

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

**PROPOSED NEW PROGRAM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA**  
**B.A./B.S. IN INFORMATICS**

**Action Requested:** Consider approval of the request by the University of Iowa to establish a new B.A./B.S. Program in Informatics which will be administered by the Department of Computer Science in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

**Executive Summary:** The proposed undergraduate major in informatics will prepare students for careers at the intersection of computing with the humanities, arts, and the natural, biological, health, and social sciences. It will apply algorithmic techniques and computing power to the acquisition and manipulation of data leading to the extraction of new knowledge. No new faculty resources, facilities, or equipment are projected for the proposed program; existing courses in the cognate areas will be available for informatics students. This proposal was reviewed by the Board Office and the Council of Provosts and is recommended for approval. No concerns were raised when it was presented to the Iowa Coordinating Council for Post-High School Education.

**Background:**

- ◇ Description of program. The proposed program is a broad interdisciplinary degree in which students gain knowledge of both computing and a cognate area. Initial cognates include art, biological sciences, economics, geography, health sciences, human-computer interaction, information science, linguistics, music, and sociology. Informatics graduates will fit organizations' needs for individuals with strong knowledge of how to apply computing to solve problems in one or more of the organizations' problem domains.
- ◇ Relationship to existing programs at SUI. Although different from the traditional computer science undergraduate program, the proposed program will be closely aligned with that program. The proposed program will also share core content with the undergraduate Management Information Sciences program. In 2006, the Board of Regents approved an interdisciplinary graduate program in informatics at the University of Iowa, with specializations in Health Informatics or Information Science, and a Certificate in Informatics. The University also maintains a Center for Bioinformatics and Computational Biology whose mission is to catalyze the development of new areas of study and expanded research opportunities in informatics areas related to the basic biological science and applied medical research.
- ◇ Duplication. The University of Northern Iowa offers two undergraduate programs that overlap a portion of the proposed program. Iowa State University will request approval of an interdisciplinary Bioinformatics program at the June 2007 Board of Regents meeting (Agenda Item 10h); ISU's proposed program has more similarity to UNI's program than to SUI's proposed program which will not target bioinformatics. The expectation is that all of the programs can make a unique and valuable contribution to the State in this area.

- ◇ Cost/Resources. The University is not projecting a need for new faculty resources, facilities, or equipment for the proposed program. The department expects to commit some of its own development funds for marketing and promotion of the proposed program. The initial budget will be \$5,000/year for three years, with additional funds available as appropriate.
- ◇ Need/Demand. According to the University, “reports from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics show that employment demand in the computing field remains high, starting salaries for new college graduates in computing careers are among the highest, and growth in number of computing jobs will continue to grow. The B.S. Informatics graduates (class of 2005) at Indiana University reported an average starting salary of \$43,000; 54% were employed or continuing their education at the time of graduation compared to a nationwide average of 33% employed at the time of graduation.”
- ◇ Projected Enrollment. The projected enrollment for year 1 is 10 students; the enrollment is projected to increase to 135 students by year 7.
- ◇ Articulation. SUI’s Computer Science Department has articulation agreements with Kirkwood Community College (KCC) for its B.A. and B.S. degrees in Computer Science. The University will work with KCC to expand the agreement to include the proposed program.
- ◇ Link to Strategic Plan. The proposed program addresses SUI’s mission “to share knowledge through outstanding undergraduate programs and to increase interdisciplinary learning opportunities.” It also addresses the Board’s Strategic Plan priority (1.0) to “ensure high-quality educational opportunities for students.”

Responses to the Board of Regents’ program approval questions are on file in the Board Office.