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HerCDM offers opportunities for female students in the college to network, socialize, volunteer and more. Read about the organization on page 3.
Building on success

The 2014-15 academic year is the 20th anniversary of the College of Computing and Digital Media (CDM)—as measured from its origins as the School of Computer Science, Telecommunications and Information Systems (CTI), which itself developed out of the Department of Computer Science—and it’s fair to say that the college has come a long way.

If you were here at the beginning, you will remember that our building at 243 S. Wabash Ave., known at the time as the Administration Center, had only a few floors dedicated to our operation. We offered one bachelor’s degree, four master’s degrees and a PhD program and had 28 full-time faculty members. By the end of the 2013-14 academic year, our footprint extended to the entire building—now known as the CDM Building—and we have expanded onto some floors in the DePaul Center and the Daley Building, as well as added a suite of classrooms in Lincoln Park. Last year also saw the creation of new space and faculty couldn’t come at a better time. The addition of new space and faculty couldn’t come at a better time.

In academia, summer is a time to reflect on the past, present and future. The 2014-15 academic year is the 20th anniversary of the College of Computing and Digital Media (CDM)—as measured from its origins as the School of Computer Science, Telecommunications and Information Systems (CTI), which itself developed out of the Department of Computer Science—and it’s fair to say that the college has come a long way.

The new academic year brings more of … everything. We have just opened a new space for CDM. The fifth floor of the Daley Building contains four computer labs/classrooms and specialized classrooms for illustration/drawing and capstone/collaboration courses. Spaces to support student projects and co-curricular activities include a physical computing lab, an interactive design lab and a creative commons. We have just launched a master’s degree in health informatics, a new health care concentration in our rapidly growing MS in predictive analytics and a new certificate in analytics. This year, we will explore adding to our portfolio in the area of design, already represented by degrees in graphic design, human–computer interaction, game development, and interactive and social media. To support growth, maintain quality and continue to be at the forefront of developments in computing and media, we have also added several faculty members with expertise in a wide range of fields.

The growth we continue to experience is a testament to the true essence of CDM: proactive creation of high-quality programs that span the entire landscape of computing and media and meet the demands of students and the marketplace, delivered by an exceptionally qualified cadre of full-time and adjunct faculty. This has been, and will continue to be, the hallmark of CDM.

Creating community: Meet the dynamic women of HerCDM

As a freshman, Brenda Maya couldn’t help but notice the lack of females in her computer science courses. “During my first quarter at DePaul, it sometimes made me feel a bit alienated,” she recalls. While more women are working in the computing and digital media fields than ever before, the gender balance still skews toward men. The ratio of male students to female students enrolled at CDM reflects this trend, with females representing 22 percent of the undergraduate population and 30 percent of the graduate population.

Nonetheless, four years later, Maya no longer pays attention to the gender breakdown in her courses. She credits this change to HerCDM, a student organization focused on empowering female students in and out of the classroom. After a brief hiatus, HerCDM relaunched in spring 2013 with a new mission and vision, and the organization quickly made an impact through networking events, volunteer projects, game nights, social activities and speaker series.

Rachel Ramos, HerCDM’s president, empathized with Maya’s plight. Like Maya, who served as the organization’s vice president during the 2013-14 academic year, Ramos took those feelings and translated them into action. “HerCDM is a safe place for women to discuss their ideas with one another,” she explains. “I can be shy in class, but HerCDM definitely helps me overcome that.” Since the organization is open to women regardless of major, it fosters conversations among students who might not otherwise cross paths. “I may be a digital cinema major, but through HerCDM, I connect with women who are experiencing the same things I am in their fields,” notes Katie Carleso, vice president. “I only wish I had joined the organization earlier!”

Many of HerCDM’s activities offer opportunities for members to interact with and learn from talented women in male-dominated fields. Last year’s highlights included guest speaker Jen Myers, a web designer and developer, and a field trip to e-commerce solution provider Gorilla Group. At Gorilla Group, HerCDM members interviewed female employees over lunch, toured the company and attended a career-focused presentation. Each member left with a different book related to the theme of women in leadership (see photo at right). “It’s amazing to meet women who are already successful in the field,” shares Sana Fatima, last year’s president.

As one of the students who helped to rebuild and reinvent the organization, Fatima played an important part in writing HerCDM’s own success story. Yet she insists that the organization does as much for her as she does for it. “HerCDM has given me the courage and the skills to go after what I want no matter what the circumstances and challenge myself to be the best I can be,” she says. “If you are passionate about something, you should pursue the opportunities you find without being intimidated by your surroundings.”

