

2014 CptS Executive Council Assessment Report

Chris Hundhausen

Chair, CS & EECS Assessment Committee

1. Background

The EECS Executive Council (EC) consists of the EECS Director and 10-25 representatives from industry. The EC is intended to give voice to the employers of graduates of the School of EECS. As such, council members are selected so as to be representative of the leadership of the largest employers of EECS graduates. One of the primary responsibilities of the EC is to provide industry perspective and feedback on the continuous evaluation of objectives and assessment of outcomes for the undergraduate curricula, and to suggest changes for implementation as needed. The EC meets with the School of EECS twice annually: once in the fall at a location convenient to EC members (e.g., the Silicon Valley), and once in the spring in conjunction with the Senior Design Poster Session at the WSU Pullman Campus. During the spring meeting each year, the chair of the Assessment Committee presents the previous year's assessment results to the EC. Detailed notes on the discussion generated by each presentation are delivered to the Assessment Committee following the meeting.

2. Assessment Methodology

The Associate Director (Dr. Arslan-Ay) sent the Executive Council Meeting Notes to the Assessment Committee Chair in May of 2014. Appendix A contains the notes. The Assessment Committee Chair set up an online discussion to enable the Assessment Committee to discuss the notes and make recommendations. Appendix B contains the committee's online discussion.

3. Results

The following are synopses of the notes most relevant to the Assessment Committee's mission of fostering continuous improvement:

- Dr. Shirazi asked Executive Council for feedback about removing the Senior Design requirement from the CptS BA program. He explained that EECS would like to remove Senior Design requirement from the CptS BA program and have the CptS BA program unaccredited. Several Executive Council members disagreed with this proposal, and they suggested to keep the BA program accredited and make Senior Design courses required for the BA program. For example, Jon Campbell said that if we remove the Senior Design requirement from the CptS BA program, it will be harder for companies like Microsoft to hire BA graduates. There are already concerns about the quality of the CptS BA graduates. Mark Grieves thought that having BA students in the Senior Design classes would have the benefit of bringing other disciplines into the senior design projects.
- Dave Richards said we should consider providing examples of good quality software in our programming and software engineering courses. Student feedback shows that good examples are very effective in teaching.
- Mark Greaves said that we should also focus on teaching students soft skills. Students should learn how to work as a team and resolve issues within the team. Students should not have to figure out how to do it on their own. They should learn about building a collaborative

environment where they don't avoid the conflict but deal with it in order to effectively work in that environment.

4. Discussion and Recommendations

Based on the Assessment Committee's online discussion, we propose the following recommendations in light of the Executive Council's input:

- Retain the Senior Design requirement for the CptS BA program.
- Integrate explicit training on soft skills into the new CptS/EE 302 "Professional Skills" course.