Interview with Dr. Nylin

We are all proud of Dr. Nylin – Dr. Nylin, who is a very dynamic person who always focuses on good work and getting results, started the CS department in Lamar University in 1977.

Dr. Nylin left Lamar seven years ago to join Conn’s appliance Company.

Q: Dr. Nylin how would you describe your career? You have had several different kinds of jobs?

A: I graduated from Lamar in January 1965. At that time I was in the Mathematics department. I was a Math major and Physics minor, and I then left to work in the Aerospace industry. I started teaching at night at a college. I then did my MS and Ph.D. at Purdue. I taught at SMU’s department of Computer Science and Operations Research, where I was an assistant professor for 3 years before leaving and coming to Lamar in 1975, as an associate professor in CS. Two years later, in 1977, I started the CS department at Lamar as a separate department. In 1984, I became the VP for Finance and Computer Services. In 1986, I became Executive VP for Finance and Operations, and then in 1990, I became the VP for Finance and Computer Services. In 1986, I became Executive VP for Finance and Operations, and then in 1990,

Lamar CS Program Receives ABET/CSAB Accreditation

The department of Computer Science applied for ABET/CSAB accreditation for its B.S. in Computer Science in 2001. A team of three evaluators from the ABET Accreditation Commission visited Lamar in October 2001. They turned in a report to ABET on their findings. It was discovered that the program met the standards in all areas of the criteria.

Study, Research & Achievement

The Computer Science Department is in the process of establishing a new program for women in Computer Science. The goal of this program is to increase the number of females receiving baccalaureate degrees from our department.

Currently only nineteen percent of our CS/CIS undergraduate majors are females. This is not just a problem at Lamar but reflects the fact that women are underrepresented in our discipline nationwide.
Interview with Dr. Nylin

I became Vice Chancellor for Finance and Academic Affairs. A few years later, I became Deputy Chancellor for Finance in the old Lamar University System. After Lamar University I joined the TSUS system, a new opportunity opened for me with Conn’s.

Q: Have you planned your career or is it a convergence of events?
A: I actually started off as a shoe salesman and paid my way through college as a sales person. I have enjoyed the different things I did and never had a great plan, but I did plan for college and for getting my Ph.D. When I became interested in CS, I became interested in teaching at the college level.

Q: Did a CS background help you in your career? How?
A: In 1990, I did some consulting for Conn’s. I was introduced to the president of the company by Conn, Jr. Here is where my MIS degree helped me. After that I became one of the Board Of Directors in Conn’s where I picked up the administrative experience in finance in addition to Computer Science.

Q: What kind of computer systems are used at Conn’s? Do you have any programmers?
A: We do have programmers, most of whom are graduates from Lamar’s MBA program. We do occasionally have job openings for programmers. We have AS400 machines and alpha machines for the Internet, all connected with optical cable networks to link different branches of Conn’s together. Conn’s web page can be found at www.conns.com. All types of information can be found on our web site including job opportunities.

Q: Dr. Nylin, what is Conn’s currently focusing on? What kind of projects/research are currently going on in Conn’s?
A: Here are the projects we are focusing on:
• Finishing major changes to the warehouse distributive system and warehouse management system.
• Reorganizing our service department and updating those systems.
• Merchandising, looking up open devices and controlling the cost of products through PL systems.
• Supporting projects by the credit company, which are very integrated.

Q: What did you learn in your career? Do you have any rules for success?
A: It's interesting to see young enthusiastic business people like you. Do not be too narrow. Do not be too technical, but be able to manage the technical. One should understand how to put resources together to do major program management. Interpersonal skills and getting people to do things so that one should be able to sell the project. Keep learning and educating yourself. Young people must have a work ethic, be consistent and have the ability to show their performance to their employer and should also be dedicated to their work. The business world is performance oriented and you must deliver results so that you are in high demand.

Q: Dr. Nylin, drifting a little from the topic, what is the most important decision you have ever made in your life?
A: Dr. Nylin laughs and says the most important decision he has made was when he married his wife. But in management, the most important decision was coming to Lamar and starting the CS department. The second decision was leaving the university and coming to Conn’s. It was a risk leaving a comfortable place, but I was confident of my success.

Q: Do you participate in Lamar University activities?
A: I am currently the chairman of the Foundation for the Institute of Technology. I am also on the Engineering Advisory Board at Lamar. My business activities limit my involvement in these activities.

Q: Do you have any suggestions for us?
A: I am pleased to see students coming through the CS program and I hope it is meeting your expectations. I encourage all of you to go out and don’t be afraid to take risks. Perform and do a good job and when you go to work always do more than what is expected. When you do more than is expected you get great rewards in return. I would tell young managers to do things that are sustainable and work to have balance in your life always.

We are all grateful to Dr. Nylin for giving us a great message and encouraging us in life. I hope we can and implement his message.

Thank you Dr. Nylin for sharing your valuable time with us.