This refrain is a familiar one for Jaclyn Hugg, assistant director of advising and HerCDM’s staff advisor. During the spring and summer, she worked with an all-female team of CIM students to produce a film about the experiences of female CIM students, which Hugg will be screening at the National Academic Advising Association’s annual conference in October. “Hearing about the individual and collective successes of these amazing students firsthand has been my proudest moment so far as staff advisor,” she says. “Their satisfaction with the organization and their desire to give back to their fellow female students is validation that we’re doing something right.”
CIM and Theatre School collaboration connects top talent

When it comes to programmatic excellence, both The Theatre School (TTS) and the School of Cinema and Interactive Media (CIM) regularly make the cut. This year, The Hollywood Reporter placed TTS on its list of the 25 Best Drama Schools and named CIM to its list of the nation’s Top 25 Film Schools for 2014 as well. Yet students from the two schools rarely collaborate on projects, in part because The Theatre School focuses primarily on stage work, and in part due to the difficulties inherent in scheduling courses across colleges. Recently, CIM sought to overcome these challenges by revamping Directing Actors for the Camera, a popular course for CIM directors, in part because The Theatre School focuses primarily on the condensed time frame presented with seven weeks to audition her actors, assemble a crew, and say, “It’s your job to make this work. That’s why you’re in this class.”

Reflecting on the course’s success, Irvine notes the students’ creative drive and willingness to learn from each other. “There was a lot of experimenting with the scripts and teams, but it was a lot of experiment writing and putting on camera work to see if it’s going to be a film in its own right,” says Crockett. His scene, entitled “Playing Cards at Dawn,” received nominations in four categories at the Premiere Film Festival (see page 8), including Best Directing; Crockett’s director of photography, Eric Liberacki, won Best Cinematography for the scene. These initial works proved formative for the directors. “We were as dedicated to our first projects as our second projects,” Endres shares. “There are no ‘trial runs’ in filmmaking.”

Nathan Streifel (THE MFA ’14), who starred in both “Off We Go” and director Theophilus Jamal’s scene adaptation, “Appel Jax,” found that acting for film differed in significant ways from stage acting. “In a stage production, the rehearsal process gives you time to work through your character, their arc in the play and their relationship with other characters,” he explains. “For a film, you have to go onto the set polished.” Nonetheless, Streifel enjoyed the entire experience so much that he plans to pursue more on-camerawork in the future.

Brandon Carlo (CDM MS ’11) spoke for all the directors when he called his actors “super-talented.” In his short film, “Love and Zombies,” scripted by Jared Pettit, actors Jason VonRoehn (THE MFA ’14) and Maureen Mizener (THE MFA ’14) argue about the future of their relationship while fighting ravenous zombies. “My goal for the project was to create (audition) reel-worthy material for each student who worked on the film,” he says. “I think I accomplished that.” The process was not without risk and uncertainty, but Carlo and his crew pushed through. “You could tell everyone wanted to be on set to see how it would all come together, and how we were going to pull off some of this stuff,” Carlo recalls, thinking in particular about drenching his actors in fake blood.

Watch “Riverside” at bit.ly/RiversideCiolek.
As a young adult, Angelika Coghlan (CDM ’85) wasn’t sure what she wanted to do with her life. “I got bored very easily and wanted to find something challenging,” she recalls. “My dad thought the technology field would suit me because tech is always changing and you have to stay on top of it.” This suggestion ultimately led Coghlan to a satisfying career at the intersection of business and technology.

While Coghlan liked the idea of working in technology, she also wanted to develop a robust set of business skills. DePaul offered the possibility of taking courses in both areas. “Back then, we were learning mainframe technology, COBOL and PUL in the computer science courses,” Coghlan notes. “Things have changed a lot since then!” After graduation, Coghlan worked for several large corporations, including Baxter Travenol (now Baxter International), Quaker Oats and Leo Burnett, but she soon found a way to combine her two passions. “I was hired as a programmer for a consulting firm, but I have very good communication skills, so I was able to talk to the business people and then translate their needs into tech speak,” she explains. “That was partly due to my DePaul education.”

After her employer was bought out, Coghlan and her husband started their own technology consulting business in 1998. Now known as Catwalk Consulting, the company generated more than $1 million in revenue during its first year in business. Then the financial market turned, and everything changed. “We thought we were doing great,” Coghlan remembers. “But we learned to be flexible and open, to try new things and to keep making new plans.” By shifting its focus to small and medium companies, as well as partnering with IBM, Catwalk Consulting landed on its feet.

Coghlan secured the partnership with IBM through the National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO), an organization that she has worked with very closely through the years. When IBM needed a last-minute speaker for a conference, NAWBO suggested Coghlan. “I was imagining a conference room with 10 people,” she recalls. Instead, she found herself addressing hundreds of people in a hotel banquet hall. “I don’t even know what I talked about, but I got a standing ovation,” she says, laughing. After that, she took on leadership roles at NAWBO, including running the technology committee, sitting on the board of directors and serving two terms as president.

Today, Coghlan deals more with the management side of Catwalk Consulting, but she maintains that she knows “enough to be dangerous” when it comes to technology. “I’m always thinking about how I would do the programming,” she says. “Sometimes it’s hard to move away from that and think about the process flow from an operational standpoint instead.” Coghlan works closely with her clients and takes pride in the way Catwalk Consulting uses data to identify problem areas. “We’re really good at understanding what it costs to provide a product or service and recommending the technology to support it,” she explains.

Catwalk Consulting also mentors entrepreneurs in Kenya. As a trustee of Kiva, a nonprofit that allows lenders to make microfinance loans directly to borrowers, Coghlan reviews applicants’ business plans and provides ongoing training. “One man was able to buy better feed for the chickens that he’s now selling to restaurants and hotels,” Coghlan says. “Another individual started an art school where she teaches widows and orphans how to make soapstone plates and decorative items, which they sell in the market.” To communicate with her mentees, Coghlan conducts Skype calls between her home in Chicago and her mentees’ mud huts in Kenya. “There’s technology for you,” she muses. “It’s really cool what it can do!”

School of Computing colloquiums showcase leading research

Each week during the academic year, a classroom in the School of Computing transforms into a community space where students, faculty, alumni and members of the public can learn about cutting-edge research projects based at DePaul and other academic institutions. “The colloquia promote the research environment at CDM and encourage collaboration across different areas,” says Professor Iyad Kanj, the organizer of the 2014 winter and spring sessions. Below, three recaps of presentations from the spring quarter offer a sneak peek at the range and complexity of topics discussed at the colloquia.

**“Empowerment Through Community Crime Prevention Technologies”**

For two years, Assistant Professor Sheena Erete immersed herself in conversations about crime. She attended community meetings, interviewed residents and analyzed online content pertaining to crime in five Chicago neighborhoods. Through these investigations, Erete found that the racial and economic composition of a neighborhood, as well as its crime level, affects how residents use technology to combat criminal activity. For example, in areas that exhibited less crime, community members were less likely to engage in anonymous reporting tactics, whereas residents in high-crime areas typically preferred to remain anonymous because they feared retaliation. By providing insight into the role of technology in supporting collective action against localized crime, Erete’s study offers a basis for development of effective technological tools to fight crime.

**“Assessing Diagnostic Complexity: An Image Feature-Based Strategy to Reduce Annotation Costs”**

The medical community has come to rely on computer-aided diagnosis (CAD) and digitization to analyze vast quantities of data in a more efficient and, hopefully, effective manner. Assistant Professor Alexander Rasin discussed efforts to improve the process further by using CAD to classify CT lung scans into evaluative categories. Using images from the Lung Image Database Consortium, Rasin extracted image features, built a database and trained a decision tree classifier and created an automated diagnostic tool to characterize images as easy or difficult cases. Depending on the categorization, the number of radiologists evaluating the images could range from three for an easy case to five for a hard case, rather than the default number of four. This approach has the potential to save time and reduce costs without sacrificing the accuracy of the diagnosis.

**“Examining the ‘Nothing to Hide’ Consumer View of Online Behavioral Tracking”**

When Assistant Professor Janine Spears leads discussions about online behavioral tracking in her classes, several students always respond by arguing that they don’t care if the government or other entities are viewing their online searches or video app visits. This stance made Spears wonder how consumers who claim they have “nothing to hide” manage online privacy risk. While the topic has been researched from a legal perspective, the dearth of empirical data inspired Spears to conduct a survey of 300 consumers to test her hypothesis that awareness of online tracking is a key motivator for protecting one’s privacy. Through statistical analysis of the data, Spears found that this was indeed the case. She noted that the “nothing to hide, nothing to fear” approach appears to be a proxy for “hear no risks, see no risks,” which could be harmful for consumers.
CIM held its Premiere Film Festival at the Music Box Theatre on June 6. This annual showcase and competition highlights some of the best student film work from the past year. Judges included DePaul faculty members and short-film festival programmers from across the country. This year, judges reviewed several hundred submissions in 20 different categories.

CIM’s Visiting Artist Series (VAS) continues to bring in top talent who speak candidly about working in the film profession. In February, VAS partnered with DePaul’s President’s Signature Series and the Office of Institutional Diversity and Equity to present the Illinois premiere of the documentary “Hate Crimes in the Heartland,” followed by remarks from Rachel Lyon, the film’s producer and director (see photo). Other 2014 VAS highlights included Mark Dippé, a director, animator and visual effects expert who has worked with Steven Spielberg, George Lucas and James Cameron; artist David McDonnell (MUS ’99, MM ’09) on computer-generated music; and the Page One Entertainment Writers Conference. Watch the VAS YouTube channel at bit.ly/vasvideos.

Photo credit: Peilin Tan (CDM MS ’14).

Around the college

The School of Computing (SoC) recently introduced a new graduate program to prepare students for information technology careers in the health sector. Students in the MS in health informatics program will gain the technical and management skills to design and support IT systems and processes in the areas of health care delivery, information processing and exchange, health care analytics, enterprise management, and information storage and security management. Additionally, the college now offers a certificate in analytics. Alumni who enroll in a graduate degree program automatically qualify for the Double Demon Scholarship, which covers 25 percent of tuition costs. Both full- and part-time students are eligible. Learn more at bit.ly/doubledemonscholarship.

The third annual Page One Entertainment Writers Conference convened students, faculty, and artists and writers from the larger community for a daylong crash course in screenwriting. Featured speakers at the May 3 event included Lenny Beckerman, head of film and television at the production company Hello!; Severiano Canales, a staff writer for ABC’s “Scandal”; Steve Conrad, whose screenplays include “The Pursuit of Happyness,” “The Weather Man” and “The Secret Life of Walter Mitty”; and Aisha Muharrar, a writer and producer for NBC’s “Parks and Recreation.” The highly anticipated free conference attracted 500 participants who learned about writing the Hollywood blockbuster, breaking into the business, genre writing and more.

On May 30, three SoC research teams presented preliminary results of their work in the college’s Medical Informatics Lab at the annual MedIX Workshop. The research projects included the creation of a software program designed to record the movements of a worm used in neurological studies, as well as attendant image analytic data; the development of a mathematical model to depict 3-D images of the torso to reduce the use of CT scans, which increase cancer risk; and the implementation of computer-aided diagnosis processes to identify lung cancer. Learn more at bit.ly/SocMedIX.

On May 6, nearly 100 CDM alumni and friends gathered at the Berghoff Restaurant for an evening reception. Interim Provost and Dean David Miller discussed the latest developments at CDM, offered statistics on the college’s continued enrollment growth and encouraged alumni to support programs and scholarships.

On June 15, actor, director and producer Jon Favreau (DHL ’14) delivered the commencement address at the combined graduation ceremony for CDM and the College of Communication. “Story is another word for the myths of our time,” he told graduates. “Figure out what your story is and tell it.” Favreau, an executive producer of the “Iron Man” film series and director of the holiday favorite “Elf,” also urged students to “be brave, be bold.” Photo credit: DePaul University/Jamie Moncrief.

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DePaul was ranked 12th on The Princeton Review’s 2014 list of Top Graduate Schools for Video Game Design and 20th on their list of Top Undergraduate Schools for Video Game Design. Selection criteria included the quality of the curriculum, faculty credentials, facilities and infrastructure, and career opportunities. Read more about CDM’s renowned computer game development programs in the latest issue of DePaul Magazine at bit.ly/depaulgaming.

Senior Amanda Pflieger served as an associate producer for former Theatre School student David Dastmalchian’s film, “Animals.” The film garnered Special Jury Recognition for Courage in Storytelling at its premiere at SXSW 2014 in March and also received the Audience Choice award at the Chicago Critics Film Festival in May.

The Hollywood Reporter named CIM 17th on its list of the nation’s Top 25 Film Schools of 2014. This ranking, a jump from 21st place last year, was the second highest for universities in Chicago. The article commended DePaul for utilizing the city’s rich resources, such as Cinespace Chicago Film Studios, and for bringing in top talent as both visitors and instructors.

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