

CCSU Spring 2001

**Closing Remarks to the CS Department
Department Meeting of Thursday, May 24, 2001**

by Charles W. Neville

I would like to thank you for your support and encouragement over the years. As you all know, I have no formal credentials in computer science, and I want to thank you for tolerating the presence of a sometimes bumbling mathematician in your midst for all this time.

Of course, it would be uncharacteristic of me to bashfully hide my opinions simply because I don't know what I am talking about, so I have a few things to say before I leave.

One or two of us keep making slighting remarks about "internet programming". To you I say, this is a free country, and you have a right to your opinions, but I feel your remarks are harmful. It seems that no one dares speak up after you have trashed the idea of including internet programming topics in our courses.

I want to briefly defend the idea of "internet programming". We have to find a way to include a significant number of internet programming topics in our courses. Web browsers provide a *universal user interface*. Instead of laboriously building a custom client with multiple hand designed screens to access, say, a database, you can simply write a Java Servlet or a perl script, write a few lines of Java Server Pages or HTML code, and let the Web browser your customer already has handle the display screens. Your customer can run the client side of your internet application in any desktop user environment, because they all include capable Web browsers. As a bonus, he or she can run it from home or from any hotel room with an internet connection. For "mobile professionals on the go", this can be crucial.

In fact, your customer can even access your internet application through his or her cell phone or Palm Pilot. It is easy to write applications for these using "internet programming"; all you have to do is include a few lines of Wireless Markup Language code in your dynamically generated Web pages, because cell phones and Palm Pilots include Web browsers these days. It is very hard to write wireless applications any other way.

Now I understand that we are an *academic* institution, and that we need to concentrate on basic principles. But most of our graduates go out into the real world to work at real jobs, and people in real jobs are increasingly expected to be able to develop internet applications. I think our graduates need to learn internet programming here, even if they need to learn the basic principles of computer science more. And I think internet applications are becoming complex and important enough so a theory of them will soon evolve. I predict that within 10 years, there will be something akin to object oriented programming tailored specifically for internet applications.

We can't wait for others to develop the theory. We have to get into the "internet programming"

business now, or we will forfeit the right to get into it forever. And if that happens, we will find ourselves becoming "The Department of Legacy Computer Science".

And now it is time for me to go, or, as we say in computer science, to `rm -rf *`. Thankyou very much.