By Erdem Alpay & Sunayana Awatramani
erdemalpay_tr@yahoo.com    sunayana_a@hotmail.com
We have received partial funding for this program under the 2002 Texas Technology Workforce Development Grants Program. The two main components of the program are the Lamar University Women in Research Development Program (“LUWiReD”) and the Women Mentoring Program (“LUCSW++”).

The two main components of the program are the Lamar University Women in Research Development Program (“LUWiReD”) and the Women Mentoring Program (“LUCSW++”).

LU WiReD

This component gives female students an opportunity to work in research teams under the direction of a female faculty member. Female students are paid a $1000 stipend for each semester in which they participate and work ¼ time on the research project. We currently have five women on our research team. Seema Lukose, a graduate student from India, is the team leader and a great role model for the undergraduate females. The undergraduate members are senior Kendall Strickland Williams, juniors Kelly and Kerry White, and sophomore Kathrin Nikitina. Carine Ghosn, a senior who is taking an Honors Independent Study in Robotics course, is also on the team. Senior Mahdi Mekic is our research assistant. The more experienced students train and serve as peer mentors to the less experienced students. Over the years, the lower-level students will grow to become the team leaders of the future.

The research team is working to develop autonomous mobile robots that can sense and react appropriately to their environment. The long-term goal will be to develop teams of autonomous mobile robots that can cooperate to perform various tasks. Autonomous robots have many useful applications, and developing them is lots of fun for students. This research involves the women in the “tinkering” aspects of computer science, both hardware and software, and enhances the women’s education in many different areas of computing, including computer architecture, software development, programming languages, circuits, and artificial intelligence.

Lamar University Women Mentoring Program (LUCSW++)

Our industrial mentoring program pairs undergraduate women with successful female professionals in computer science and related industries. Many of our mentors are LU alumni. Mentors and their assigned students communicate via email and/or telephone and have an opportunity to meet on campus once a semester. Each semester meeting includes an open forum in which a panel of mentors discusses topics of interest to our female students. Our first meeting was held on November 4 and was very successful. Our current roster of mentors includes:

Rana Awar - ExxonMobil
Zenobia Brown – Accenture
Jacqueline Bryant and Thelma Myers – Raytheon
Stephanie Fontnette – BMC Software
Staci Lisenby – Shell Oil
Tannaz Machhi – J. P. Morgan Chase
Susie Robertson – Hewlett-Packard
Jennifer Rochlis – NASA

If you would like to participate in this fun and exciting program, please contact Dr. Peggy Doerschuk, the program director, at the address listed below.

We have also started a peer mentoring program for our female students. Groups of students from different levels (freshman through senior) are formed at the beginning of each semester and serve as a support group for each other. Students also meet monthly to discuss issues of common interest and to develop a sense of community among the female students.

If we get enough additional funding, we plan to institute an outreach mentoring program in which we pair our undergraduate students with middle school girls who are interested in computer science.

If you would like to make a donation to the women’s program, to participate in the mentoring program, or to get more information, please contact:

Dr. Peggy Israel Doerschuk
Director of LUCSW Program
Lamar University Computer Science Department
P. O. Box 10056, Beaumont, TX  77710
(409)880-8782 email israel@sal.lamar.edu
ACM was founded in 1947 and it is the world’s first educational and scientific computing organization.

Phone: Lamar University
Computer Science Department
P.O.BOX 10056 Beaumont, TX 77710 U.S.A

Phone: (409) 880-8775
Fax: (409) 880-2364
Email: cs_dept@hal.lamar.edu

Did you know???
Your donations to LU can be designated for the CS department by making your check payable to “CS department”

Did you know???
ACM was founded in 1947 and it is the world’s first educational and scientific computing organization.

Dr. Jerry Bradley, Dean of Graduate students, Jing Liao, a graduate student in CS, Dr. Stuart Wright, Professor of Sociology & Assistant Director of Graduate Studies (from left to right)

Chinese male chorus

“2002 International Day”

The much-awaited International Day 2002 was celebrated with a huge splash of fun and color, in the plush eighth floor of the John Gray Library on-campus. Students of various nationalities took this opportunity with great enthusiasm to provide an insight into their rich and exotic heritage. They actively participated in artistic performances, captivating their audience with beautiful rendeings of their regional dances, music and various other arts. The festive air transported us to distant lands, teaching us the fascinating and vibrant ways of people around the world. With performances ranging from the traditional Chinese shadow-boxing, folk-dances like the Indian Garba, to the latest songs from their native lands, the day was a delightful mix of modernity and traditions.

Students from each country joined forces to put on display mouth-watering regional dishes. This international cuisine included popular goodies as well as exquisite preparations, leaving the taste buds asking for more!

The day ended on a happy note, gifting students and professors alike, with beautiful memories to cherish for a lifetime.

ACM Programming Contest

Dr. Tran and Dr. Harvill took two teams to the ACM Regional Programming Contest in Baton Rouge November 2. Our teams at the ACM South Central USA Programming Contest did an excellent job.

Team 1 (with Steven Trahan, Sainath Pawaska & Brian Beasley) solved three (3) problems and ranked 19th among 95 competing teams. (They almost solved a 4th problem.)

