



Dear President Smatresk, Dean Sandgren, members of the university committees, Chancellor Klaich, Chairman Leavitt, members of the NSHE Board of Regents and other interested parties:

I am writing to you over my concern, my disappointment and my anger over the report that UNLV may eliminate the Informatics program due to the State budget constraints. I fully realize that in this economic recession, measures have to be taken but I urge you to consider that cutting this department is a horrendous means for achieving the goal. While I cannot argue what other departments have to offer, and am sure you have all received enough statistical information to hopefully reason why it should not be cut, I would like to share with you my thoughts about the benefits of this program.

First, I have had the distinct privilege of being a graduate student in the Informatics program, working towards a Masters degree, since Fall of 2008, and have since turned my studies towards Human Computer Interaction. Professionally, I am the Director of Research & Creative Services for a local technology company, a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner and preferred vendor, whose business is providing advanced solutions in the webcasting market. Most recently we supported Microsoft and NBC as webcasting encoders and digital asset managers for the 2010 Winter Olympics amongst other recognizable events. Frankly, there was no other choice of a graduate program for me, and finding this particular program in a local university was an unbelievable stroke of luck. I am not a computer scientist despite programming on a regular basis, nor am I a business manager, though I supervise all technical projects at my company, and I am not an information systems person, though I deal with computers all day.

What I do at my job is a little of all the above and more than anything, being able to apply how humans react and deal with technology, now commonly called User Experience (UX). This is the very core of HCI, so hopefully you can understand the fortune of having such a current and relevant program here. In fact, there are few programs that even offer this level of instruction in Informatics and HCI across the USA. You might ask if a program like HCI is important when compared to other more traditional engineering programs like CompSci but I would urge you that it is extremely relevant in today's market and economy - even Microsoft saw fit to employ an HCI expert as Principal Researcher of Microsoft Research (ACM SIGCHI recipient Bill Buxton) - the ones responsible for things like Surface, Photosynth and Silverlight. And though I don't personally deal with cyber-security as a primary responsibility, the fact that this program has NSA-CNSS certification is an asset that they cannot afford to waste.

As for my company, online video is quickly becoming the next big thing. iStreamPlanet, as well as another that I work for part-time (I teach web design and user experience courses at the Art Institute - so I think I have a double need for this program), split the cost of my tuition - THAT'S how interested they are in me completing it. But more than that, Las Vegas is completely deficient in technically skilled staffers. We have attempted to import candidates from out of state, only to meet with much resistance and now have to consider moving research and development operations

out of Las Vegas. That we have been here for 9 years and now have to consider leaving is a significant issue for me both professionally and academically.

Second, I have had the honor of being a part-time instructor at UNLV for the most recent and the current semesters, teaching HCI-related cognate studies in Web Design and Web Security to undergraduates. As I also teach at ALLV (more technical and vocationally oriented) I can tell you that the students in the Informatics program are eager, they are responsive and they are well trained - not as programmers and computer scientists, but as technical people with a wide range of skills. These are the abilities needed for the current generation of people-oriented technologies (like webcasting and information security) and there are few other programs in the country that can provide this level and variety of instruction. Losing this program ... you might as well just tell all the students - good, high achievement, tuition paying, LOCAL students - that they should go out of state to get an education and at the same time remind yourselves that Nevada would LOSE those indispensable resources.

For me, I had hoped to continue on to a PhD after completing the Masters program but should it be eliminated, I will have to seriously consider leaving the region and going somewhere that it is still offered.

Please, let's keep the program, let's keep a very relevant skill in the state and continue to offer a necessary solution to a very current need. I hope you can consider my comments - as a taxpaying citizen of Nevada, as a technical professional trying to learn more and bring more business to the State, as a teacher in another institution who knows that this program has value at other schools, and as an instructor at UNLV who knows that the students here will be the future of Nevada on their very near graduations.

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