CS GSA Activities Summary (2007-08)

1. CS GSA Election - 10/17/2007

This year, starting fall 2007, the ECECS Department split into two separate departments - ECE and CS. The CS GSA committee members and the ECE GSA committee members were officially elected by the graduate students of both departments in this event. Food (pizza and pop) was served at this event and this event served as student mixer where the students could interact with each other as well the new committee members in an informal setting. The newly elected CS GSA presented their agenda and a general outline of the activities they have planned for the year.

2. “End of Exams - Movie Night” (Food + Movie) - 12/07/2007

The CS GSA organized an "End of Exams - Movie Night" event with free food, pop and screening of the movie "Pirates of the Caribbean - At World's End", at the end of fall quarter. More than 50 people (students, staff and faculty) from the CS and ECE Depts. participated in the event. The main purpose of this event was to allow the students and the faculty and staff in both CS and ECE Departments to interact with each other in a very informal setting. Providing an escape from the energy-zapping quarter the students have had (especially for the 1st year graduate students), was also high on the agenda.

3. Professor Jerome Paul Farewell Reception - 1/10/2008

The CS GSA and the Student Chapter of IEEE organized a farewell reception to honor Professor Jerome Paul, who retired after 37 years of distinguished service to the University of Cincinnati. Dr. Paul has played a very vital role in the development of the ECECS Dept. at UC and has also been the Dept. Head of the CS Dept. Several undergraduate and graduate students, staff, and faculty from the various Colleges and Engineering Departments attended the event.


Paper copies of Thesis/Dissertations are no longer accepted by the graduate school. All students planning to graduate have to prepare an electronic version of their thesis as part of the graduate school checklist. The CS GSA organized this seminar by having a speaker from the ETD Helpdesk at UC explain the ETD submission process and the graduation checklist. This seminar was open for all students of the College of Engineering and about 25 students attended the seminar.

5. Series of four workshops on SUN Technologies – Winter & Spring quarters

Yue Chao, a graduate student at UC, is also a part-time employee at Sun Microsystems and the Sun Campus Ambassador at UC. The CS GSA organized a series of four workshops given by Yue Chao, on the latest products and their features from SUN. These workshops were open to all graduate and undergraduates students of CS and ECE Departments. The first workshop was on the latest version of NetBeans - Sun's IDE for Java, held on 2/20/2008. The second workshop held on 3/06/2008 focused on using webservices with NetBeans 6.0. The third workshop was held on 4/03/2008 and was about using Open Solaris and the final workshop, on using Sun Studio, was held on 4/17/2008. Pizza, pop, “Subway” subs and snacks were provided at all the four workshops.
6. “Exam week coffee break” – Fall, Winter and Spring quarters

The CS GSA, in collaboration with the ECE GSA, organized the "exam week coffee break" for the students of ECE & CS Depts. in fall, winter (and spring) quarters of 2007-08 who worked late (9PM – 2AM) preparing for their exams during the exam week. We gave coffee, tea, hot chocolate and a kind word to students stressed out with their exam preparation (especially since only the vending machines are available on-campus at that time).

7. 3rd Annual ECE / CS Poster Symposium– 4/8/08

The CS GSA and ECE GSA, in collaboration with the student chapter of IEEE, organized the 3rd annual ECE / CS poster symposium event in which 23 students from both the departments participated. This event was organized in a grand scale – we invited 6 distinguished judges from the industry as well as academia to judge the posters and apart from the poster symposium, we had Mr. Tom Hortel (VP and co-founder of VentureForward), as the guest speaker. This being an annual event now, in order to encourage participation, we also introduced 10 student grants of $15 each to cover the poster printing charges of the students. The entire event, especially its organization was appreciated by all.

8. Ohio Graduate Student Symposium (OGSS'08) – 4/26/08

The four Ph.D. granting universities (in CSE) of Ohio (University of Cincinnati, Ohio State University, Kent State University and Wright State University) participate in the Ohio Graduate Student Symposium (OGSS) every year. Last year, OGSS’07 was held at University of Cincinnati. This year, the symposium was held on April 26th, 2008 at Kent State University. OGSS being an ideal opportunity to interact with fellow researchers from other Universities in an informal setting, the CS GSA encouraged the students from the ECE and CS Departments to participate in this event. At OGSS’08, UC had the maximum participation among the 4 Universities with 12 students. Aravind Ranganathan and Jung Hyan (Peter) Jun, current officers of CS GSA, helped organize the travel for the students and also participated in the event.

