Faculty and staff of the Department of Computer Science can take satisfaction in the final report of the Program Review Committee (PRC). The report calls attention to the department’s accomplishments, commending it for its commitment to student success, high quality teaching and advising, diversity, and continuous professional development of faculty and staff. It also applauds the department for its collegiality, attention to planning, sound fiscal management, and clear sense of identity. The department faces many challenges, including recruitment and retention of faculty in a highly competitive market, access to appropriate computer labs, space for faculty and graduate students, and constant changes in hardware and software that affect teaching and research. Nevertheless, it has dealt with these matters constructively, collaboratively, and effectively.

To help units become stronger, the program review process highlights areas that need attention as well as successes. Like the department’s own self-study, the PRC concluded that the department has not been as active in seeking external funding and producing scholarly research as we would expect. Successes in these areas are important because they are vital elements of a vibrant academic program and critical to the University’s efforts to increase external funding. The PRC recommends that the department develop a strategy to increase faculty scholarship and external funding as part of its strategic planning process. I and other members of the College staff—as well as the Graduate Dean and Director of the Office of Sponsored Programs and Research—stand ready to assist the department with the planning process and suggest strategies for enhancing performance in these areas. I am confident that the professionalism, collegiality, and hard work that has enabled the department to develop strong undergraduate and masters programs will enable it to increase its research productivity and take advantage of appropriate opportunities for external funding.

The Department Chair, Dr. Julie Barnes, largely concurs with recommendations in the PRC’s final report. She provides context for many of the recommendations and suggests several minor changes in the PRC’s timeline that are quite reasonable. Her response typifies a positive approach to problem-solving that appears rooted in the department’s culture.

I endorse the PRC’s recommendations with the following stipulations.

I believe that the department should develop its resource acquisition plan and faculty recruitment/retention plan in conjunction with its strategic plan, submitting all three to the College in May 2003. The department’s strategic plan should inform more detailed operational plans for resource acquisition and faculty recruitment/retention, so it makes sense to prepare them together.

To assist the department with its planning process, I will be happy to meet
with the faculty early in the 2002-03 academic year to discuss matters of concern, including strategies for increasing external funding, acquiring a dedicated computer lab, addressing department space needs, and enrollment management issues.

Given the department’s concerns about assessment, I will ask Dr. Elizabeth Cole, Associate Dean for College Development, to meet with the department to answer questions about assessment and, especially, to share strategies that have been successful in other units. I ask the department to use this information to develop an assessment plan for its graduate program by September 2003; this will enable the department to implement the plan during the 2003-04 academic year, generating data that will inform graduate curriculum revision the following year.

I am very pleased with the many accomplishments of the Department of Computer Science and the faculty’s dedication to program excellence. While there are a number of issues that we must address, I am optimistic that a strong program will become even stronger in the coming years.

______________________________________  ____________________
Donald G. Nieman, Dean                      Date

Concurred:

______________________________________  ____________________
John W. Folkins, Provost                     Date