Review of the RHE Computer Science Technology (CTCH) Program

Summary

The Program Review Committee (PRC) presents their review and recommendations regarding the Computer Science Technology (CTCH) program offered at the Chillicothe, Lancaster, and Southern campuses.

Serious concerns were found when the review was undertaken and the reviewers considered that the program was in-jeopardy. The RHE Interim Executive Dean has assured the PRC that these concerns have been or are being addressed. In the light of that assurance, the PRC recommends to UCC that the program is viable.
The Computer Science Technology (CTCH) Program is a program that is in jeopardy. The program is offered independently at the Ohio University-Lancaster, Ohio University-Chillicothe, and the Ohio University-Southern (Ironton) Campuses. The CTCH program prepares students for an entry level position in Information Technology and computer related fields and leads to the Associate in Applied Business (A.A.B.) degree in Computer Science Technology. The student can graduate with an A.A.B. Degree in Computer Science Technology and/or the student can continue into the baccalaureate degree programs in General Business, Communication Studies, Technical and Applied Studies, Communication Systems Management, Information and Telecommunications Systems, or Industrial Communication. Two professional certificates are also offered in Information Technology (IT) and computer networking. Total student enrollment from academic year 2003-2004 through academic year 2010-2011 was 2767 students. The program attracts largely non-traditional (53.5%) white males (76%) over the age of twenty-five.

Concerns and Recommendations

Inconsistent, transient, and inadequate program leadership across the three campuses over an extended period raises questions about the ability of the University to sustain the program, tailor curriculum to student and industry needs, and place students in relevant careers.

The program director is a tenure-track Group I faculty member housed at Southern campus. Currently, neither of the two tenured Group I faculty at Lancaster serves as program director, while Chillicothe lacks a Group I faculty member and program director. None of the three Group I faculty, including one probationary faculty member, reported any RSCA in 2010-11. Only in 2008-09 did every Group I faculty member have some form of RSCA. If tenure is not achieved by the current program director, the program leadership will be in question.

Although many courses taught by adjunct faculty who have appropriate backgrounds and show genuine commitment to the students and program, the students expressed concern that accessibility to adjunct faculty is limited and prevents full engagement in the program.

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1 Prepared in Fall 2012 by Gordon Brooks (Department of Educational Studies) and Deak Arch (Department of Aviation), UCC Academic Review Committee. Internal reviewer site visits completed in Spring, 2012 by Jeff Giesey, Judith Lee, William Shambora, Ron Stephens, Tim Anderson, Tom Scanlon, Ann Paulins, and Eddith Dashiell.

2 Since the review was completed, and this report written, the RHE Interim Executive Dean has assured the Program Review Committee that the concerns that led to this program being noted as in-jeopody have been remedied. The recommendation to UCC is that this program is now viable. See also the attached letters from the RHE Interim Dean and others. David C. Ingram, chair UCC Program Review Committee November 2013.
Resources at the Ohio University-Lancaster Campus are dated and inadequate for sustaining the program. Computers are ten-year-old “hand-me-downs” that can no longer meet the needs of students or support new software. In addition, the campus lacks an onsite dedicated lab to support hands-on networking activities.

Given the serious nature of the state of the program, it is recommended that the Computer Science Technology program undergo a follow-up review in AY 2015-16

Program Review

The Computer Science Technology (CTCH) Program is a program that is offered independently at the Ohio University-Lancaster, Ohio University-Chillicothe, and the Ohio University-Southern (Ironton) Campuses. The CTCH program prepares students for an entry level position in Information Technology and computer related fields and leads to the Associate in Applied Business (A.A.B.) degree in Computer Science Technology. The student can graduate with an A.A.B. Degree in Computer Science Technology and/or the student can continue into the baccalaureate degree programs in General Business, Communication Studies, Technical and Applied Studies, Communication Systems Management, Information and Telecommunications Systems, or Industrial Communication. Two professional certificates are also offered in Information Technology (IT) and computer networking. Total student enrollment from academic year 2003-2004 through academic year 2010-2011 was 2767 students. The program attracts largely non-traditional students (53.5%) and mostly white males (76%) over the age of twenty-five.

Faculty Profile

During the period of the review, only one full-time faculty was employed at the Ohio University-Chillicothe Campus from academic year 2004-2005 through academic year 2007-2008. A retirement recently opened the position, and a search is currently being conducted to fill this full-time faculty position. Ohio University-Lancaster Campus has, throughout the majority of the review period, employed two full-time faculty. Ohio University-Southern Campus has employed one full time faculty during the review period, with the exception of the 2008-2009 academic year. Adjunct faculty are utilized at both the Ohio University-Lancaster and the Ohio University-Southern Campuses. The diversity of the faculty consists of one Caucasian male, one Asian male, and one Caucasian female.