9. Distinguished guest speaker, Dr. Dan Siewiorek – 5/13/08

Dr. Daniel P. Siewiorek is the Director Human-Computer Interaction Institute and a Buhl University Professor of ECE & CS at the Carnegie Mellon University. We invited Dr. Siewiorek for a guest lecture and this event was co-sponsored by the Student Chapter of IEEE, the Taft Research Center and the CS Department with the GSGA granting $370 from the group grant. Apart from the guest lecture, Dr. Siewiorek also attended a presentation given by the students from our Department where the students presented their current research briefly. We believe that an event such as this would further more collaborations between the two Universities in future.

10. Representation at the GSGA

We have consistently and actively represented our Dept at the GSGA (with 100% attendance) and have actively participated in all the activities and events organized by the GSGA.
11. DQE Papers from the Department

The CS Dept holds its Doctoral Qualifying Exam (DQE), compulsory for all PhD students, in the beginning of spring quarter as well as in summer. Until this year, the past DQE question papers were not made available to the students. The CS GSA worked with the department and obtained the DQE papers from the last year (2007) which was then made available to all students from the CS GSA website (http://cs.uc.edu/~csgsa/resources.php?file=dqe.php). The department has also changed the policy now and the DQE question papers will henceforth be made available for the benefit of the students.

12. Website (www.cs.uc.edu/~csgsa/)

The new CS GSA website has really caught the attention of several students. We have been updating the news and event archives as frequently as possible. Our news items not only list academic events in and around UC such as conferences and seminars, but also movie screenings, latest relevant information (on CPT / OPT, etc), and even volunteering opportunities. Several students have taken the time to give us their feedback over email or in person, which has been so far positive. A lot of students have benefitted from the information and the events listed in our website and we hope to continue to do so.

Events planned for the remainder of ’07 – ’08

1. CS GSA Annual Report – Spring (or fall) quarter

Although the general meetings of the CS GSA are public and open to all members (we meet every Thursday at 3PM), the attendance of these meetings has been generally poor compared to the number of students in the department. The members of the CS GSA are informed of the activities mainly via email and via the CS GSA website. The CS GSA intends to organize an official “Annual Report” meeting, where all the CS (and ECE) students would be invited and the CS GSA would go over all our activities for this year along with a summary of the finances and expenses to ensure transparency and to get their feedback for the future activities. We are planning to have this in this quarter or with the next CS GSA elections in the fall quarter.

2. Bowling Event – Spring quarter

The CS GSA has a remaining group budget of $125.49 (from the GSGA) and is planning to organize a trip to a local bowling alley for the students and faculty and staff. Depending on the number of people interested, the CS GSA intends to cover the expenses partially or wholly. We are currently in touch with different bowling alleys to finalize the rates.

3. Guest Speakers – Spring & Fall quarters

We are currently working at having a local guest speaker from General Motors on 5/29/08. Dr. Victor Bahl from Microsoft research, who had originally agreed to give a talk on May 29th had to cancel due to a change in his schedule. He has now agreed to come instead in the fall quarter of 2008-09. Also, Dr. Leah Jamieson (Ransburg Distinguished Professor of ECE, Professor of Engineering Education, Past Director of EPICS - Engineering Projects in Community Service) from Purdue University, and the President of IEEE for the year 2007, who had originally wanted to come as the guest speaker for our poster symposium event has agreed to come in fall quarter.
4. Incoming student orientation – Summer & Fall quarters

The CS GSA is also planning to prepare materials that would help new graduate students starting their MS or PhD in our Dept. The CS GSA will be working with the Dept to provide supplemental materials to the new students along with the information packet they get during the orientation. These materials are intended to provide valuable information to student to ease their initial transition into grad school. We intend to email the incoming students immediately after their acceptance of admit from UC. By meeting these new students early, we hope to make them aware that they can come to us with problems and can always get help and advice from us that would make their initial grad school life and especially the transition into their first quarter easier.

Summary and compliance with the 6 UC[21 guidelines:

For a fresh GSA, starting with 1/3rd the budget of ECECS, we looked for other funding sources and local speakers and other opportunities (such as the SUN Workshops) where the food expenses were borne by SUN Microsystems. Also, all our events and activities have been open to graduate students from both CS and ECE Department students, with most events being open to undergrads as well.

From the very beginning, we felt a lack of a sense of belonging between many students and the CS GSA. We have tried hard to establish a real relationship between the students and the GSA since only then will any information from us be accepted and absorbed by the students. All our events and activities have been aimed at promoting a sense of place and a sense of community within the Department among the students’ minds.

Scholarship: By organizing the 3rd annual CS / ECE Poster Symposium, as well as, actively promoting the student participation in the OGSS ’08, we have promoted academic excellence and scholarship amongst the graduate students in both CS & ECE departments. Furthermore, having distinguished speakers such as Dr. Dan Siewiorek, as well as by organizing workshops focusing on current technologies (SUN Technology workshop series) we have contributed to the fulfillment of the same principle.

