April 26, 2012

Office of the President
226 Tigert Hall
PO Box 113150
Gainesville, FL 32611

Dear President Machen:

ACM is encouraged by your statement yesterday to the University of Florida's community that a new proposal is under consideration to address the university's budget constraints while preserving the university's quest for continued excellence in computer science education and research. We hope that the discussions between the departments of Computer and Information Science and Engineering and Electrical and Computer Engineering will result in a framework that supports and preserves strong computer science research and graduate programs.

The Association for Computing Machinery – the leading society for computing professionals worldwide – understands and sympathizes with the university's difficult choices when faced with deep budget cuts from the state. We, however, were concerned with initial proposal to transfer much of your existing Computer and Information Science Department into the other department and significantly reduce graduate and research activity in this area. Given the huge and growing demand for computing jobs nationally and in Florida, the crucial role that computing research plays for our economy and for multidisciplinary research in so many important fields, we support strengthening, not weakening, University of Florida's strong computer science research base.

We are witnessing historic growth in the computing industry and multiple sectors of the economy that rely on computing-enabled discovery. Computing is driving economic growth, discovery and jobs across our nation. It is the research enterprise that lies at the heart of this engine. Even in difficult budgetary times, the federal government has continued to support fundamental computer science research. ACM strongly encourages governments and universities at all levels to robustly support funding and programs to support computer science research.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics recently released its projections for job growth through the end of the decade. Computing occupations are projected to be among the 10 fastest growing major occupations in the United States, outpacing overall job growth in the economy. The State of Florida's data tell a similar story. According to the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity's projections, computing occupations will average more than 6,500 job openings annually over the next decade.

The best undergraduate programs in computing are those that engage in *both* teaching and research, with these functions tightly coupled and mutually reinforcing. The University of Florida is already established in both areas – as a top 40 computer science program nationally and one that boasts several fellows of the ACM, which is one of our highest honors that we bestow on individuals from the field.

Further, a strong computer science research base supports the growing intersection of computing with multiple disciplines and the nurturing of multidisciplinary academic collaborations in new scientific frontiers. Computer science research serves as an important avenue for novel discoveries with real-life applications essential to many industries, including medical, biotechnology, alternative energy, manufacturing, and transportation logistics management and to the "big data" analytics of the healthcare, insurance, and real estate industries. A strong

computer science research base also is increasingly crucial to obtaining many of the multidisciplinary grants, particularly in the scientific, engineering, and medical fields.

We look forward to learning the details of the new proposal and applaud the decision to engage the broad range of stakeholders, including your students, faculty, staff, alumni, and industry partners, in the process. We hope the process will result in a decision that strengthens both the teaching and research of computer science. Your continued attention to maintaining excellence in computer science education, research, and outreach will give Florida's students better opportunities not only to fill but also to create new jobs underpinned by this critical discipline.

Sincerely,

Alain Chesnais
ACM President

About ACM
ACM, the Association for Computing Machinery, www.acm.org, is the world's largest educational and scientific computing society, uniting computing educators, researchers and professionals to inspire dialogue, share resources and address the field's challenges. ACM strengthens the computing profession's collective voice through strong leadership, promotion of the highest standards, and recognition of technical excellence. ACM supports the professional growth of its members by providing opportunities for life-long learning, career development, and professional networking.