Abstract
Despite the vast amount of course registration and evaluation data available, there is relatively little being done to leverage that information to help current students figure out what courses to take and when best to take them. Our goal for this project was to design a student-facing course recommender tool to facilitate social navigation within this space.

The Google Doc
Aside from word-of-mouth, one of the only resources we had as graduate students in the School of Information for tips on what courses to take was a Google Doc with comments made by former students. Inspired by the surprising effectiveness of this simple document, we wanted to see if we could create a better, more permanent solution using past course registration history and other sources of relevant data.

The First Attempt
Our first attempt at creating a recommender system had mixed results. Using course registration data from the School of Information, we allowed users to input classes they had already taken and recommend additional courses based on what other students with similar schedules had previously taken. While there would occasionally be nuggets of interesting suggestions, the system would also often recommend unfulfilled required courses, taken. While there would occasionally be nuggets of interesting suggestions, the system would also often recommend unfulfilled required courses, taken.

Exploring the Data
We wanted a better idea of what kind of data we were working with, so we created several visualizations to help us with this. The School of Information registration data that we had spanned a total of 18 years from 1995-2013. During this time, enrollment has grown from tens of students at its inception to over 400 in the present day, with numerous specializations being added over time as well.

Conclusion and Next Steps
There are many sources of data that could potentially be incorporated into this system, however, many of these sources are scattered and in a form not easily accessible or usable to students. One of the challenges of this project was gathering and consolidating lots of data from many different sources (e.g. course registration data from the Data Warehouse, course catalog data using the UM Developer API, etc.).

In addition to course registration and requirements data, we are also interested in incorporating course evaluation data to provide better recommendations. This would give the system much more power to take into account particular student interests and individual preferences. We realize that this information can be quite sensitive, so we are still figuring out how best to utilize and implement this.

The prototype we are developing will only use School of Information data, which is a decision we made due to time constraints and because we are most familiar with this data. We hope that in the future, all students will be able to use a system like ours to find out everything they would want to know all in one place - how many people took a class, when they took it, and how much they liked it - in order to painlessly figure out the best courses to take.

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