Citizenship: CS GSA has been diligent to ensure that its duty on Citizenship is upheld. The farewell reception in honor of Dr. Jerome Paul was such an occasion, where the CS GSA took on the responsibility of representing every single graduate student that has been a part of ECECS department (ECE & CS departments of late) in paying tribute to years of yeoman service rendered by Dr. Paul. The orientation for the incoming graduate student is also envisioned in this spirit. By initiating the CS GSA annual report, we hope to instill awareness of good governance, transparency & responsibility among the CS Graduate student community. In addition, CS GSA members have actively participated in matters pertaining to the UC Community at large; the issue of GFH closing being such an issue, where Aravind Ranganathan has been one of the active members in organizing student awareness in this issue within and outside our department.

Stewardship: The CS GSA has been an excellent steward of the interests of its members, as well as the department, the GSGA and all other organizations we have partnered with, as reflected in all our activities. All our decisions and actions have not only been based on the best
interests of the CS GSA alone, but on that of all involved entities. For example, as evident from our proposal for Dr. Siewiorek’s guest speaker event, since the GSGA itself has a constrained budget and since a lot other GSAs are also dependent on the GSGA’s competitive group grants, we tried to limit our use of the group grant as much as possible and by looking for other (richer) funding sources. Whenever we used the department or University resources, we have been fully responsible and conscientious. For example, we would not only plan for putting up flyers to advertise our event, but also to remove and recycle them after the event; in all our events where we served food and drinks, we made sure of cleaning up afterwards; when we used department/college property such as easels for our poster event, we took additional care in returning them in the same condition, etc. However, we have always had the interests of our members foremost and all our decisions have been based on whether it would contribute or not to the overall improvement of the graduate student life in our department.

Leadership: The primary goal of CS GSA this year has been on taking leadership in efforts that are geared to the betterment of the CS Department, especially with respect to all matters pertaining to Graduate students. A recurring theme had been the continued dialog and interaction between every member in the department. Apart from events specifically intended for such a purpose (e.g. Movie Night, upcoming bowling event), we have exploited every opportunity to promote these goals: taking in graduate students to volunteer in events such as Poster Symposium, increasing their involvement with the rest of the department, and being available for a friendly chat at the exam-week coffee break are examples of such activities. In addition, the planned orientation for the incoming graduate students, will also partly serve this purpose.

CS GSA also took the initiative this year to organize a continued series of distinguished speaker events. Our leadership in this has generated such an enthusiasm amongst the Faculty, graduate students & undergraduate students alike; so much so that everybody is keen in contributing towards the success of these events.

The CS GSA also took the leadership in honoring a distinguished Faculty member, Dr. Jerome Paul, who retired from UC after years of service.

Partnership: Partnership has been one of the key aspects of CS GSA during the last year. It was partly necessitated by the shoestring budget that we inherited; yet, the greater good of collective effort was at the forefront. This was exemplified by the efforts in hosting the distinguished speaker event featuring Dr. Dan Siewiorek, where CS GSA got the cooperation of UC-IEEE, Taft Research Center, CS Department & the GSGA in making the even successful. The Poster Symposium & exam-week coffee break were jointly organized with ECE GSA, where for the former we also got the assistance from UC-IEEE. In addition, CS GSA also promoted the continued partnership between CS & ECE graduate student groups, by making every event organized by the CS GSA open to the ECE Graduate students & faculty as well.
Cultural Competency: As a very high percentage of the graduate students in CS & ECE departments are international students, the social gatherings held & planned are focused on greater interaction between student groups from different backgrounds, thereby promoting the cultural competency. We believe the Orientation for the Incoming Graduate Students would also contribute greatly in this regard.

Enclosed with this report are some pictures from our various events to provide a general idea of the happenings in our events.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge all the contributions from the faculty and staff from our department and college, other entities we have partnered with – the ECE GSA and the student Chapter of IEEE, students who actively participated in all our events, and especially the GSGA without whom a lot of these events wouldn’t have been as successful or even possible.

-- CS GSA Committee Members

President: Chittabrata Ghosh
Vice-President: Asitha Bandaranayake
Secretary: Aravind Ranganathan
Treasurer: Jung Hyan (Peter) Jun
Pictures from the various CS GSA Events (visit the CS GSA website for more):

1. “End of Exams - Movie Night”
2. Professor Jerome Paul Farewell Reception
3. SUN Technologies Workshops by Yue Chao
4. “Exam week coffee break”
5. 3rd Annual ECE / CS Poster Symposium
6. Ohio Graduate Student Symposium (OGSS’08)
7. Dr. Dan Siewiorek’s Keynote Speech (5/13/08)