

CIS Task Force Summary

October, 2009

The central mission of CIS is to deliver, promote and enhance research and education in the Computing and Information Sciences across Cornell. The main focus of our strategy going forward is to strengthen the three core CIS departments and programs: Information Science (IS), Statistical Science (SS) and Computer Science (CS) – transforming IS and SS into full-fledged departments and reinforcing strength in CS. There are two key motivations for our focus on these three units. First, each of these is a broadly recognized discipline represented by departments and schools at peer institutions (e.g., Berkeley, CMU, MIT, Stanford and Washington all have strong programs in at least two of these three areas). Second, each of these programs offers undergraduate majors across multiple colleges, as well as having strong multi-disciplinary research ties with a broad range of departments – thereby each explicitly serving the cross-campus mission of CIS. Changes in the Department of Statistical Sciences will need to be worked out with the Deans of several Colleges. There is a separate group of faculty looking specifically at issues and recommendations for Statistics. Transforming Information Science from a program to a department can largely be accomplished by building on the existing strong collaboration between CIS and the Communication Department in CALS.

This more focused strategy represents a partial change from the previous strategy for CIS, which was to pursue opportunities with Departments and Colleges as broadly as possible. This change is in part a reflection of current budget realities, but is also a recognition of the fact that regardless of budget the largest impact will come from partnering with the Colleges in selected high-visibility areas where peer institutions have comparable departments and programs. In focusing on these areas, CIS will still maintain a broad reach across many Colleges and Departments at Cornell, and promote interdisciplinary work, but will now do so by partnering with one of the three CIS units (CS, IS and SS). For instance, IS has strong ties with Comm, Econ, ORIE, Psych, and Soc; both CS and Statistics are significant participants in Comp Bio; and CS is an important player in Computational Science and Engineering.

In addition to focus on the three core programs, there are several key cross-cutting areas where CIS will specifically seek to partner with the Colleges in building ties with the core programs. These key areas include Digital Arts, Computational Biology, and Computational Science and Engineering. The key areas are distinguished from the core CIS programs in several regards. In particular, nationally these areas are not generally represented by departments or undergraduate majors, but rather largely by graduate programs and research centers. For instance, Computational Biology efforts generally bridge multiple departments, at Cornell this has primarily been BS&CB and CS (and there has been a good history at Cornell of cross-department research collaborations and coordinated hiring in Comp Bio).