“Merger” News

The two University Councils both voted in favour of the merger (subject to satisfactory funds being available) on Wednesday 23rd October, so we can now be pretty sure that it will go ahead. At this time I have no information regarding the next stage of the process.

The principal issue as far as our discipline is concerned is to resolve how the total staff resource in computing (which amounts to this Department plus Computation at UMIST) should be positioned so that we can maintain our 5* standing in computer science and attract sufficient high-quality students to pay the bills. It is clear that this cannot be achieved by placing all of the staff of both departments into one school, so there must be at least one more significant computing-based school (in addition to the school centred in mainstream computer science) attracting students and conducting high-quality research in an area sufficiently distinct from computer science to minimise the risk of confusion in the minds of research funding bodies and school leavers.

At the last meeting of the Department Board I indicated that I thought significant progress was being made on this matter. However, a subsequent statement from the Department of Computation made it clear that I had been over-optimistic as to how far they were prepared to move to a position where they would form the core of a new school that left ‘clear water’ between us. There is still a lot to be resolved over the future of computer science in the new institution, and it seems likely that we will need to bring in outside help to advise us on how best to proceed.

Just prior to the Council vote I and a small subgroup of the merger ‘task group’ met with the Deputy Chairs of the University of Manchester Council to represent to them the Department of Computer Science’s concerns over our position vis-a-vis the Department of Computation should a merger go ahead. We felt confident that our concerns were understood, and that this had been a very useful meeting.

The most important reassurance I can offer those who are concerned about what the merger may mean for them and the Department is to observe that, at every stage of the discussion, all of the senior management of this University (up to and including the Vice Chancellor) have stated repeatedly and publicly that nothing will be done that would damage our standing. With the clearly stated objective of the new institution to be world-class we, with our 5*, are a major asset to the new institution and it would make no sense to risk diminishing the value of that asset.

Staff News

Academic Staff

I am delighted to announce that Ian Horrocks and Jim Miles were promoted from Senior Lecturer to Reader and that Graham Gough was promoted from Lecturer to Senior Lecturer with effect from 1st October 2002.

New Posts

Interviews for the Robotics lectureship took place on 24th October 2002 and the position has been offered to one of the shortlisted candidates who has accepted verbally; formal acceptance and starting date remain to be confirmed. The Robotics UG and PG teaching is once again being undertaken by Dr Stephen Marsland (currently working with Chris Taylor in the Department of Imaging Science and Biomedical Engineering).

We will shortly be advertising for a replacement for Enrico Franconi.

Honorary Appointments

Harold Simmons' honorary appointment has been extended for a period of three years.
Sabbaticals

David Lester has decided to postpone his sabbatical which was planned for Spring/Summer 2003.

Howard Barringer continues his sabbatical leave for the academic year 2002/3. He can be recognised by his carefree expression!

Changes to Admin Roles

The following changes to admin roles have taken place from 1st October:

- Graham Gough has taken over as Director of the Undergraduate School from Peter Capon.
- Graham’s role as First year Tutor has been taken over by Jim Garside and Suzanne Embury; Jim tells me they are still working on the division of duties associated with the position.
- Alan Rector will join the team of Third Year project organizers.

A full list of admin roles for 2002/3 can be found at:
http://www.cs.man.ac.uk/csonly/php/department/admin_roles.php3

Support Staff

I am delighted to announce that Jeff Pepper has been promoted from Experimental Officer to Senior Experimental Officer with effect from 1st October 2002.

I am pleased to report that Karon Mee took up a 2 year secretarial appointment with Carole Goble on 22nd July 2002.

As announced in the last newsletter, Sonia Burch retired on 31st August 2002 and Sophia Lewis-Martyr has now transferred to the UG office from ACSO. The Department is advertising for a full-time Grade C secretary and a part-time Grade B secretary to replace Sonia and Debbie Kay (who left during the summer).

I am pleased to tell you that Lynn Howarth, the Departmental Secretary, has returned to work. She is still undergoing treatment and will be absent for a few days at intervals but I am sure we are all glad to see her making such an excellent recovery.

Research Staff

Arrivals

I am pleased to welcome Dmitry Tsarkov who joined IMG on 1st August 2002 and Miguel Lujan Moreno (formerly a research student with CNC) who joined CNC as a Research Associate on 1st August 2002.

I am also pleased to welcome Chris Garwood (brother of Kevin!) who joined MIG on 19th August and Rahman Hassan who joined the ALS group on 1st September 2002.

…. And Departures

We are sorry to say goodbye to Clifford Addison of CNC, who accepted a permanent position at the University of Liverpool on 4th October 2002.

Research News

It was a great pleasure to see that the Vampire system continues to be a world leader. The system, designed by Andrei Voronkov and Alexandre Riazanov, won the world cup competition (CASC) of automated
theorem provers, in two main divisions at the 18th International Conference on Automated Deduction in Copenhagen in July.