Programmatic Practices

Ohio University-Chillicothe Campus

The Ohio University-Chillicothe Campus hosts fifty-nine program majors. Due to a retirement, as of December 2011, an ongoing search for a full-time faculty replacement was still being conducted. The self-study did not indicate specific workload requirements.

Ohio University-Lancaster Campus
The Ohio University-Lancaster Campus hosts fifty-six program majors. Since the Lancaster Campus does not have a program director, program decisions are determined by the faculty. The advising load is shared evenly by the two associate professors on campus. Each faculty member teaches at least three courses per quarter and the course assignments are based upon the interests of the faculty.

Ohio University-Southern Campus

The Ohio University-Southern Campus hosts thirty-one program majors. All majors are advised by one central faculty member. The full-time faculty member also serves as the CTCH program director for the Southern Campus and teaches two courses per quarter, and is allowed one course deduction per quarter.

Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity

According to the self-study, “Support for faculty research and other scholarly activity is provided by the individual campuses and Regional Higher Education (RHE).” The self-study also indicates that funding to attend conferences and scholarly activity is awarded on a competitive basis. None of the three Group I faculty, including one probationary faculty member, reported any Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity (RSCA) in 2010-11. In only one year of this review period (2008-09) did every Group I faculty member have some form of RSCA.

Resources

Resources are not uniformly adequate across campuses.

Ohio University-Lancaster Campus

Licensing costs for computers and software remain a concern. Equipment is in limited supply and must be relocated to serve student base. Computers are ten-year-old “hand-me-downs” that can no longer meet the needs of students or support new software. No dedicated lab is located on site to support hands-on networking activities.

Ohio University-Southern Campus

Southern: students and faculty found computer lab facilities adequate; students especially praised the TASK lab.

Undergraduate Program Review

The completion of the Computer Science Technology degree program leads to an Associate in Applied Business degree. It is a two-year degree program, first offered in 1985 at Ohio University Lancaster and offered continuously since that date. The CTCH program consists of 97 credit hours. A fulltime student typically works 25 hours a week and takes between 14 - 16 credit hours per quarter.
CTCH students are required to complete a minimum of 97-credit hours of course work to earn the A.A.B. degree, with 45 of those hours coming from outside the CTCH program. Students take a core group of CTCH courses that allow students to gain exposure to several areas of the IT field: programming, databases, web development, networking and systems analysis. Once these requirements are satisfied, students are then able to choose an area in which they wish to concentrate via their choice of electives. With the change from quarters to semesters, the current concentration on programming in the curriculum has been reduced, by lowering the number of required programming courses from three to one. This provides students the opportunity to select additional electives that focus on their chosen area of concentration.

Graduate Program Review

Not applicable.

Concerns and Recommendations

Inconsistent, transient, and inadequate program leadership across the three campuses over an extended period raises questions about the ability to sustain the program, tailor curriculum to student and industry needs, and place students in relevant careers. In terms of teaching, Group I faculty influence and leadership are quite limited: neither of the two tenured Group I faculty at Lancaster serves as program director, while Chillicothe lacks a Group I faculty member and program director, and the Group I faculty member and program director at Southern is a third-year assistant professor. Most courses are taught by adjunct faculty who have appropriate backgrounds and show genuine commitment to the students and program. None of the three Group I faculty, including one probationary faculty member, reported any RSCA in 2010-11. In only one year of this review period (2008-09) did every Group I faculty member have some form of RSCA.

Resources at the Ohio University-Lancaster Campus are dated and inadequate for sustaining the program. Computers are ten-year-old “hand-me-downs” that can no longer meet the needs of students or support new software. In addition, an onsite dedicated lab to support hands-on networking activities is nonexistent.
April 2, 2013

David Ingram, Chair
UCC Program Review Committee
Alden Library
301G Faculty Commons
Athens, OH 45701

Dear David:

The regional deans and I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the concerns about the Associate in Applied Business degree in Computer Science Technology (CTCH) program expressed in the recent UCC review. For the convenience of the UCC members I have summarized the responses of the deans below because, even though the program is offered at three campuses, it is ultimately a single degree program. When you see our collective actions below and our explanation for some misunderstanding in the review process, I am hopeful that you will agree with us that the CTCH program is a good quality program and should no longer be considered “in jeopardy.”

