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Educational Policies Committee Program Proposal, College of Science, November 4, 2011

Utah State University

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Section I: Request

Utah State University (USU) proposes an administrative move of the Department of Computer Science (CS) from the College of Science to the College of Engineering.

Section II: Need

In May, 2011, President Albrecht requested that the Department of Computer Science (CS) explore an administrative move to the College of Engineering, which would strengthen both the CS department and programs within the College of Engineering by taking advantage of the considerable synergism between CS programs and engineering programs in areas of teaching and research. Among the synergistic activities that can be enhanced through closer relationships between CS and engineering programs are the development of advanced software and hardware systems to support space-based research; artificial intelligence applications for autonomous systems involved in remote sensing and control of complex robotic systems; advances in cyber security involving hardware and software systems, and improved hydrological modeling involving large hydrologic and geographic information systems and digital elevation models. Faculty in the Department of Computer Science have engaged in several months of discussion regarding this restructuring, and many are enthusiastic about a move to the College of Engineering.

In other universities, CS programs are often housed within colleges of engineering. For example, among the western land-grant peer institutions, computer science is housed in the colleges of engineering at Montana State University, Oregon State University, University of Alaska – Fairbanks, University of California Davis, University of Idaho, University of Nevada Reno, University of Wyoming and Washington State University. CS is housed within the College of Engineering at the University of Utah. Moving the CS Department into the College of Engineering will strengthen all programs by improving the relationships between computer science and closely related engineering disciplines to better prepare computer scientists, computer engineers, and more broadly, engineers interested in computing, for leadership positions in industry, government and academia.

Section III: Institutional Impact

Under the proposed new structure, the College of Engineering will comprise six departments: Biological Engineering; Civil and Environmental Engineering; Computer Science; Electrical and Computer Engineering; Engineering and Technology Education; and Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering. Placement of CS in the College of Engineering will strengthen the academic offerings and research programs in many synergistic areas of computer science and engineering. It is not anticipated that the proposed move will have any negative impact on student enrollment or program accreditation.

Section IV: Finances

The proposed restructuring will not require any new physical facilities or fiscal resources.