Biennial Narrative Report
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School of Information Sciences
The University of Tennessee

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This is the third biennial narrative report by The University of Tennessee, School of Information Sciences (SIS), since its Master of Science in Information Sciences accredited program was reaffirmed in 2009 for seven years. Since the last biennial narrative report in 2011, SIS has:

- joined the prestigious international iSchools consortium, reflecting SIS' reputation for attracting funded research, and our faculty's production of new knowledge and engaged information professionals;

- celebrated the 2012 milestone of 40 years of accredited status by achieving a national ranking of 17th among ALA-accredited schools, only one notch below our aspirational peer, the University of Wisconsin-Madison;

- implemented a new capstone experience in the form of an ePortfolio;

- developed and implemented a new comprehensive strategic assessment framework (called CRISP) for evaluating the program's effectiveness and performance, in anticipation of the full accreditation review in 2016;

- hired two new full-time assistant professors: Dr. Carolyn Hank, who began in January of 2013, and Dr. Wade Bishop, who joined SIS in August 2013;

Mirroring the order of the *Standards*, this report provides the Committee on Accreditation (COA) with the updated narrative documenting SIS' continuing compliance, and its ongoing planning and assessment processes to uphold those *Standards*, and maintain the School's role in the College, in the University, and in the LIS community. All previous COA correspondence since the previous comprehensive review has been examined. In an April 14, 2012 letter accepting the 2011 narrative and statistics, the COA requested that SIS provide the description and location of how the School provides publicly-available evidence of assessment and evaluation of student achievement, per Standards II.7 and IV.6. This requested information was provided to the Director of the ALA Office for Accreditation on September 7, 2012 via an

email from the Associate Director of SIS. However, our response is also mentioned here for the convenience of the COA, and to consolidate its documentation into this report. The SIS website includes a page entitled Student Achievement http://www.sis.utk.edu/student-achievement , which describes the process by which student achievement is supported by student outcomes that have emerged from systematic review involving all stakeholder groups and managed by the Curriculum Committee. The page mentions the three options students have for the culminating experience: thesis, comprehensive exam, or the new e-portfolio option. This page is available directly through the URL, and a link in the first paragraph of the frequently-visited "About SIS" page http://www.sis.utk.edu/about points to it. Detailed information about all aspects of completing the degree are provided in the online Graduate Student Manual, which is directly accessible through links posted on both the Prospective Students and Current Students sections of the School's website.

Standard I: Mission, Goals, and Objectives

The School's mission, program goals and objectives, supported by effective metrics for measuring our continual improvement, have been reviewed and affirmed at each of the annual faculty retreats (2009 through 2013). In each of these years the School's Vision 2020 strategic plan also has been revisited, to affirm the strong chain of connection between the School's areas of focus, our strategic plan, and the University's VolVision Top25 initiative. The major outcome of the fall 2012 retreat was the identification of five key priorities for action, to support the School's strategic vision and mission: course pathways, increasing enrollment, focusing/creating the program's identity, student career services, and faculty mentoring, specifically through tenure & promotion workshops. The School's progress towards these priority areas is discussed in the appropriate sections below.

The fall 2013 retreat debuted the new CRISP evaluative framework for continual quality improvement, which is now guiding the School's systematic preparation for ALA reaccreditation in 2016, and for the current University-level SACS reaccreditation. CRISP is a dual-purpose

acronym, standing for the **C**ontinuous **R**eview for **I**mproving **S**ystems and **P**erformance process map, but also for its five foundational modifiers for achieving future success, reminding SIS to focus on being **C**ompetitive, **R**elevant, **I**nnovative, **S**trategic, and **P**roductive. These five modifiers are then applied to each of the six ALA Standards, emphasizing outcomes assessment. The CRISP approach will ensure that SIS is maximizing the return on taxpayer investment in higher education, while performing to the highest possible standard in all of the dimensions that must interact to support the delivery of quality education in our field. Instead of a finite event, CRISP presents accreditation compliance as a continuing cycle of needs identification, planning processes, program responses, and assessment measures, leading to the redefinition of needs, and so on. At the 2013 retreat, faculty-staff committees for most of the ALA Standard areas identified unit-level Performance Outcomes for their relevant Standard, then developed assessment measures for the Performance Outcomes. Alternatively, the CRISP Curriculum committee identified Student Learning outcomes and their measures, for Standard II.