Team 2 (with Ryan Hamshire, Arun Kumar & Carine Ghosn) solved two (2) problems and ranked 32nd.

Drs. Tran and Harvill and Mr. Foreman conducted training sessions with these teams which were selected after a locally competitive programming contest.
International Conference

As a result of the efforts of Dr. Quoc-Nam Tran, an assistant professor, the tenth IMACS Conference on Applications of Computer Algebra will be held at Lamar University in July 2004. There are two recent algorithm developments in Computer Algebra that are extremely important for applications. They are the Groebner basis algorithm and quantifier-elimination algorithms. Applications involving these algorithms will be emphasized at these meetings in Beaumont, TX on July 21-23, 2004.

Topics To Be Presented
1. Non Standard Applications
   Eugenio Roannes Lozano (Madrid, Spain)

2. Computer Algebra in Robotics
   Jochen Pfalzgraf (RISC Linz, Austria)

3. Computer Algebra in Education
   Ian Cohen (Stockholm, Sweden)

4. Symbolic Computing Aspects of Multi-Agent Systems and Autonomous Agents
   John Campell (University Coolage, London, UK)

5. Computer Algebra and Theorem Provers
   Jacques Calmet (Karlsruhe, Germany)

6. Formal Theory of Differential Equations
   Greg Reid (Vancouver, Canada)

7. Analysis of Ordinary Differential Equations
   Vladimir Gerdt (Dubna, Russia) & Alexia Bocharov (Wolfram Research, USA)

CS@LU Welcomes New Faculty

Dr Chung-Chih Li

Dr. Chung-Chih Li did his Masters in Computer Science at Lamar University under Dr. Koh. He is back with all of us to share his knowledge and experience. He did his Ph.D in Computer & Information Science from Syracuse University, New York, 2001.

Some of his Research areas include Computational Complexity Theory, Theory of Computation, Computational Learning Theory, Recursion Theory, Mathematical Logic.

His current research lies on the notion of “optimum programs for type-2 computation”. Type-2 computation is a model for many contemporary computing problems such as machine learning, data mining and problems in bioinformatics where the data size is no longer a finite object.

Dr. Li and his wife, Sandy, have two children in elementary school. The family enjoys the friendly atmosphere of the Beaumont area.

Dr Dehu Qi

Dr. Dehu Qi, originally from the People’s Republic of China, joined the faculty of Lamar University this fall after completing his Ph.D dissertation on Machine Learning at the University of Missouri-Columbia in August. Machine Learning is a subfield of Artificial Intelligence. The purpose of Dr. Qi’s research is to develop a general, effective multi-agent learning system. This learning system incorporates reinforcement learning, genetic algorithms, genetic programming, and artificial life. The work of Dr. Qi has important and direct applications to new areas of computer science such as data mining of structured databases and WEB intelligence. The area of WEB intelligence exploits artificial intelligence and advanced information technology on the WEB. WEB agents are capable of making decisions on behalf of their users and improving their own performance in dynamically changing and unpredictable task environments.

Before coming to Lamar University, Dr. Qi taught courses in digital logic, database management, software engineering, and the theory of computation at the University of Missouri. He has published a number of papers on multi-agent systems, genetic algorithms, neural networks, and evolutionary computation.
In August 2002, the Commission met and granted Lamar University Computer Science accreditation retroactively from fall 2000. The department has worked for many years to achieve this goal, and every member of the faculty deserves enormous credit for her/his dedication to this goal. It is unusual for a department to achieve accreditation on its first try, and we were approved under the new ABET 2000 Criteria, a distinction that only Computer Science can boast of in the College of Engineering. In Texas, there are less than 20 universities with ABET accreditation.

The achievement of ABET/CSAB accreditation, fundamental changes within our own academic discipline, new opportunities for interaction with other fields, a thriving software economy, university strategic plans that emphasize information technology—all of these circumstances add up to great opportunities for us. We are seeking the necessary support to realize these opportunities, from within the University and from outside.

In the past year, we have obtained scholarship funding for students who are within two years of graduation and have good grade point averages through a joint grant with the Mathematics department from the National Science Foundation. However, the department is still woefully in need of scholarship funds for recruitment and retention of freshmen and sophomore students. In fact, at this time, we still only have one regularly funded scholarship each year, the Crawford-Lewis Scholarship. On the other hand, we have many able applicants with SAT scores in excess of 1200 who will be unable to attend Lamar without financial assistance.

If you are able to help the department with a financial contribution, all of the money donated will go directly for scholarships. Those interested in having a long-term impact on young people interested in a career in the computing field can make an impact by endowing a scholarship in the name of the donor or someone else. The mission of the department can only be realized with the financial support of alumni.

You can contact the department Office by calling (409)880-8776 or by writing to Dr. Lawrence Osborne, Chair, Department of Computer Science, Lamar University, Beaumont, Texas 77710. The email address for the department is cs_dept@hal.lamar.edu. If you prefer to make your donation through the University Advancement Office, please contact Ms. Camille Mouton at (409)880-8419. Checks for donations should be made payable to Computer Science Department—Lamar.