

September 2026

The IS faculty has unanimously passed the following response to the external reviewer Dr. Delen's assessments and recommendations:

Key points

- **Build on departmental strengths:** Recognize stable enrollment, historically high Fall 2026 credit-hour production, and the PhD's academic and reputational value.
- **Clarify departmental identity:** Consider “**Information Systems and Applied AI**” to communicate our strengths in applying technology to organizational problems.
- **Differentiate programs:** Clearly articulate each program's purpose, target students, career pathways, and contribution to the department's shared identity.
- **Streamline MSIS specializations:** Consolidate overlapping, low-enrollment pathways and modernize offerings in data management, cloud engineering, and AI deployment while protecting program quality.
- **Strengthen program quality and remain accreditation-ready:** Improve assessment, learning outcomes, curriculum mapping, faculty qualifications, and continuous-improvement documentation. Defer an ABET or AACSB commitment until departmental identity and college strategy are clearer.
- **Protect PhD quality through capacity-based growth:** Align enrollment with dissertation-chair capacity, advising workloads, research support, and student funding; prioritize rigorous preparation, effective mentoring, and timely completion.
- **Address MSIS conversion strategically:** Improve recruitment communication and examine enrollment barriers while recognizing international funding expectations and visa constraints beyond departmental control.
- **Focus implementation:** Focus on a manageable set of priorities, responsibilities, and measures of progress for the next 12–24 months.

Formal statements and recommendations:

Department Position

The Information Systems faculty appreciates the external reviewer's constructive recommendations and agrees with the overall conclusion that our programs are healthy and that the next stage of development should emphasize strategic focus rather than broad restructuring. Given stable departmental enrollment and historically strong credit-hour production, our priority should be to protect existing strengths while sharpening program identity, improving curricular efficiency, strengthening areas of future demand,

and ensuring that faculty and financial resources are aligned strategically. We also recognize that some outcomes—particularly MSIS conversion among international applicants—are significantly affected by external factors such as funding expectation and changing visa and immigration conditions. Accordingly, program health should be evaluated through a broader set of measures including enrollment, credit-hour production, retention, completion, student outcomes, faculty capacity, and financial sustainability.

Strategic Recommendations

- 1. Clarify the Department's Strategic Identity.**

Consider positioning the department more explicitly around **Information Systems and Applied AI**, emphasizing the application, management, deployment, and governance of information systems, data, analytics, AI, and emerging technologies to solve organizational problems and create value. This builds directly on the reviewer's recommendation that CIS be distinguished from computer science, cybersecurity, analytics, and general business through its organizational and applied technology focus. The specific department and program names should remain open for faculty discussion.

- 2. Streamline the MSIS Portfolio.**

Review low-enrollment specializations and related courses—including Network Administration, Data Management, and others—with the goal of consolidating them into fewer, stronger, contemporary pathways. Potential directions could include cloud engineering and AI deployment, enterprise data and analytics, cybersecurity management, healthcare information systems, and AI-enabled organizational transformation. The objective should be to strengthen course enrollments, clarify market positioning, streamline the curriculum, and support sustainable faculty workloads, with new specializations or certificates considered only when they advance these goals. Dr. Delen similarly recommends stronger market-facing MSIS positioning and stackable pathways in selected growth areas.

- 3. Use a More Complete View of MSIS Enrollment Performance.**

Continue to examine admitted-student conversion, but distinguish factors within our control from external factors such as international student funding expectations, visa conditions, and broader market conditions. The external review itself identifies scholarships, cost, international-student constraints, competition, and other factors as possible explanations for conversion patterns. We should therefore monitor conversion alongside actual enrollment, credit hours, retention, completion, delivery mode, and financial contribution.

- 4. Strengthen Program Quality and Remain Accreditation-Ready, but Do Not Commit to ABET or AACSB at This Time.**

Continue strengthening assessment, learning outcomes, curriculum mapping, faculty qualifications, stakeholder engagement, and continuous-improvement documentation to advance program quality regardless of the accreditation pathway ultimately selected. ABET would make the most sense only if we intentionally move the undergraduate program toward a more computing-oriented professional identity, while AACSB would represent a broader college-level strategic

commitment. Dr. Delen similarly recommends evaluating accreditation alternatives strategically before committing substantial resources. We recommend revisiting this question after our department identity and the college's longer-term accreditation strategy become clearer, with demonstrable benefits to program quality and student learning guiding the decision.

5. **Protect PhD Program Quality Through Capacity-Based Growth.**

Continue supporting the PhD as an important academic and reputational asset while establishing transparent expectations regarding cohort size, dissertation-chair capacity, faculty advising loads, research support, completion, and student funding. Program quality—including rigorous research preparation, effective mentoring, and high-quality dissertations—should guide enrollment and resource decisions. The objective should be sustainable growth aligned with our capacity to provide a strong doctoral experience and support student success. **The reviewer specifically identifies the PhD's momentum as a reputational asset and strength that should be protected.**

6. **Make Applied AI, Research, and Industry Engagement a Primary Differentiator.**

Use DSU's technology mission, MadLabs, research infrastructure, faculty expertise, doctoral programs, and external partnerships to strengthen the department's identity around applied AI and organizational technology. Industry-sponsored projects, applied research, internships, graduate research opportunities, and external funding can differentiate our programs nationally while strengthening student outcomes and employer relationships. This is consistent with Dr. Delen's recommendation to use our research infrastructure more intentionally for applied research and external engagement