



University of Pittsburgh

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Patricia E. Beeson
Provost
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January 27, 2016

Dear Colleagues:

It is with great appreciation for all he has contributed to the School of Information Sciences and to the University that I write to let you know that Ron Larsen recently informed me of his plans to step down as Dean of the School of Information Sciences and return to his teaching and research. His decision to step down from the deanship in the summer of 2017 will conclude fifteen years of successful administrative leadership and service to the School and to the University.

Ron earned his PhD in computer science from the University of Maryland College Park in 1981, his master's degree in applied physics at The Catholic University of America in 1971, and a bachelor's degree in engineering sciences from Purdue University in 1968. His early career was spent at NASA working in several capacities, including positions as a mathematician, an aerospace technologist, and a program manager. Among his achievements was the launching of NASA's computer science research program in the early 1980's. Soon after earning his PhD, he joined the faculty at his alma mater, the University of Maryland College Park, and while there he assumed several administrative and leadership roles including Assistant Vice Chancellor for Computing for the university system, Associate Director for Information Technology for the university libraries, as well as Deputy Director of the Maryland Information and Network Dynamics Lab, and Executive Director of the Maryland Applied Information Technology Initiative, a consortium of 50 departments in 9 universities working to expand the pipeline of graduates in information technology. During his tenure at Maryland, he also served nearly four years at the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) as Assistant Director of the Information Technology Office. We were fortunate to recruit Ron as Dean in 2002.

Ron has served as dean during a time of immense change in the field of information sciences, and Ron's visionary leadership of SIS during this time has been an essential component of the School's success. Under his leadership, SIS has been transformed from a departmentalized faculty to a unified information school ("iSchool"). The reorganized school creates an environment conducive to collaborative research and education among SIS faculty and between SIS faculty and scholars outside the School. Under his leadership, the School's programs have grown and their reputation expanded, with several program specializations ranked among the very best in the country, and external funding to the School's faculty has tripled during his tenure as dean.

Ron is currently coordinating the next major reorganization of the University's data, information, and computing programs in collaboration with the chair of the Computer Science (CS) Department, Professor Taieb Znati. Under Ron's shared leadership with Professor Znati, SIS and CS faculty are developing a proposal for a new academic unit that will incorporate both faculties into a single academic and administrative unit, consolidating academic programs, capitalizing on existing strengths, enhancing collaborations, and creating an intellectual hub for computing and information sciences at Pitt.

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During his tenure as dean of SIS, Ron joined four other deans of major information schools (Syracuse, Drexel, University of Washington, and University of Michigan) in 2003 to meet regularly to share experiences in shaping the evolution of their schools. By 2005, that fledgling organization had grown to include ten North American universities. At that point, Ron helped to found the iSchools Consortium, which has since grown to include 65 universities on five continents and which hosts an annual international conference.

It has been a pleasure to work with Ron, both in his role as director of SIS and as a member of the Council of Deans. His vision, leadership, and commitment to the University's broader goals have been an indispensable part of Pitt's recent progress over the last fifteen years, and he will be deeply missed. As he continues his work as dean and professor of SIS through the 2016-17 academic year, I know you all will join me as we celebrate his outstanding service to SIS, and thank him for his ongoing dedication to the University of Pittsburgh. This summer, a search committee will be formed to identify Dr. Larsen's successor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Patricia E. Beeson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Patricia E. Beeson

PEB/dps