For clarity, I have labeled the categories of concern below:

Program Leadership: The issues raised in the Program Review have been resolved with the appointment of a RHE system-wide coordinator and a campus coordinator at each of the three campuses where the program is offered. There are four full-time faculty in the CTCH program now, three Group I faculty (two tenured) and one Group II faculty.

Age of equipment: Most of the 7-year old computers at the Lancaster campus have been replaced with 4-year old computers. Older computers are required by the nature of the program because one of the program learning objectives is testing and repairing malfunctioning computers. The UCC Review erroneously listed these computers as 10-years old.

Dedicated lab space: There is adequate space for the CTCH program at all campuses but it is not dedicated lab space at most campuses. Creating dedicated labs results in space with little activity for much of the week. We understand from Dean Dennis Irwin that even at the Athens campus, dedicated space is not available in many kindred technology programs. CTCH students have adequate access to networking labs at all campuses whether or not there is dedicated lab space.
Faculty scholarship: The regional campus deans and I recognize that adequate scholarly activity is a necessity for all Group I faculty. During the review period all but one of the three Group I faculty members in this program reported significant scholarly activity. One faculty member making inadequate RSCA progress has been notified in writing of the need to produce scholarship within the next year.

Assessment of Learning Objectives: Formal establishment of learning objectives and the implementation of a process of continuous improvement to ensure that learning objectives are being met is underway for CTCH as well as for all RHE degree programs. We have submitted a timetable for achievement of this task to EVPP Benoit and we have already begun work with the RHE Program Coordinators and University Assessment officials to complete this process.

As noted by each of the regional campus deans, I would also like to express my appreciation to the site visitors, to the UCC Program Review Committee and to all members of the UCC for their time spent on this process and for their helpful guidance. We are fortunate that the issues brought to our attention by the Review have been able to be expeditiously addressed and that we are hopeful that the UCC will no longer consider the program in jeopardy. Regardless of UCC’s final categorization of the CTCH program, I and the regional deans will be more than willing to work with you should the UCC feel that a follow-up review in AY 2015-16 is needed.

Sincerely,

James W. Fonseca
Interim Executive Dean

cc: Martin Tuck, Dean, Chillicothe Campus
MEMORANDUM

To: Dr. Robert Brannan, Chair, UCC Program Review Committee

From: Dr. James M. Smith, Dean, Ohio University Lancaster

Copy: Dr. James W. Fonseca, Executive Dean, Regional Higher Education

Subj: Academic Program Review of Computer Science Technology

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on UCC program review of the A.A.B. in Computer Science Technology. I do not believe the program is in jeopardy based on recent changes in how RHE structures its support for academic programs both at the campus and system level. Specific to the Lancaster campus, issues with some dated equipment noted in the report were improved upon in the summer of 2012 as part of the campus computer maintenance process.

As you may recall from other recent responses to program reviews, the RHE deans restructured leadership of academic programs so that each campus hosting a program has a dedicated campus program coordinator and where the program exists on multiple campuses, a system program coordinator is also appointed. Specific to OUL, Da Zhang serves as the campus coordinator and Christine Wolfe serves as the system program coordinator. Both of these faculty are tenured. It is my understanding that the faculty work well together across campuses as they met in the summer of 2012 and have established a repository for syllabi, identified core content to more clearly communicate important topics for adjunct faculty, discussed ongoing reviews of adjuncts, and even developed elective courses for the major and service courses for the campus. I am pleased to learn of this work by the faculty and the leadership of the tenured faculty member that now serves as the system coordinator.

An area of concern in the report specific to the Lancaster campus pertains to the lab in which the students gain hands-on skills. While the computers students disassemble and simulate repairs on are indeed “hand-me-downs,” the inventory indicates that they are not 10 years old as noted in the report. Twelve of the computers are 7 years old and, while at the end of their life in the lab, they still serve a useful purpose in meeting instructional objectives for courses early in the sequence to develop psychomotor skills in removing delicate chips and boards and inspecting and testing basic hardware that does not change as rapidly, such as power supplies and fans. This summer, eight computers were added
to the CTCH lab inventory that are just over 4 years old that are better suited for advanced work (originally purchased for classroom use in August 2008). I understand this has allowed instruction on Oracle VirtualBox, setting up a virtual environment with MS Server 2012, as well as teaching how to run and configure multiple operating systems such as Linux. Thus, while the computers are dated, it is by design so that oldest computers serve to teach basic skills with little concern if something gets damaged beyond repair. Computers that are approximately 4 years old are ideal as they represent computers that typically need repair in a workplace environment while still allowing fairly current software to be installed and configured. We will work to maintain this rotation so that the computers are in the 4 to 6 year old range, as well as explaining to students why they are learning on computers of different ages.

