Insider Report on the Recent EGSA Elections

Irene Langkilde and Jafar Adibi

On Wednesday, April 30th, elections for the Engineering Graduate Student Association (EGSA) were held. Jafar Adibi and Irene Langkilde had previously submitted a Statement of Intent (copied below) in order to run for the positions of president and vice-president. They won the elections with a unanimous vote (partly because no one else came forward to run against them.) The outgoing president afterwards told them that he had decided not to run because he was impressed with their Statement, and also wanted to give new people the opportunity to be involved.

Jafar and Irene have both been involved in organizing and leading other groups. Jafar organized the Iranian Graduate Student Association (which among other activities, raised $10,000 to help victims of recent Iranian earthquakes), and also the International Students Relief Effort Council at USC. He is also active in some charity groups, and has initiated different multi-cultural events and programs on topics such as Persian Literature and the Modern Iranian Cinema.

During this last year Irene organized LDSGraLA, the Association of Latter-Day Saint Graduate Students in Los Angeles (an organization for Mormon grad students attending universities in the LA area), and also currently serves as president of the women’s organization for the USC unit of her church. This past semester she has been involved in weekly one-on-one tutoring at McKinley Elementary School in Santa Monica for 5th graders, and has also been in charge of organizing informal seminars for the Natural Language Processing group here at ISI.

Jafar and Irene both feel that there are many benefits from organizing and networking among people who have interests in common. Such organizations offer the power and ability to influence decisions, make positive changes, and improve the general well-being of the group’s members and hopefully also of society in general as well. EGSA elections. They hope through EGSA to work towards improving many aspects of engineering grads’ lives here at USC, and plan especially to:

- build networks and friendships among grad students
- provide financial support for students to attend conferences at which they are presenting papers
- improve the organization and facilities of the Seaver Science (and ISI) Libraries
- act as a liaison in relations between students and the university
- establish career connections with alumni, industry, academics, and start-up businesses
- bolster the quality and reputation of USC’s Engineering and Computer Science programs, and help to recruit top-quality students

They appreciate especially the support of faculty, researchers, staff, and their fellow grad students in the ISD division here at ISI. They welcome any suggestions, comments, or ideas. They hope with your help to fulfill this vision of accomplishment in the upcoming year.

PROPOSAL FOR OFFICE ON EGSA COUNCIL

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Jafar Adibi as President
Irene Langkilde as Vice-President

STATEMENT OF INTENT

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The purpose of the Engineering Graduate Student Association (EGSA) is to promote academic, social, career opportunities for USC engineering graduates, and serve as a liaison with the university. To achieve these goals, we propose to support the following activities and objectives:
Academic
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- Promote student participation at conferences
- Provide funding to graduate students for paper presentation
- Encourage students in writing solo authorship papers
- Organize company tours
- Organize scientific talks
- Encourage group studies
- Encourage women as a minority in the Engineering School

Social:

- Sport activities
- Social gatherings
- Help graduate students get to know each other
- Subsidize tickets for school events
- Inform graduate students of interesting non-EGSA events

Networking

- Develop rapport with USC Alumni
- Develop rapport with industry
- Introduce Graduate students to startup companies and innovative career options
- Promote use of the Career Center
- Co-operate with other graduate students association at USC
- Co-operate with other Graduate Student Associations at UCLA, Caltech, UC Irvine, CalState schools

liaison with University

- Automate student tracking and access to records by administrative staff
- Improve registration procedure (ex: automate D-clearance)

Promote Engineering School's Reputation:
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- Report graduate student awards and accomplishments in campus and outside media
- Help recruit top students to the engineering graduate program

Networking

- Develop rapport with USC Alumni
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The Ariadne Project
Craig Knoblock

Perhaps you have heard something about the Ariadne project and wondered what it is about. The goal of this project is to be able to take a set of Web sources and quickly assemble them into an application that provides efficient integrated access to these sources. The name Ariadne comes from Greek mythology, where Ariadne gave Theseus the thread used to find his way out of the Minotaur’s labyrinth. The research on this project will focus on developing machine learning, planning, and modeling techniques to be able to rapidly construct wrappers to access Web sources.
and then efficiently process queries against these sources. Another related thrust of this project will focus on developing trainable information management agents that will build on this infrastructure to allow users to rapidly construct agents for their own Web tasks.

It is not a coincidence that the project bears some resemblance to the SIMS project since it is a spinoff of SIMS that focuses on the Web instead of more traditional databases and knowledge bases. The project will build on much of the infrastructure already developed for SIMS, including the modeling language and the use of Loom for describing sources. In addition, Ariadne will be compatible with SIMS and provide SIMS with the capability of accessing Web sources by sending subqueries to an Ariadne mediator.

There are now eleven people, soon to be thirteen, working on various pieces of the Ariadne project. While I have been named the "project leader," the project is in fact a collaboration between Steve Minton and me. For those of you that were not aware of our long history, Steve and I started working together almost 14 years ago at CMU, with a short 7 year break while Steve spent some time at NASA Ames. In addition to the two of us, the other people working on the project are described below. Some of these people, including both Steve and me, will continue to play an active role in the SIMS project.

