technology as a critical tool of the trade. For these reasons, we have updated many existing courses, built a technology requirement strand into all course syllabi, and introduced a number of technology-intensive courses as special topics offerings. We have also addressed the importance of cultural diversity through specialized courses and through instruction regarding multicultural issues incorporated in the core and elective offerings.

Because teaching is an integral part of the total educational experience, attention has been given not only to course content but also to pedagogy. Survey results indicate that we are succeeding in providing supportive and active learning oppor-

tunities through a variety of strategies that emphasize an experiential approach: problem-based assignments, field projects, small group problem solving sessions, and simulations.

We believe that a continuous cycle of assessment, analysis and action is essential if we are to maintain a dynamic program that blends the classic with the cutting edge in tools and information retrieval techniques, in information expertise and quality. Future course development with CS colleagues is part of the Department's long-range vision.

9.3 Student Diversity

The Program attracts a diverse student population in terms of ethnicity, age, and geography. As mentioned above, nearly half of our students are Asian Americans or Pacific Islanders; another 10% come from China, Japan, Indonesia, and Korea. The majority of our current students are seeking mid-career changes; their average age is 35 years. Over 60% are part time students, many of them hold full time jobs. Approximately 12% of our present student body are from other states. Within the state, almost half of the students enrolled in our interactive television courses live on one of the neighboring islands. The recent addition of an information literacy service course for undergraduates exposes the Program to the more diverse undergraduate student body. These statistics and activities underscore the fact that the Program must explore effective ways to reach these target audiences.

As the Program strives to attract and retain a diverse group of qualified students, we will continue to assess our system of academic advising, the quality and variety of courses offered through distance education, the scheduling of courses to ensure a balance of offerings in the evenings and weekends, and the implementation of a long-range recruitment plan.

9.4 Faculty Excellence

Survey responses from students and alumni indicate their unanimously high regard for LIS faculty members as teachers and mentors (Appendix 2 provides summary results, complete results available on site). Faculty have received University and national recognition for teaching excellence, curriculum innovation, research and publication, and community service. They continue to demonstrate a sustained record of research that covers a wide spectrum of scholarship ranging from children's literature to database design, from analysis of disaster information systems to search behavior and information literacy.

Critical to the Program's continuing effectiveness, the faculty recognizes the importance of developing collegial interactions with other units on campus. This has been accomplished on many levels: disseminating research and scholarship through interdisciplinary colloquia, providing service to the entire University by participating in campus committees, developing cross-listed curricula and dual master's degree opportunities, providing leadership in an interdisciplinary doctoral program, and collaborating with librarians on a new undergraduate course. All of these efforts will be continued.

Beyond the University system, however, we recognize the growing need to actively pursue partnerships with other community institutions and with the corporate sector in our teaching, research and service endeavors. Initial attempts in this area have included a bibliographic database project funded by the National Park Service and collaborative grant seeking with the Hawai'i Department of Education and Tech Corps Hawai'i, a nonprofit consortia of businesses and government agencies.

Given the University's increasing emphasis on entrepreneurial ventures, the Department plans to aggressively explore a variety of options as one of its strategic goals.

The Department is greatly encouraged by the recent authorization to create a new faculty position that will be the first to bridge the CS/LIS specializations. Concurrent approval to hire a student services specialist and computer specialist signifies strong administrative support for the Department and the Program. Acquiring these new resources also remind us that we are accountable for providing a premier learning and research environment and that we must continue to assess our performance and market our value to the rest of the community. Future strategic planning retreats will address these issues.

9.5 Physical Resources

The merger with ICS has expanded student and faculty access to leading edge computer and research labs in the POST Building. Future departmental plans call for constructing our own distance learning classrooms in both the POST and Hamilton buildings and the installation of a virtual LAN to connect these classrooms and the interactive television studios. These developments will aid us in maintaining and extending programs without requiring additional physical space.

These plans come at a strategic time when lack of space on the Manoa campus is a serious problem. As discussed in an earlier chapter, the LIS Program is currently working on details of space reassignment with the Hamilton Library administration. When renovation and move are completed, the Program will reconfigure itself into 2/3 of its current space and acquire an additional classroom. As part of the space redesign plan, we will create a combination computer lab and classroom as well as a computer alcove for student use. We view the ongoing, collaborative discussions between Hamilton Library and LIS staff as a valuable opportunity to re-assess current and future uses of space in light of program needs, and to explore the functionality and aesthetics of effective facility design.

9.6 Conclusion

The LIS Program is committed to educating individuals for careers as librarians and information professionals in a rapidly changing technological and global society. We are also committed to achieving these goals through quality instruction, faculty and student research, and public service. The parallel missions and goals of the Department of Information and Computer Sciences and the LIS Program will continue to shape the progress of the Program.

Continuing and extensive planning by committees of faculty, staff and students; annual faculty retreats; quantitative and qualitative evaluations from students, alumni and the information community; contributions from the Program's Advisory Committee, as well as University administrators and peers all contribute to the Program's agenda for the future.

Section 9.7 below presents the current LIS Program strategic plan, including goals, objectives, activities, accomplishments since 1996, and assignments. This plan is a work in progress that, in our experience, requires frequent updating and extensions into the future.

