MEMORANDUM

Date: December 10, 2017

To: Alex Triantis (chair), Larry Davis, Scott Wolpert, Steve Rolston, Joseph JaJa, Doug Oard, Greg Ball, Dean Kitchen, Katherine Abraham, Dan Falvey, Bill Idsardi, John Bertot, Ellen Williams, Rama Chellappa, Mihai Pop

From: Mary Ann Rankin, Senior Vice President and Provost

Re: Task Force to advise the provost on enhancing national status in CS, Data Analytics and related disciplines

Dear Colleagues:

Because of the growing importance of information technology, data analytics, computer imaging, cybersecurity and related disciplines in the world today, the growing student demand for these majors, and the ever-increasing importance of these fields to other academic disciplines, many universities across the country are examining ways to improve impact, efficacy and access to these important fields. In some cases these efforts have involved changing the organizational structure of colleges, schools and departments to create new program alignments and opportunities. In others the emphasis has been on building infrastructure, collaborative spaces and other resources.

I write today to ask you to serve on a task force to advise me on how best to enhance the status, effectiveness and connectivity of UMD’s programs in Computer Science, Data Analytics, Computer Engineering, and related disciplines. This is a very broad charge and we can discuss how best to focus the analyses, but the Academic Planning Advisory Committee (APAC) has suggested that we might start by examining the following questions:

• What actions and resources would best position UMD to achieve greater national recognition and higher stature in the important fields of computer science, data analytics, computer engineering, information science, and related disciplines? Are there barriers that currently interfere with such achievements and if so, how might we overcome them?
• If organizational structure is judged to be such a barrier, what new organizational arrangements should be considered? Are particular organizational arrangements correlated with high ranking and achievement in these fields among our peers? What would be the costs and benefits of alternative administrative structures?
• If a new administrative structure is envisioned, how should UMIACS be involved—i.e., would UMIACS be necessary or redundant with a new administrative structure? What other units would/should be involved?
• Should there be particular physical changes—Programs to be co-located in new building space, etc., either in addition to or instead of administrative changes?
• How would we measure outcomes, i.e., what would be the indications of success or failure?
• How would students benefit from any proposed changes?
• How would connectivity with other fields be affected by any proposed changes?

As the task force begins its work, I’m sure additional questions will arise. I expect that you will want to convene meetings with various stakeholder groups and gather input from across the campus and from other universities. My office will staff the task force activities and will stand ready to support your work in whatever way we can. Thank you very much for your willingness to serve. We will be in touch shortly to schedule an initial meeting.

With many thanks,

Mary Ann Rankin