Grad Students

- Jose Luis Ambite is working on the Ariadne planner based on a new approach to planning described in a paper to be presented at AAAI this year.
- Naveen Ashish, who is at Bell Labs for the summer, already developed an initial wrapper toolkit and has started work on techniques for caching and prefetching of Web data.
- Ion Muslea is working on machine learning techniques for rapidly constructing wrappers.
- Sheila Tejada is working on the problem of constructing models for integrating Web sources.
- Cenk Gazen, who will be working here for the summer starting June 15, will be investigating the use of Graphplan and SATplan for efficient query planning.

Researchers

- Andrew Philpot, who is still working on the SIMS project, is also working on the problem of building wrappers for Web pages containing catalogs, such as the General Services Administration web pages. This is part of a larger joint project with Peter Will's division on electronic commerce.
- Lars Asker, who is a visitor that is also working at JPL, is working closely with Steve on machine learning techniques for locating information in large text pages, such as company reports.
- Jay Modi, who just finished his B.S. at CMU and will be starting at the end of June, will be working on tools for constructing information management agents.

Summer Interns

- Venk Natarajan, who is currently an undergraduate at CMU, is working for the summer on a graphical interface for the wrapper toolkit.
- Hunter Payne, who is also an undergraduate at CMU (notice a pattern?), is working on various aspects of query processing.

Undergraduate

- Joshua Margulis, who is a USC undergraduate and has an IMSC undergraduate fellowship, is working on building various Ariadne applications.

A more detailed description of the project, several papers, and an on-line demo are all available from the Ariadne Web site: http://www.isi.edu/ariadne. The project was featured on CNN recently and we are working on converting the video to Quicktime and placing it on the Web site. Check out the site and try out our demo.

New Faces in ISD

We are pleased to announce ISD's new arrivals:

Bruce Jakeway is a graduate student from Trinity Western Univ. in Langley, B.C., who is working with Ed Hovy and the Machine Translation group for the Summer. Bruce is no stranger to ISI. This is actually his second visit.

Joshua Margulis is a USC undergraduate and has an IMSC undergraduate fellowship, who is working on building various Ariadne applications.
Karine Megerdoomian is a visiting instructor from USC's University Park Campus, who is helping Bonnie Glover-Stalls and the Machine Translation Group with Persian Translation.

Venk Natarajan is currently an undergraduate a CMU, who is working for the summer on a graphical interface for the wrapper toolkit.

Hunter Payne is an undergraduate at CMU who is working on various aspects of query processing.

Diana Sidarkeviciute is a visitor from The Royal Institute in Stockholm. She is working with Lewis Johnson on the MediaDoc project, developing tools for visualizing JAVA programs.

Welcome one and all!

We look forward to hearing from each of them more personally in the next issue.

AI Student Research Forum

Last spring semester the ISD graduate students organized a student forum, where we could meet weekly to discuss current research issues and receive feedback and advice from our peers. We have covered a variety of topics so far, such as, knowledge representation and acquisition, constraint satisfaction, natural language processing, and planning. Several ISD researchers have been invited to participate in our meetings. They have enriched our discussions and provided us with different perspectives and insights on the research issues. We hope that ISD researchers will continue to take part in our future discussions. This semester we have also begun a joint presentation program with the AI graduate students at UCLA. If you have any suggestions or questions about the student forum please send them to: aigrads@isi.edu.

Our URL is http://www.isi.edu/isd/ai-grads

Upcoming ISI AI Seminars:
There are no seminars scheduled for the next few weeks, due to the number of recruiting talks that have already been planned.

Please see the Artificial Intelligence Seminar Series Web page at: http://www.isi.edu/~gil/isi-ai-seminar.html

ISD Tidbits
Congratulations to Bonghan Cho!
Bonghan Cho formally graduated from the University of Southern California, with a Doctorate in Computer Science, on Friday, May 9, 1997.

Fairwell to Eric Melz
Eric Melz will be heading to Pittsburgh, PA to continue his computer science studies at Carnegie Mellon University at the end of the Summer. He will be greatly missed by Division 3, especially the LOOM group. We wish him the best!

ISD Birthday Celebrations

July 1997

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Computer Trivia

1. When did the computer first make its appearance as a main character in the movies? Was it in Gog, Desk Set, or Colosus: The Forbin Project?

2. What famous actor tried to steal IBM customers away to Apple Computers in an early Apple II TV ad: Alan Alda, Kevin Costner, or Clint Eastwood?

3. In Star Wars, was R2D2 an actual working robot, a hollow robot operated by a little person, or a computer-animation image?

4. In the comic strip Doonesbury, what computer did Mark learn to program: The PDP-11/70, the Macintosh, or the IBM PC?

5. What leading man was attacked by robot spiders in the movie Runaway - Tom Selleck, Tom Hanks, or Tom Cruise?

Computer Trivia Answers

1. Gog
2. Kevin Costner
3. A hollow robot operated by a little person
4. The PDP-11/70
5. Tom Selleck