Computer Bytes

Ch-ch-ch-changes

Art Karshmer Retires

The department has seen several changes in 2000 that mean that the immediate future will challenging but still extremely exciting. After nineteen years of service, and nine as department head, Art Karshmer retired from NMSU. We held a long series of farewell events including a evening of roasting and reminiscing. The culmination was Art's own 60th birthday party, held at his house in the

Art Karshmer

Las Alturas area. He was showered with gifts, thankyous and best wishes until he had to throw us out. Judy, his wife, organized a Mariachi band to play by the pool; the wine flowed freely and then he was gone. We shall miss him.

As you may guess if you knew him, Art is not actually returned, but has taken a teaching job at the University of South Florida at Tampa, so he is living the life of luxury with his retirement pay from NMSU and his new salary. Judy is Associate Dean of nursing there, and they have bought a boat!

The new DH

To replace Art, the faculty voted to nominate Roger Hartley, who has been with the department fifteen

years, as the new head, and the Dean duly appointed him. Art groomed Roger as much as possible for his new role, so that the transition was relatively painless. Roger assures everyone that he accepts the challenge of taking the department into the 21st century and vows to keep the strengths of the department and to make improvements where necessary.

New Administrators

After the debacle involving ex-president Orenduff, and the retirement of interim president Bill Conroy, NMSU has a new president, Jay Gogue (pronounced "goozh") who has administrative experience from Clemson and Utah State. He has already made several obvious changes to streamline administration, and has pledged to hand back power to make decisions to Deans and Department Heads. He is a very straightforward character and has made a good start. One of the immediate changes is that John Owens, the number two administrator, left for the University of Nebraska system. After his departure, president Gogue, changed the title of the job to that of Provost, and appointed Tom Gale, a retired Dean of Arts and Science as an interim holder of the post while a national search is undertaken. Hopefully the new

The newcomer: Son Tran

The department welcomes Assistant Professor Son Tran to its ranks. Son completed his Ph.D. at UTEP last year in the area of reasoning about actions and is currently involved with answer set programming, an offshoot of logic programming that seeks to find solutions to some very hard computational problems. He will be working with Enrico Pontelli on this research.

Son is a native Vietnamese but has been in the US for the last five years completing his education. Among his awards are a Best Paper Award, for the paper "Extending ConGolog to allow partial ordering" at the Sixth International Workshop on Agent Theories, Architectures, and Languages, in 1999, the Outstanding International Graduate Student Award, University of Texas at El Paso, in 1998, and the Outstanding Dissertation Award, University of Texas at El Paso, in 2001.

He attended Stanford University in the Knowledge Systems Laboratory last Summer and joined us this January. He and his wife and daughters have already settled into Las Cruces and we look forward to learning more about Vietnam, especially its cooking!

Provost and President together can take NMSU into the 21st century. One of Gogue's pet projects is distance education, so you can look to the university to make big strides in that direction in the coming years. Computer Science will, of course, be at the forefront of the movement.

Faculty turnover

The department has suffered, as so many have across the country with the explosion of the Internet, the dot com revolution and fierce competition for experienced people. We have lost four faculty in two years (Aluru, Gupta, Wiebe and Hernandez) and only managed to replace one person. In addition the rapid rise in starting faculty salaries for new PhDs led the new head and the Dean to cannibalize one position in order to give the remaining faculty an equity raise that they so richly deserve.

All universities are experiencing similar problems, and state universities like NMSU with their relatively fixed budgets are unable to respond quickly, leading to dissatisfaction and the turnover we have had here. Roger, the new head, has made this his number one priority and has high

hopes of filling the vacancies this Spring.

Enrollment increases

The department has seen a steady increase in both undergraduates and graduates. There are more undergraduate computer science majors than any time in the 1990s (372) and more graduates than any year since 1994 (72). This translates into more students actually graduating than ever before and entering the profession.

We have also seen steady increases in our service courses. About 1000 students take CS110, our computer literacy course, every semester, and we have four full sections of C programming. Our number of student credit hours (taking into account the number of hours in each course) is also at an all-time high: 11,000 per year, compared to 7,700 in 1990. All these numbers mean that we must be doing something right. Our graduates are much sought after by the big companies, and they are well-pleased with the people they hire.

