A Proposal for a System Synthesis Project Focusing on the Issue of Risk to CMU Students from Vehicular Traffic, Fall, 2006

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Most of you are probably aware that a 19 year old female student, Wei Wei Wang, of Woodbury, N.Y., was struck by a car as she crossed Forbes Avenue at Margaret Morrison Street the evening of April 11. She died in UPMC hospital the next day. While the full story of how the accident occurred is still unclear, it is very obvious that there are a number of places around and on campus where pedestrians are at risk from vehicles. (I myself was hit in 1997 while crossing the street in the cross walk at Margaret Morrison and Tech Streets by a car that ran a stop sign. Fortunately, I was not seriously injured.) There are other obvious locations around campus where pedestrians have experienced accidents or where accidents are waiting to happen.

I would like to propose that a group of Heinz School students undertake a System Synthesis Project in the fall, 2006, to examine risk factors around campus in regard to vehicles and to suggest improvements to the current situation. Among the research topics that initially come to mind to investigate are the following:

(1) A GIS analysis of points around campus where accidents have occurred or have features conducive to accident occurrence. (The parking lot and corridor between Newall-Simon Hall, Smith Hall, and Hamburg Hall is one obvious on-campus location. Off-campus locations that are also quite hazardous include the interaction of Frew Street and Tech St. as well as Frew Street itself along its entire length.)

(2) Analysis of, and proposals to, improve conditions at the hazardous sites identified.

(3) An analysis of the enforcement of traffic rules on and around campus by both the City of Pittsburgh Police and CMU security as well as the procedures they follow. (My understanding is that some changes may be in the offing regarding increases in the enforcement powers of the CMU security force.)

(4) A study of student attitudes toward vehicular risk while on foot and proposals to educate them and heighten their consciousness of risk.

(5) A survey of traffic calming methods that could be utilized on and around campus. (Some of these might require changes in city ordinances.)

Several faculty members including Kristen Kurland, who is currently pursuing a risk study for Children’s Hospital involving street accidents to children. Councilman Bill Peduto, the councilman for this district is very interested in the project and could be a potential client.