Standard II: Curriculum

Over the past two years, SIS and the Curriculum Committee has made substantial progress in several areas, including formalizing student learning outcomes and their assessment, course catalog changes and additions, the continued fruition of the e-portfolio option, and addressing the need for Pathways to link specific courses to particular career options. Starting with fall 2013, the comprehensive exam format was modified to align it with the University's SACS accreditation standards; students must now choose their three questions to write from a total of six (not five) questions, and they must choose one from each of the three conceptual sections, which ensures a broader test of the students' understanding.

Regarding the ongoing focus on Student Learning Outcomes (SLO), the Committee developed a course-level process for identifying and assessing SLOs, by conducting a literature search, then using syllabi to identify course objectives and mapping them to the program objectives, creating a matrix, and linking them to professional competencies as well. Assessment

opportunities for SLO include the three culminating experience options, and potentially the practicum course. In the 2012-13 year, SLO development was focused on the program level, and the rubric and document were used for populating the University SACS accreditation template as well.

The Committee performed a comprehensive review of the course catalog, resulting in changes in some course numbers, updated descriptions, one course deletion, and the assignment of permanent numbers to ten courses previously offered under a generic "special topics" number. Other accomplishments include the creation of principles for rotating course offerings (which included faculty input), guidelines for summer course offerings, a three-year provisional course plan, and data-mining research to prevent grade inflation.

This Committee also initiated the development of curriculum Pathways to aid students in selecting courses that will prepare them for career paths of interest, and to facilitate student advising. The use of Pathways rather than a more rigid tracking approach allows students to enjoy the personal quality of the School's flexible approach, while simplifying the decision process for students who have a focused career objective in mind. The Committee systematically reviewed a range of career foci, then included faculty input to ultimately identify 11 priorities for pathway development. They also specified the six structural elements mandated for each pathway: a description, careers, a recommended course list, potentially useful courses external to SIS, practica locations, and related positions held by recent graduates. The first completed pathway document is for academic libraries, an area of special expertise for SIS.

The e-portfolio, as a third option for a culminating experience, has proved increasingly popular. The preparatory course "Capstone for Career Success: Designing Effective ePortfolios" has been assigned a permanent course number for spring of 2014, and is fully enrolled. In May 2013, seven graduating students presented their online portfolios in the inaugural showcase event attended by faculty and other students.

Standard III: Faculty

The SIS faculty added two new members in 2013, filling the gaps created when Dr. Kimberly Black left the faculty in January 2012, and Dr. Cindy Welch elected to change her appointment from a tenure-track position to become a Clinical Assistant Professor in the fall of 2012, teaching a 3/3 course load, and continuing to coordinate the School Library Media program. The first newcomer was Dr. Carolyn Hank, formerly on the faculty at McGill University, who came to SIS in January of 2013. Dr. Hank's research is in digital curation and archives, and she is coordinating the development of the archival studies program. Dr. Wade Bishop came to SIS in fall of 2013 from the University of Kentucky, and studies data curation and Geographic Information Systems (GIS). Dr. Bishop is co-PI on an IMLS Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian grant to integrate GIS into the LIS curricula.

SIS alumna Dr. Line Pouchard ('98) was added as an adjunct faculty member in spring 2013. Dr. Pouchard is a research and development scientist at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory's Computer Science and Mathematics Division.

The Faculty Affairs Committee conducted and completed seven in-depth revisions of the School's bylaws, and the final version was ratified by the faculty in April 2013. At the request of the Chancellor and Provost, this committee created a list of the top 30 journals in our field, to support the University-level VolVision Top 25 initiative's assessment of the quality and impact of faculty publications. The Committee developed criteria for journal selection, resulting in the *Aspirational Publication Venues – Journals* list. The Committee also created a similar list of top conference proceedings; both lists were discussed and approved by the faculty at the 2012 retreat. The Committee also formulated criteria for performance evaluation, and tenure & promotion for clinical faculty, which were added to the School's bylaws. Finally, this Committee worked with the Tenure & Promotion Committee to create a T&P workshop for faculty members in April 2013, fulfilling the faculty mentoring key focus area.

The SIS faculty are producing exciting new knowledge through an array of funded research projects. Ongoing grants first mentioned in the 2011 narrative are not listed here, although many, such as the National Science Foundation-funded DataONE (**O**bservation **N**etwork for **E**arth) project, remain highly active. Building on the success of his earlier project, Bharat Mehra is co-PI (with Vandana Singh) on a second round of the IMLS-funded Information Technology Rural Librarian Masters Scholarship Program (ITRL2), to provide full scholarships and mentoring to twelve rural Appalachian librarians. The 16 students funded by the original ITRL program graduated in August 2012.

