

CIS Advisory Committee- Networking Subcommittee Meeting 3/22/2018, 6:00 PM, A-1228

Present: David Klick, Matt Feuerborn, Adam Larsen, Mike Ebner, Bette Chilton, Vickie Klick, RJ McGarry, Dave Kornfeind

After salad and pizza, Adam called the meeting to order at 6:25PM.

Adam began by summarizing the rationale for the subcommittee/task force for Matt and Bette. The conclusion of the first meeting was that the networking courses and their sequence are reasonable, with some small updates. The discussion then moved into the question of whether the networking degree aligns with industry needs locally. Industry certifications are viewed as very important, more so than the college degree for this part of the job market. Cohen made the point that passing the Kish networking courses doesn't mean much to him, but passing the certifications that the courses are supposed to prepare for DOES mean something. Otherwise, he is more interested in NIU students with a four-year degree who can be trained to do whatever is needed. A student with a bachelor's degree is more likely to have developed some of the soft skills that are vital in a team. Without a full-time faculty member focused on networking, it's hard to see how the low enrollment will change, which limits the program's viability.

Kish is a Pearson View test center. The test set available here includes all or most of the relevant networking certificates. Matt said that it would be possible to add a course fee to the classes to cover the cost of the certifications (~\$200). However, not all students would be interested in the certification exam and the extra cost would be a barrier. Having the cost of the certification exam attached to the course cost makes it eligible for financial aid. It might be possible to structure it as a "recommended" or optional item with the bookstore. Mike suggested that it could be handled like honors classes, with an alternate course section for those who are planning to take the exam; however, Matt wasn't sure if it would be possible to have a different course fee in that case.

RJ pointed out that you wouldn't want to have every course have an associated exam, and it would be good to have the exams spread out so students had only one (or maybe two) a semester.

Another problem is that there aren't a lot of networking jobs nearby. The two-year degree doesn't directly transfer to NIU; the BSAM program is business/management/accounting and has little to offer a student who wants to get into networking. It's better to get the gen eds and take a few programming courses at Kish in that case, then transfer to NIU and take all computer science. Mike offered his own experience as evidence that the programming classes at Kish were good preparation for going to NIU.

Matt returned to the fact that the department has two different, parallel degrees, each with a couple of options. About 30 completed networking degrees in 5 years; Dave and Mike were part of a group of 7 who got their CCNA certification, at a high point ~7-8 years ago. The Cisco option for networking is problematic because an instructor needs to be CCNA-certified AND be certified as a CCNA instructor. It also requires specialized hardware. The 24 semester hours of general networking/administration courses are a good basis for a certificate. ICCB no longer requires a certificate to be tied to a degree, so it would be possible to drop the networking degree and retain the certificate and the eight three-hour networking courses. The network administration degree option includes the same 8 courses plus some programming and a project or internship. Industry certifications are essential for network administration as well. Bette suggested creating a one-credit-hour course for test prep, possibly for the second eight

weeks of the semester. Since that requires 16 contact hours, it could be structured as an intensive 16 hours for a couple of days toward the end of the semester, a week at the end of the semester, or even continuing education. This would enable students to review the material, learn test-taking strategies, etc. The course fee would include the cost of the certification exam. Such a course could make it possible to require the students to sit for the exam at the end of the course (helping connect the school's efforts to student outcomes). There are precedents in other programs such as nursing. An intensive week-long program or "boot camp" might also be appealing to local businesses who want their employees certified.

Matt said that final exams are now optional in the 17th week of the semester, so either that "exam" week or perhaps the week before regular classes start in January could be a time for certification prep for the fall classes. David said that the Linux Administration certificate calls for 3 years of experience before taking it. Linux 1 certification is doable, but would require a few changes to CIS 170.

Adam asked what the process is for finding out whether one or more of these ideas is viable. One of the things that needs to happen is to emphasize in the courses that industry certifications are important. It will be important to start with one or two certifications and see how it goes from there. Mike recommended that we start with the A+ certification for CIS 142/PC Repair. Adam suggested we also do Network+ (CIS 140) as our other initial trial.

Next steps: Administration needs to evaluate the options discussed. There will be further discussion at the full advisory committee meeting on Thursday, April 19.

Matt asked David if there were changes to other non-networking courses for consideration. CIS 115 (Internet Fundamentals) is a low-enrollment, 2 credit hour course that would be convenient to drop.

CIS 150/250 and CIS 160/260 are both IAI articulated as CS1/CS2. Some online materials at the college need to be updated to show CIS 160/260 is articulated as CS1/CS2.