TAU response to recommendations by the CHE committee Following the " Summary of Recommendations and Timetable"

Short term [~ within 1 year]:

1. The school should set up an industrial advisory board.

   Answer:
   The school welcomes the idea of an industrial advisory board and will form a committee to start with planning such advisory board and recruiting.

2. Within a year, the school must develop and implement a plan for an alternative master's program that will provide a higher graduation rate and shorter time to degree.

   Answer:
   This year the school has started an excellence program for master students who are required to be full time, complete their course requirement and finding an advisor within one year from starting the degree. These students get a very nice fellowship. We hope that this program will increase the number of students completing the master degree. We are planning to extend this program gradually. Please note that every year 35-40 complete their master degree in the school which we believe is above the number in other universities in Israel (or at least comparable). On one hand some of our students are in their mandatory military service. On the other the salaries in the High Tech industry are very high (especially in Tel Aviv area). Hence there is a limit to the change we are expecting to see. Eventually our measure of success is the number of master students that are graduating and the quality (and number) of papers that they publish. We are doing very well with respect to this measure.

3. Within a year, the school budget must include adequate resources for TAs.

   Answer:
   The budget for TAs has increased but there exists a lack of TA candidates, because a major fraction of the CS graduate students work in industry and are not interested in teaching duties.

4. Within a year, the school must develop and implement a mechanism for tracking progress of PhD students annually, especially post-proposal.

   Answer:

There may be some confusion here. Such a mechanism exists and is implemented. Every year each post-proposal student has to send a report on the papers that she/he has been published/submitted and working on. The advisor has to write a short evaluation on the student progress.

5. Until enough faculty can be hired to bring the student-faculty ratio into compliance, within a year, the number of students admitted must be reduced to compensate.

   Answer:
   This recommendation will be taken into account in the university strategic plans

6. Within a year, the school must institute an honors committee to promote nominations of faculty members for recognition such as ACM, IEEE, and AAAS Fellow and/or Academia Europea, or other international honors.

   Answer:
   This has been already implemented. The school has officially formed such a committee (which includes four faculty members). The committee worked quite hard in the last few months.

7. Within a year, the university must develop and implement a mechanism whereby researchers can use grant money to pay graduate students higher stipends or salaries.

   Answer:
   The maximum fellowship/stipend that can be paid (and is actually paid) to a graduate student is higher than the standard amount given in other universities in Israel.

8. Within a year, the school must rationalize and simplify the procedures for funding student travel to conferences.

   Answer:
   We follow the rules of the university. We are planning to write a document which will be given to the students, explaining the procedure for travel funding.

9. Within a year, the department should set in place a process to reflect on the attainment of outcomes in a planned, periodic manner.

   Answer:
   This process exists implicitly and the school will discuss how to do it explicitly.

10. Comprehensive space planning must be done now, not when the new building is complete. In particular, academic staff members, grad students, and post-docs in the same research group must be co-located.

    Answer:
    A major effort is being done. Note, however, that until the new building is complete there is in general lack of space in the Faculty of Exact Sciences.

11. Starting immediately, the university should establish and execute a plan for providing adequate modern teaching space.

    Answer:
    Such a program exists and is already being executed. It will take about three years to complete.

12. The Faculty of Exact Sciences must make the basis for resource allocation fully transparent, and allocate resources across schools in a fair and equitable manner.

    Answer:
    A reorganization of the Faculty budget and administration is currently being formulated.

Intermediate term [~ within 2-4 years]:

13. The school must designate some number of positions for experimental computer scientists, and only candidates who work in such areas should be interviewed for these positions.

    Answer:
    In the last few years we worked systematically, interviewed and made offers to some experimental computer scientists. We are planning to continue with this effort (without compromising with excellence)

14. The university must take decisive action to bring the student-faculty ratio into compliance with the 25 to 1 CHE standard. This action must start immediately and complete within 4 years.

    Answer:
    TAU would like to bring the student faculty ratio into compliance with CHE standards. It is difficult to carry out this initiative due to financial limitations. We try to do our best.

15. As a first step, the department must be allowed to hire up to 5 new faculty over the next four years, of which at least one should be in an experimental area. There must be adequate resources (including startup funding and office space) to assure hiring of excellent candidates.

   Answer:
   The school is planning to hire two new faculty members each year until we get to 45 faculty members. Then we will continue to hire one or two faculty members every year to overcome the retirement of faculty members. A faculty member in experimental area is in our top priority.

16. The school must make a systematic and persistent effort to compete for European funding.

   Answer:
   Each new faculty member gets the information and advice on how to apply to various grants (including the European ones). Moreover, it is explained to him/her that this is taken as a factor in promotion/tenure process. Faculty members have to sponsor their graduate students mostly from their own funds. Without funding it is hard to maintain students. Please note that we would be happy to get extra admin in the school for helping with management and applications for grants. Recently the university improved their support and encouragement for grant applications.

17. The university must ensure that there is sufficient infrastructure to support a push for European funding.

   Answer:
   The university has improved the support and encouragement for grant applications.

Long term [until the next cycle of evaluation]:

18. The school must develop a realistic plan to build toward a strong group in experimental computer science. When interviewing experimental candidates, they should not compete head-on-head with theory candidates, because Israeli universities have a strong cultural bias in favor of theory.

   Answer:
   In the strategic plan of the school hiring experimental candidates is first/top priority.