SIS Director Ed Cortez secured two major grant projects that align directly with the School's core value of promoting diversity. Dr. Cortez is co-PI on the IMLS –funded Library Anchor Models for Bridging Diversity Achievements (LAMBDA) project, awarding $189,416 supporting public library services for LGBTQ homeless youth. Dr. Cortez is the PI for the IMLS-funded LaSCALA project, in partnership with UT CCI and the University of Arizona SIRLS, to recruit, mentor, and support four Latino doctoral students. Suzie Allard is a Co-PI. The $339,593 project's goal is to develop Latino faculty to teach in LIS schools and conduct research in STEM contexts. The two UT students began their coursework in Fall 2013.

IMLS also awarded a $50,000 planning grant for curriculum development in cybersecurity for the nation's science information sources. Suzie Allard serves as PI, and adjunct professor Bruce Wilson of the Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) is the co-I, in collaboration with the University of New Mexico Library and the Los Alamos National Laboratory. The UT Center for Information and Communication Studies (CICS) won a grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation to investigate the trustworthiness of various scholarly information sources and channels. Dr. Carol Tenopir leads this project, which also involves Suzie Allard and adjunct professor David Nichols, from England.

Two funded projects provided opportunities for recruiting and training SIS students interested in science data and information. The Data Curation Education in Research Centers

(DCREC) grant, sponsored by IMLS for $384,094, funded three SIS masters students and included summer internships managing large-scale data sets in scientific settings. Suzie Allard served as co-PI. The three DCERC students graduated in spring of 2013. The Science Data and Information Professionals for the Future (SciData) project is funding eight SIS students with science backgrounds, who also gained practical experience in scientific settings, and a trip to England to study scientific electronic publishing. IMLS funded SciData for $546,472; Suzie Allard is the PI and Carol Tenopir is the co-PI. The SciData students will be graduating in Spring of 2014.

Dr. Tenopir heads the Building on Lib-Value grant funded by the British JISC Collections, which involves six British universities, and measures the patterns and value of reading to academics. Rachel Fleming-May is a co-PI on an IMLS National Leadership Planning Grant entitled Virtual Verse in the Library: Surveying the ePoetry Landscape. Carolyn Hank brought along two funded projects in her move to SIS: an ALISE Research Grant, and an OCLC/ALISE LIS Research Grant.

Several SIS faculty members have garnered prestigious awards or honors in recognition of their outstanding contributions to scholarship and teaching in the LIS field. SIS' most honored faculty member is Chancellor's Professor Carol Tenopir, who was awarded the inaugural College of Communication and Information Board of Visitors endowed professorship. In January 2013, Dr. Tenopir was named a 2012 American Association for the Advancement of Science fellow. In the fall of 2012, Dr. Tenopir was honored with the Southeastern Conference Faculty Achievement Award for UT.

Professor Peiling Wang received the 2012 UT CCI Faculty Innovative Technology Teaching Award, and Rachel Fleming-May won the UT CCI Faculty Teaching Award. Devendra Potnis received the SIS Bonnie Carroll & Roy Cooper Faculty Enrichment Award for 2012. In the past two years, Carol Tenopir has delivered more than twenty invited speeches in locations throughout the world. Bharat Mehra was the invited keynote speaker for the Indian Library

Association Annual Conference in Mangalore. Suzie Allard was invited to speak at the National Research Council's Board on Research Data & Information in Washingon, D.C. in February 2013. She was also just recently award the "2013 LJ Outstanding Teacher of the Year Award." The many other noteworthy achievements by the faculty are too numerous to list here, so the readers may wish to visit http://www.sis.utk.edu/sisfaculty to view faculty CVs.

Standard IV: Students

From Fall 2011 to Fall 2013, 241 new students joined our program, with an average age of 32, including 87 (36.1%) on-campus students and 154 (63.9%) distance education (DE) students. Among these 241 students, 172 (71.3%) are from Tennessee and 34 from Virginia, six are from Arkansas, and the other 29 students are from various other states or countries. One hundred eighty-two (75.5%) of the new students are female, and 59 (24.5%) are male. There are a total of 300 students enrolled in the program at this writing, with an average undergraduate GPA of 3.43. About a third of our current students hold at least one previous graduate degree. Enrollment is down from the prior reporting period, and the School is actively engaged in researching the causes and developing solutions to boost applications and enrollment. With the approval of the faculty, SIS administration has put into place a process for a spring admissions cycle, which will start with the Spring 2014 semester.