New Arrivals

We have two new babies in the department. Emma was born to Alicia Morales, our coordinator for the Native Americans in Computer Science program. Emma was born prematurely, but is now a healthy 7 pounds and growing. Nalin, a boy, was born to Jing, wife of Desh Ranjan who is on the faculty. He sleeps a lot, but is already growing well. Desh is a very proud father!

The Native American Summer Camp

Last summer the department held its second summer camp for Native American high school students. This program, sponsored by the National Science Foundation as part of a Minority Instituation Infrastucture grant, enables these students to get a taste of college life, and to participate in several activities, central to which is an introduction to college Computer Science. Students do projects in Math and Computer Science and build there own web pages in a writing component. We also take them on field trips,

both academic and fun. The utlimate goal of the program is to encourage these students to attend college and to look at Computer Science as a viable

career. Many of them will be first generation college students, so they are real trail-blazers.

Last year's group was an oustanding bunch of kids who really had a good time. All of them commented that the camp was too short

(three weeks) and many friendships were struck up between students from different reservations and pueblos. The bookends for the camp were two sessions from Project Eagle, two guys from Oklahoma whose aim it is to encourage Native Americans to achieve a balance between their ancient cultures and rituals and the "way of the white man". The students really respond to this, making the camp something to remember for a long time

Congratulations!

√ To Misha Auguston for winning a big grant from the Office of Naval Research. He and other researchers from Indiana University, Purdue University and the Uni- versity of Alabama at Birmingham were awarded $1.5M for work entitled "A framework for seamless interoperation of heterogeneous distributed software components". NMSU's share is $220,000 over the next three years.

√ To Son Tran for winning a startup grant from NASA entitled "Agent development and control verifica- tion using dual charac- terizations". The amount is $12,500 for one year.

√ To Nemecio ('Chito') Chavez for being awarded one of the new AGEP (Alliance for Graduate Education and the Professoriate) scholarships. This award is reserved for minority students whose goal is to get as Ph. D. and enter the academic profession. Since this has been Chito's goal for several years now, this was a natural award. He will receive a $2,000 enhance-ment per semester to his graduate assistentship.

Support for graduate students

The department's grant from the Department of Education to support Graduate Assistants in Areas of National Need (GAANN) has been renewed for a further three years starting in 2000. This grant provides monthly stipends, and lump sums for travel, equipment and books. It is

open only to US citizens and green-card holders and is intended to encourage students to attend graduate school especially when they intend to get a Ph. D. The department currently has six GAANN fellows and is always on the look out for likely candidates.

Mail/Femail

(a cautionary tale)

One day, after I logged in to my CMS account here, I discovered that new mail was waiting for me in my reader. The lengthy message was prefaced by the heading: "From: Mailer@<machine>: Your message could not be sent ..etc Reason: Address un-known..."

Upon scanning this returned letter, I discovered that it had not been written by me at all, and that the intended recipient and sender were thousands of miles away, apparently the unfortunate victims of a random mailer screw-up. The first sentence of that letter, though, I will always remember: "My dearest Janice: At last, we have a method of

Contacts:

Department

web site: http://www.cs.nmsu.edu
graduate student organization:
  http://www.cs.nmsu.edu/~gradrep
email: csoffice@cs.nmsu.edu
telephone: +1 (505) 646 3723
fax: +1 (505) 646 1002
surface mail:
  New Mexico State University
  Department of Computer Science
  P.O. Box 30001, MSC CS
  Las Cruces, NM 88003-0001
parcel deliveries:
  New Mexico State University
  Department of Computer Science
  Science Hall, Rm 123
  Stewart Street
  Las Cruces, NM 88003

University

web site: http://www.nmsu.edu
telephone: +1 (505) 646 0111

Graduate School

web site: http://www.nmsu.edu/~gradcolg
email: gradinfo@nmsu.edu
telephone: +1 (505) 646-2736
fax: +1 (505) 646-7721
surface mail:
  The Graduate School
  P.O. Box 30001, MSC 3G
  New Mexico State University
  as Cruces, New Mexico 88003-8001

Department of Computer Science
New Mexico State University
Las Cruces, NM 88003

TO: