Version of November 7, 2011

Proposal: Change the Master of Arts (MA) designation to Master of Science (MS) in Computer Science (CS) in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences.¹

Rationale

To help reposition our Masters program we seek to convert the Master of Arts designation to Master of Science. The purpose is to address a perception issue, particularly among potential international applicants, that the program is not technically focused.

Masters Programs in Peer Institutions

The peers identified in the Department of Computer Science Strategic Plan all offer the Master of Science in Computer Science. These peers are: Brown University (uses Sc.M. designation), New York University, Rochester University, Johns Hopkins University (uses MSE designation), University of Chicago, Northeastern University, University of Southern California, and the State University of New York at Stony Brook.

The peer study indicates that the MS designation is independent from the Bachelors degree designation; for example, Rochester offers both BS and BA degrees.

Relationship to Other BU Programs

The proposed “MS in CS” designation bears similarity with the “MS in CS” designation currently used by BU’s Metropolitan College (MET). However, each program targets a different student population. In particular, the MET program is an evening continuing education program and targets mostly working professionals. Our CAS MS-CS program is a day program that mostly attracts full-time students and is very selective in its admission process. We in fact consider our master’s program as a gateway for exceptional master’s students to join our PhD program.²

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¹ Our dual bachelors-masters degree will become designated as BA/MS.
² The program that our post-bachelor’s PhD students will join will become designated as MS/PhD.