

Computer Science Canada (CS-CAN) / Informatique Canada (Info-CAN)

A Proposal

Introduction

Canada lacks a national computer science organization that represents all aspects of computer science and effectively represents the interests of the discipline at the national level. In May 2015 CACS/AIC and the NSERC CS Liaison committee agreed to establish a working group to develop a proposal for such an organization. This working group has been active since September 2015. This document summarizes the proposal for the new organization that is currently under development.

Background

Academic computer science is largely underrepresented at the national level and our story is largely untold. We don't have the same lobbying presence in Ottawa as other scientific disciplines and we have often found ourselves at a disadvantage when it comes to funding. Yet we have a number of world class research departments and many smaller departments that more than pull their weight in research and the training of highly qualified personnel. In addition, we need to convince the public that computer science is more than a viable career path and address the gender imbalance in our departments. This cannot be done by individual departments on their own or by groups representing individual sub-disciplines. Instead, we need a single organization that provides a unified voice for computer science and can advance our causes at the national level.

One of our main challenges is producing an organization that represents the breadth of departments that we have in Canada and the wide range of activities they undertake. The organization must have a strong voice on research and at the same time advocate for the role that we play in the development of talent for the IT industry. We need to reach out to high schools to encourage students to enroll in our programs and communicate the rich history of our field and the contributions that we have made to the development of computer science. The new organization must encompass all the activities of our departments and cannot concentrate on a single aspect of them.

The New Organization

The proposed name of the new organization is Computer Science Canada (CS-CAN) / Informatique Canada (Info-CAN). This name has already been registered and appropriate domains names have been secured. The mission statement for the new organization is:

The mission is to foster excellence in Computer Science research and higher education in Canada, drive innovation and benefit society.

The roles played by the new organization include, but are not limited to:

- Advocate for Computer Science within Canada
 - Research funding

- CS education
- Public policy
- Promote Computer Science
 - Awards
 - Undergraduate and graduate recruiting
- Connect with Industry
 - Research speed dating

These roles will evolve as the organization becomes established and the interests of its members is determined.

Membership

There are four classes of membership:

- Department – Includes all the faculty members in the department along with its students.
- Individual – All the individual faculty members in the Department members in addition to faculty in related disciplines whose departments are not members of the organization.
- Student – Student in computer science or a related field.
- Industry – Individuals from industry who support the goals of the organization.

The department membership class mirrors the membership structure of CRA where membership is at the departmental level. It is assumed that most of the individual and student members will come in through a departmental membership and not through individual application. The addition of a separate individual membership class allows for faculty members in related disciplines to join the organization. This will be attractive to faculty members supported by the NSERC CS committee who are not in a computer science department.

We think it is important to have student involved in the organization early in their careers. They will be encouraged to join the organization as student members and they will have a position of the organization's board. Similarly, the industry membership class encourages industrial participation in the organization. This membership class is also open to individuals in government departments and research laboratories.

Organization

The activities of the new organization is governed by an elected board, an executive and a number of standing committees. The composition of the board includes:

- One student elected by the student members of the organization.
- One industry member elected by the industry members of the organization.
- X individual members elected by the department members, with one vote per department.
- Y individual members elected by the individual members with the condition that $Y \geq 2X$

The board constitution attempts to balance the representation of the small and large departments. If all the board members were directly elected by the individual members there is the possibility that the larger departments will dominate the board. To counter this a number of the board

members are elected on the basis of one vote per department, treating all departments the same regardless of size.

Board members are elected for a three year term and approximately one third of the board positions will be up for election each term. A board member can serve for two consecutive terms, after which they must be off the board for three years before they can be elected again. A nominations committee will be responsible for soliciting and recruiting a slate of nominees for each election. The nominations committee will attempt to maintain a balance on the board with respect to department size, region, gender and PhD vs. non-PhD granting departments, so the board is representative of the organization's membership.

The executive consists of the following members:

- President – directly elected by the individual members.
- Vice-President – selected from the board members.
- Treasurer – selected from the board members.
- Secretary – selected from the board members.
- Immediate Past President – automatic after the election of a new president

The executive members have the same term constraints as the board members.

The initial set of standing committees for the organization are:

- Advocacy Committee
- Awards Committee
- Communications Committee
- Departmental Affairs
- Diversity Committee
- Education Committee
- Nominations Committee
- NSERC Interaction Committee
- Outreach Committee
- Research Committee

It is assumed that board members will be actively involved in these committees either as the committee chair or co-chair. Committee membership is open to all members of the organization and the committee chair will be tasked with recruiting members and reporting the committee membership to the board. The department affairs committee will be responsible for the annual department heads meeting, which will be a continuation of as this aspect of CACS/AIC activities.