In addition, this summer I had discussions with both tenured faculty at OUL regarding preparing a budget proposal for ongoing equipment upgrades, as well as the requirements for a dedicated lab. Space is very limited at Lancaster for technology programs. Several programs need space at OUL and I have been working with Dean Irwin regarding two Russ College programs housed at OUL. While some progress has been made with one program returning to Athens, future progress may free space for a dedicated lab. In the short term, one of the largest issues with the current lab may be easily resolved by having dedicated workstations within the lab and/or having work stations on wheels. I fully expect a short term solution can be reached while we work on a more long term solution.

Regarding UCC noting a lack of research or scholarly activity, one of the tenured faculty at Lancaster is pursuing completion of a doctorate and the other has been active in professional development at discipline related workshops and technology conferences. It is my understanding these activities were noted on their annual reports. I understand and support a focused effort on completion of a terminal degree.

I hope that these comments provide information that was not known to the committee at the time of the review. It is my intention to continue to work with CTCH faculty to grow the program and to support its instructional equipment and faculty professional development and scholarship needs.
January 3, 2013

Dr. Rob Brannan
Chair, Program Review Committee
University Curriculum Council (UCC)

Dear Rob:

In responding to the Academic Program Review of the Associate of Applied Business degree program in Computer Technology (CTCH), I would again like to thank the review team that visited the Southern Campus—Professors Jeff Giesey, Judith Lee, and William Shambora—for their thorough and thoughtful approach to the program review process. Their professionalism was much appreciated by the Southern Campus faculty and staff with whom they met.

Second, I would like to offer my perspective on the Program Review Committee’s (PRC) findings. The committee’s concern with program leadership seems well warranted, as the probationary Group I faculty member at the Southern Campus found himself writing much of the self-study by default, despite the presence of tenured faculty members at another campus. Although communication between and among program faculty occurs on a consistent basis, better coordination of the program through well-established leadership would better serve both the program’s majors and the university. It is my hope that the recent naming of a Regional Higher Education CTCH Coordinator will address this issue—at least in large measure.

An additional shared concern raised by the PRC is that of sufficient research, scholarly, and creative activity (RSCA) by the Group I faculty, which is of significant consequence for probationary faculty. I share that concern, particularly because there are significant funding opportunities for professional development at the campus and RHE levels. When the PRC states that “funding to attend conferences and scholarly activity is awarded on a competitive basis,” that is true of some funding sources—most notably the RHE funding pools. At the Southern Campus, each Group I faculty member has access to targeted professional development funds sufficient to cover some conference activity: all the faculty member has to do is to provide the OUS Faculty Development Committee with a justification for the proposed activity. In addition to that funding source, the faculty member can apply for funds
from a general faculty development pool that has not been exhausted in the last three years. In addition, every faculty member at the Southern Campus who has presented or published within the 2011 or 2012 academic years earned a course release for AY 2013. Given these sources of funds and the course release, there is ample support for a faculty member who wishes to be RSCA active. While I believe that some RSCA activities by CTCH faculty may have been insufficiently highlighted in the self-study, the PRC’s concern with the level of RSCA activity for Southern Campus faculty is well-considered. RSCA activities will be closely monitored by the campus administration.

I am pleased to read that the PRC considers Southern Campus support for the program to be adequate, as the Technology Committee has led an aggressive upgrade campaign in the last three years. It is also gratifying that the TASC lab at Southern was singled out for praise by CTCH students, as it has been a source both of academic support and practical experience for them. Given an infusion of one time only funds that enabled the program to gain CISCO training certification, one reasonably might argue that support for the program has been more than adequate—it has been sufficient to enhance the program.

In closing, I wish to applaud the University Curriculum Council for the efficiency with which this program review was conducted. I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the review and wish to commend the Council on its commitment to revise the process in order to make it more data driven. We at the Southern Campus appreciate the additional perspectives of our programs the review process provides and will address the concerns it raises.

Sincerely,

William R. Willan, PhD
Dean
Ohio University Southern
January 9, 2013

Dr. Rob Brannan
Chair, Program Review Committee
University Curriculum Council (UCC)

Dear Rob:

Thank you for sending the draft of the internal program review document for the Computer Science Technology (CTCH) Programs offered on the Lancaster, Chillicothe and Southern campuses. As you know, completion of this program results in an Associate of Applied Business degree. I also would like to thank professors Tim Anderson and Ronald Stephens, the reviewers from the UCC who conducted the site visit to the Ohio University Chillicothe campus. I greatly appreciate such a complete and thorough review of our program.

