Web and User Experience Program Review
Weber State University
Faculty Response

Faculty Members

Abdulmalek Al-Gahmi, Luke Fernandez, Richard Fry, Laura MacLeod, Garth Tuck, and Cody Squadroni

Concerns

Advising Concern

There was a concern that Cody Squadroni is taking on the lion's share of the advising responsibilities for the Web and User Experience degree. The faculty discussed that to take the load off of Cody Squadroni that Laura MacLeod, Luke Fernandez, and Garth Tuck are willing to meet with students and advise them. We will advertise this on our website, in our classes, and to our students so they know who they can speak to for advising. Pat DeJong will still take on the majority of advising depending on schedule.

Faculty Experience Concern

All of the faculty in the program are well equipped to teach Web Development courses. The current faculty have over 80 years of combined Web Development experience, as well as sufficient knowledge to teach the existing User Experience support courses within our current degrees. If and when a full User Experience degree or program is ever offered within the School of Computing, then additional faculty hires and/or training opportunities for the existing faculty will need to be pursued at the same time. Meanwhile, the currently assigned faculty to the Web/UX program feel strongly confident in our ability to deliver our current degree programs without any major adjustments or realignments to the personnel assigned.

- The faculty member with the Ph.D. in Political science has seventeen years of industry experience as a software and web developer. He has also published extensively on the interaction between humans and digital technology -- a subject that intersects in important ways with the discipline of user experience.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Hire a faculty member with the expertise to provide the User Experience curriculum needed or drop "User Experience" from the degree name and create a new minor in conjunction with the Department of Visual Arts & Design. The new minor could integrate applicable courses from the Design for Digital Media and User Experience Design minors to

capitalize on the strengths from both programs and better meet the needs of students in the field of User Experience.

- **Intent to Implement**
  - We concur with this recommendation in general. We think dropping User Experience from the degree name and changing it to Web Development fits the curriculum better. We also believe we should continue to hire an individual in the web development area.
- **Steps to Implementation**
  - Drop User Experience Name: Faculty will meet with students and the industry advisory committee to get their input and thoughts of how dropping user experience would impact the program. Once we get feedback, we will run the name change through the approval process in Curriculog.
  - New Hire: We will continue to have our Web and User Experience job posting open and keep an eye on new applicants. As new applicants come, we will conduct interviews and work towards getting an individual hired with the skills necessary in web development.
- **Timeline for Implementation**
  - Drop User Experience Name
    i. Fall 2019: Get feedback from students and industry advisory committee. Create a proposal for the name change with the given feedback.
    ii. Spring 2020: Submit proposal through Curriculog to get name change approved.
    iii. Ongoing: Once name change gets approved, we will work towards updating all marketing items.
  - New Hire
    i. Fall 2019: Start looking through applicants who have applied to the open job listing and start scheduling the on-campus interviews.
    ii. Spring 2020: Have applicants come to campus to interview.
    iii. Summer 2019: Have applicant hired on to start teaching Fall 2020.
- **Plan for Evaluating the Implementation**
  - Drop User Experience Name
    i. Gather program data to see if the name change has increased enrollment numbers.
    ii. Conduct focus groups with students to gather more feedback on the name change.
    iii. Gather job market data to see if jobs in the web development area are increasing or decreasing.
  - New Hire
    i. Get faculty feedback on new hire collegiality and if the faculty load has gotten easier with the new hire taking on some courses.
    ii. Certain web courses being offered on a regular basis.

Recommendation 2: Elevate the portfolio requirement from the AAS level to the BS level to provide a complete program-level assessment tool.

- **Intent to Implement**
  - We concur with this recommendation. We will continue to offer WEB 2890 - Client-Side Portfolio at the AAS level but make it a prereq for WEB 3200 making sure students are completing their frontend portfolio before moving to the upper division courses. We will continue to offer WEB 4350 - Web Development Capstone, which is a required course and has the students cover full-stack development and create a project to add to their portfolio. With these courses, we will make sure students are assessed in the proper areas and are meeting the program outcomes with the projects they are completing.
- **Steps to Implementation**
  - Faculty will meet to discuss what students should be demonstrating in WEB 2890 and WEB 4350.
  - Information entered into Curriculog to make WEB 2890 a prereq to WEB 3200 so students can't wait to the last semester to complete their portfolio.
- **Timeline for Implementation**
  - Fall 2019: Faculty who teach courses will meet and discuss the learning outcomes that should be happening in these classes.
  - Spring 2020: Information entered into Curriculog to make WEB 2890 a prereq to WEB 3200.
- **Plan for Evaluating the Implementation**
  - Compare student progress from WEB 2890 to WEB 4350.
  - Conduct a student focus group to see what they did or did not like about these courses to help improve them and make sure the content is up-to-date with modern web development.

Recommendation 3: Assist students in finding and acquiring internships to fulfill the purpose of the program to provide employment-ready graduates.

- **Intent to Implement**
  - We concur with this recommendation in general. We don't think making the internship course a requirement is a good idea because there are situations when internships aren't available. We do believe the internship course is essential, and we will advise students to take the internship course as elective credit and assist them in getting an internship. We will make efforts when opportunities arise to let students know of job opportunities, and we will invite employers to campus to come to talk to students about opportunities. We will also make use of university services when it comes to jobs and internships.
- **Steps to Implementation**
  - Faculty will meet with the industry advisory committee and make internships a priority on the agenda.
  - Faculty who advise students will recommend students to take the internship course and help direct them in finding an internship.

- - ○ Faculty will use university services like job fairs and make students aware of such events.
  - **Timeline for Implementation**
    - ○ Fall 2019: Add internships as the first item to the agenda in our industry advisory committee meeting and work with industry partners in getting our students internships. Advise Web students to take the internship course as upper division elective credit.
    - ○ Ongoing: Checking in with our students to make sure they are aware of job fairs or internship opportunities that are happening.
  - **Plan for Evaluating the Implementation**
    - ○ Gather data on how many students are starting to take the internship course.
    - ○ Conduct a focus group with students to see if they had success with the internship course and what could be done better.
    - ○ Make adjustments depending on feedback.

Recommendation 4: Provide for teaching assistants/tutors to assist students in upper-division courses. This would also serve to reduce the load on faculty.
- **Intent to Implement**
  - ○ We concur with this recommendation. We want to implement a Web tutoring program like the Computer Science program.
- **Steps to Implementation**
  - ○ We to identify and secure funding to create a Web tutoring center.
  - ○ Allocate a faculty member over the tutoring center and manage the tutors. Release credit would be given for this job.
  - ○ Open up a job posting and inform Web students and work towards hire our first tutor.
- **Timeline for Implementation**
  - ○ Fall 2019: Work with Spencer Hilton on identifying and securing funding for the Web program tutor center.
  - ○ Spring 2020: Allocate Luke Fernandez over the Web tutoring and have him create the job posting.
  - ○ Summer 2020: Hire our first web tutor.
- **Plan for Evaluating the Implementation**
  - ○ Gather data on students that are taking courses that tutoring is offered for and see if students are doing better or worse within those subjects.

Recommendation 5: Transfer Mr. Cody Squadroni to a tenure-track position with commensurate pay to reduce workload while providing stability to him and to the program.
- We concur with this recommendation but a tenure track position will need to be handled by Dean Ferro.

Recommendation 6: Increase faculty salaries. If faculty must work several jobs to make ends meet, they cannot, will not, dedicate themselves whole-heartedly to educating students.

- We concur with this recommendation but an increase in faculty salaries will need to be handled at the college or university level.