Richard Zobel has been given an ‘Outstanding Service Award’ by the Society for Modelling and Simulation International with the citation: “In recognition for several decades of outstanding contributions to the society, especially for efforts in establishing the European SCS Conference Series”.

We have now formed the Bio Health Informatics Forum spanning the Faculty of Medicine, School of Biological Sciences, and Department of Computer Science, with exciting plans to extend and diversify both our teaching offerings and research. Computer Science academic staff involved are Alan Rector, Robert Stevens, Chris Taylor, Magnus Rattray, Norman Paton, Carole Goble, Andy Brass and Terri Attwood. The Forum plans to hold an ‘Awayday’ in January 2003.

**Research Funding**

Research funding continues to be buoyant and we are well on target this year with the number of grant applications being submitted.

Congratulations to the following staff who have been awarded research funding:

- Andy Brass has been awarded a NERC grant for Provision of Software and Hardware to support the Data Management and Quality of the NERC Environment Genomics Programme.
- Doug Edwards has been awarded an EPSRC Grant - An Integrated Framework for Formal Verification and Distributed Simulation of Asynchronous Hardware.
- The DTI has awarded E-Science Grants to Carole Goble (DTI ixGrid) and Robert Stevens (DTI – GOAT).

Staff continue to be very successful at attracting grants from various other sources as well as the Research Councils:

- Alan Rector was awarded a Health and Safety Executive MI THOR Grant.
- Graham Riley and Len Freeman were awarded a grant by the Tyndall Centre for SOFTIAM: Integrated assessment modelling using distributed software components.
- Ian Watson was awarded a contract from Sun Microsystems, sub-contracted by DARPA, for a Pilot Investigation of Dynamic Compilation for Parallelism.
- The Amulet group has been awarded a contract, through MIL, to carry out research work for Cogniscience.

First calls for proposals for EU Framework 6 are expected around the end of November 2002. The Research office will keep you informed.

**Research Students Symposium**

The Research Student's Symposium is to be held on 4th to 6th November. Third Year PhD students give a 20-25 min talk. Second Year Students produce a poster on their research, and participate in the poster session.

This is an excellent opportunity for all staff to get a flavour of the breadth and depth of research being done in the Department by our expanding and thriving Research School. The event has been scheduled to coincide with the undergraduate reading week so that staff will (hopefully) have some free time to attend!
All talks will be in LF 15. All coffee breaks, the lunch and the poster session will be in IT407. For further details see: [http://www.cs.man.ac.uk/researchs/symposium.php3](http://www.cs.man.ac.uk/researchs/symposium.php3)

**UG and PG News**

**UG**

We continue to have to work hard to meet Home intake targets as a result of the drop in A-level maths take-up. Overall UG student numbers are around 10 lower than target (Overseas number are up by around ten but Home numbers down by about 20). However the team have done a magnificent job of attracting the best students. The A-level points average of this years intake was up again at a new record high of 24.86 points. For comparison previous years averages were:

- 2001: 24.53
- 2000: 24.27
- 1999: 24.22
- 1998: 23.80
- 1992: 20.11

We have also increased the minimum English language standard required of overseas students, from IELTS 6 to IELTS 6.5.

Congratulations to three of our students, John Tapsell, Neil Campbell and Lei Li who reached the final of the Barclays Capital Programming Challenge held in London on 19th October 2002.

**Taught PG**

29 students have enrolled for the MSc in Computer Science and 44 for Advanced Computer Science (10 more students than last year). There are a further 18 full-time students taking the specialist courses (Computational Science, Imaging Science, MEnt) and another 11 students have enrolled for part-time programmes.

As with UG, Home numbers are below target and Overseas numbers above target. However the overall figure is pretty much on target. Initial impressions are that the students are highly motivated and keen to learn!

MSc students from 2001/02 are currently in the process of handing in their dissertations; these will be examined by mid-November, in time for December graduation.

**Research Students**

32 new M.Phil/Ph.D students have registered for the session in September, which brings the overall Research student body to 95 for 2002/03 compared with a target of 85. Both Home and Overseas numbers are above target. A further 4 students are expected to register within the next couple of weeks. These numbers represent a substantial and very encouraging increase on last year.

**Other News**

Last year the Department agreed to support the Children’s Research Fund, a charity which sponsors research into children’s diseases, by taking advertising space on their Year Planner. This seemed a good opportunity to advertise the Department locally while supporting a good cause.

You will be pleased to know that the Year Planner raised a total of £96k in 2001/2 for the Children’s Units at Pendlebury, Booth Hall and St Mary’s Hospitals. You can see a copy of the Year Planner on the wall outside Carmel Dickinson’s office.