As you know, the internal review of the program reports that the program at each campus is “In Jeopardy” and the concerns expressed by the committee dealt mainly with a lack of consistent program leadership, inadequate faculty staffing and facilities on certain campuses as well as a lack of research productivity from the current group I faculty who staff the program. As many of these concerns were specific to certain campuses which offer the program, and the deans for the other campuses have submitted separate letters of response, I will tailor my response to the review towards concerns and recommendations which are specific to the Chillicothe Campus.

It is true that during the majority of the review period and during the campus site visit, the Chillicothe campus did not have a faculty member to coordinate the CTCH program. The faculty member who previously served as the coordinator for the program had retired and had not been replaced. When I arrived on the campus in May of 2011, the program was being coordinated by Patricia Griffith who was serving the campus as the Director of Information Technology and also taught as a Group III (adjunct) faculty member in the CTCH program. A position request for a Group II faculty member to teach in and coordinate the program was approved, and a search for the position began in the Fall Quarter 2011. After one failed search, the position was filled from a second search by the end of the 2011-12 academic year. Mr. Joseph Triplett was hired on the Chillicothe campus to fill the position and began his duties during the 2012-13 academic year. Mr. Triplett has over ten years of experience as an Information Technology Specialist and taught CTCH courses as an adjunct faculty member on the Chillicothe campus since 2001. He has an Associate and Bachelors degree in Accounting and Business Administration respectively and a Master of Science degree in Computer Information Technology. I am confident with Mr. Triplett joining the faculty as an Assistant Professor and Program Coordinator for CTCH, the program on the Chillicothe campus now has strong leadership and guidance for the future and he will effectively offer a quality up-to-date CTCH curriculum for our students.

From my review of the internal report, the Program Review Committee seems to support an expectation/requirement for group I faculty to staff and coordinate the CTCH programs on each individual campus. I, personally, very much disagree with the expectation of group I faculty staffing being a requirement for offering the CTCH program or any other associate degree program on the regional campuses. My reasoning is as follows. Typically, students seek 2 year associate degrees (such as CTCH) on the regional campuses in order to increase their career options for employability within the
campus’ service region. As a result, the campuses must maintain a certain level of flexibility in offering these 2 year associate degree programs in order to match the workforce needs and employment opportunities within the region. What is a discipline in demand within the region one year may not be the next. A university requirement/expectation to staff these programs with group I faculty would significantly reduce the ability for the campuses to maintain this flexibility. Staffing the programs with well qualified group II faculty, who have a strong emphasis for instruction, maintains this flexibility and allows the program coordinator to focus more of their attention on recruiting, marketing, professional development and maintaining/growing the enrollment of the program.

The review committee also expressed a concern regarding the accessibility of adjunct faculty who teach in the program. First, I would like to comment regarding the value of having adjunct faculty or discipline specific “practitioners” serve as instructors in the associate degree programs. Many students are attracted to these programs because they want to have instructors who have practical experience in the discipline. These practitioners typically have active professional careers in the discipline they teach, or are recently retired, and have a great deal of valuable practical or “real life” experiences they can add to the classroom curriculum.

Because they are not “permanent” (group I or II) faculty at the university, accessibility of these instructors to the students is at times an issue, but we stress to these faculty the importance and expectation of maintaining adequate and consistent office hours on campus and communicating this information to the students in their classes. In addition, the campus provides office space for group III faculty to meet with students during their office hours. The campus administration encourages students to report if a faculty member is not maintaining adequate/consistent office hours and if this is indeed the case, the campus Associate Dean will approach the faculty member in order to address this issue. Persistent problems in this area would result in the faculty member not being rehired by the campus.

Finally, there was a comment in the report that the Chillicothe Campus Self Study did not indicate specific workload requirements for the faculty. As the group III (adjunct) faculty are hired on a course by course basis, and are paid based on the credit hour weight of each course, these faculty members are not covered by the Regional Higher Education teaching workload policy. During the review period, the group I and II faculty (group II faculty are typically hired at 0.8 fte) who teach in the program were expected to teach a 12 credit hour load each quarter; the standard workload expectation for RHE faculty.

In conclusion, I very much appreciate the efforts of the program reviewers to assess the Associate of Applied Business degree programs offered on the Chillicothe campus and the opportunity to respond to their findings and recommendations. This process will be invaluable to each of these programs as they plan for the future.

Sincerely,

Martin T. Tuck PhD
Dean
Ohio University Chillicothe