Thanks to the generous endowment of $104,000 from Rich and Jane Moulton Ray, SIS has added the Jane Moulton Ray Scholarship to its list of endowed scholarships. This scholarship focuses on Tennessee residents or high school graduates with financial need, who are first-generation college or graduate students. In an April 2013 ceremony honoring the donors, four incoming students were awarded $1,000 each.

SIS has continued the events, communication channels, structures, and methods discussed in the last report to promote greater student engagement and more active participation in the life of the School and the University. In addition, the new Passport to Success program has been implemented, to encourage student participation in SIS' many enrichment events, such as

visiting scholar lectures, Advisory Board sessions, town hall meetings, student chapter meetings, and many events at the UT Libraries. The program rewards student engagement, by tracking event attendance and tying it to prize drawings. DE students can participate online at almost all Passport events, via the Blackboard Collaborate course delivery software. This program has significantly increased student participation in these enrichment activities.

Another enthusiastically-received activity is the introduction of an optional Thursday night social mixer as the initial event of the incoming student orientation. This mixer was first offered in fall 2011, and is now a regular fixture. Incoming students can mingle with each other, faculty, staff, and even some current students, in a relaxed informal atmosphere, before the intensity of the next day's orientation session.

The Student Affairs Committee has continued its ongoing efforts to enhance the student experience at SIS, for both our on-campus and DE students. Among the events they have supported are a full range of Student Chapter organization meetings, the Special Library Association's Trivia Night and Brown Bag events, a co-organized Information Professionals Career Panel event (also supported by the East Tennessee Library Association and the UT SIS Alumni Society), and a field trip to ORNL. DE students in town for comps can also attend the fall or spring picnics held on those days. This Committee also oversees the nomination of student representatives to governance entities at the school, college, or university levels, selects the faculty meeting liaison, and   manages the process for awarding scholarships and year-end student awards.

To facilitate student mentoring by SIS alums working in professional positions of various kinds, in the spring of 2013, the SIS Alumni Society worked with the student leaders to create an online system for linking students with virtual mentors. Separate online forms were created for students and for potential mentors, and a member of the Alumni Society would use the forms to match students with "virtual" mentors in their area of interest. The system was implemented at a

pilot level, resulting in several useful mentoring connections, and its expansion and continued use will be continued in Spring 2014.

Standard V: Administration and Financial Support

The CRISP Administration and Finance committee is framing its review of SIS compliance with this standard by using a continuum of adequacy to excellence, in assessing current performance and processes of the administration and staff, and setting targets for improvement. Effectiveness in oversight and planning are considered on three levels: the School, the College, and the University. The key functional responsibility areas are student services, the chief executive's duties, administrative support, instructional technology, and communication, so outcome measures are being identified and developed for each area.

As in the past, the School of Information Sciences is positioned within the UT College of Communication and Information, with Mike Wirth as Dean. Dean Wirth is extremely engaged with the School and regularly attends all kinds of our events. He values the leadership role the School holds within the College. The Chancellor of UT Knoxville is Dr. Jimmy Cheek, and his VolVision Top 25 campaign to raise the national prominence of the University is ongoing. SIS supports his vision, and appreciates the University administration's recognition of our nationally-ranked program, our efforts to engage in interdisciplinary relationships with other academic units, and our leadership and experience in the delivery of quality online graduate education.

The SIS Director, Ed Cortez, is beginning his ninth year at SIS, and continues to provide strategic leadership to improve the resources and status of the School, and to continue its ongoing progress in fulfilling its mission, and that of the University. With the support of Associate Director Suzie Allard, Dr. Cortez has expanded the SIS administrative team, in order to improve services to all of its stakeholders. The functions that support an efficient and effective academic unit have been enhanced, including responsive student services addressing all stages of the student lifecycle, good communication and a collaborative culture among team members, and

a customer service focus that anticipates the needs of faculty and students. The Associate
Director's responsibilities include supervising the administrative staff.

In the fall of 2011, SIS' Administrative Support Assistant Jay Tucker was promoted to
Program Resource Specialist, replacing Gerri Littlejohn, who retired after 32 years. Ken McClain,
an Iraq War veteran with an M.A. in Human Resource Development, filled the Administrative
Support position. In January 2012, SIS alum Kitty McClanahan (Ph.D., 2011) came aboard as
Assistant to the Director, Practicum Coordinator, and Coordinator/Lecturer for the undergraduate
minor in Information Studies and Technology (IS&T). In the summer of 2013, Jay Tucker left
UT, and Ken McClain became the Program Resource Specialist. In October 2013, Becca Hefti
was hired as Administrative Support Assistant, tapping into her similar position at North Carolina
Chapel Hill. SIS again has a full staff of six, with distinct responsibilities.

.   Regarding revenue, the School continues to be impacted by reductions in state funding to
the University, reflecting the general state of the economy. Despite the dampening effect on
tuition-based revenue from reductions in enrollment in our program, some compensation for this
effect occurred, because the students tended to take more credit hours. SIS continues to receive
substantial revenue streams through grants and contracts, and the DE program. These revenue
sources help SIS to provide student support, faculty travel funds, and other intrinsic components
for maintaining a top-flight program.

Standard VI: Physical Resources and Facilities

Since 2011, SIS has completed multiple remodeling projects of the School's facilities. In
Spring 2012, the main office was substantially upgraded, including the installation and furnishing
of two new interior cubicles to accommodate new staff members, plus new carpet, paint, décor,
and signage for the main office and 4th floor lobby, at a total cost of $75,162. A secondary office
suite with some SIS faculty offices and CICS offices was revamped in Spring 2013, including
constructing an office for Dr. Hank, and carpet, paint, and furniture for the suite's anteroom and
CICS offices. Over the past two years, six faculty offices and three staff offices were upgraded,

with new carpet, paint, and/or furniture. A special facility project was the January 2013 conversion of the area formerly occupied by the Center for Children's and Young Adult Literature (CCYAL) into the Gary R. Purcell Reading Room, and two offices for SIS doctoral students. The late Dr. Gary Purcell was the School's Director at the time of its first accreditation in 1972. This memorial reading room serves as a place of respite for all CCI faculty and staff, and hosts the twice-monthly visits of stress-relieving therapy dogs from the UT Veterinary School's Human Animal Bond In Tennessee (HABIT) program. (The CCYAL was moved to the main Library for the convenience of all students.)

In this reporting period, the School made a wide array of technology-related improvements. Most notable was the successful January 2012 conversion from Saba Centra to the Blackboard Collaborate platform for synchronous course delivery, including training and troubleshooting for faculty and students. In September 2012, the entire SIS website was upgraded, reorganized, and migrated to Drupal 7. Formal usability testing was done on the old website to guide the revamp, and on the new site to evaluate its effectiveness. A new Mac server for the School's websites came online in June 2013. A Blackboard organizational site was created to provide students, staff, and faculty with live online access to SIS' events and enrichment activities, and archived recordings of past events. SIS equipped new faculty and staff with needed technology, and upgraded computers, software, and peripherals for several existing personnel, per the periodic schedule. To continue to provide effective mobile access, all faculty and staff received 3rd generation IPads in September 2012. Funds from the UT Technology fees were used to upgrade a computer lab-classroom that SIS uses for orientation training and the comprehensive exam. Drupal websites were created for several courses and grant projects. The online self-assessment test for incoming students was updated for the latest standards, as of fall 2013. SIS also handled the purchase, setup, and distribution of laptops for students funded by two grant programs: SciData and ITRL2.

Conclusion

The School is well positioned to deliver on its important charge – to produce highly capable and innovative information professionals, through our steadfast commitment to excellence in teaching, research, and service to the LIS community. SIS embraces an outlook of continual self-assessment, seeking increasingly effective ways to improve our processes and performance, in order to deliver an optimal educational experience for our students. The new CRISP framework will help to assure a thorough, systematic approach to self-assessment that extends to all elements of our program, and aligns with the mission, goals, and objectives of SIS, the CCI, and the University, and specifically addresses the ALA standards. Assessments of all elements, but especially of the curriculum, will purposefully consider their commitment to foundational principles, while accommodating the continual innovation that is the hallmark of the field. SIS has a strong basis of quality personnel, a well-designed organizational structure, a supportive College, University, and state legislature, and a firm commitment to the field of Library and Information Sciences, to rely upon, in plotting a sustainable course for its continual growth and improvement.