Minutes of Tufts CS Student Council
Taken by Jared Chandler

October 8, 2020
7:00 - 8:30pm
Virtual Halligan 102

- **ACTION ITEMS**
  - Create a new Piazza for Department Announcements
  - Send email blast every week with department announcements including
    - Chair’s office hours
    - Link to Google calendar
    - Link to department suggestion box
  - Create a space in Sococo w/ground rules to not talk about CS
    - **Done:** “Sea of Tranquility” room on Floor 1 VH (It’s on eastern edge of the floor below the “Holodeck” and the “CS Student Council” and above the “Charles Babbage” room.) *Please publicize!*
  - Create course guide tailored for athletes
  - Create student mentoring clusters, mixing students from different classes
  - Promote use of Instagram as communication channel
    - Have “takeover” days. Volunteers:
      - Sam Testa, Alyssa Vargas-Levine, Kate Hanson, David Massart
      - Juliana Vega, Ben London, Janny Huang, Kate Epifano
  - Have students sign up to meet with EAB members
    - **10/16 2:45 - 3:15pm,** anywhere in Sococo
    - [Sign up sheet](#)
  - **Done:** Send feedback on mentoring connections to Chris Phifer.
  - Find ways to encourage more graduate student interaction. Jared has agreed to work on this project informally

- **Student Resources.** The meeting opened with a discussion of various CS department focused student resources, including:
  - Website: [https://engineering.tufts.edu/cs/student-resources](https://engineering.tufts.edu/cs/student-resources)
    - Summarizes a number of resources available to students
  - **Student Resource Request Survey**
    - This survey is a place for students who have financial needs related to CS courses to communicate with the department so the department can try to fill the needs. The survey will be open this semester and next. The department will address the needs on a rolling basis.
  - Chair office hours:
- Kathleen has weekly office hours and asked for advice on how to publicize.
- Recommendations from Council:
  - Create a new Piazza for Department Announcements
  - Email blast every week
  - Link to department google calendar in email
  - Ask professors to link to chairs’ office hours from Piazzas.
- **Department Suggestion Box**
  - This link is a qualtrics survey that allows anonymous or credited suggestions for improvements in the CS department.

- **Virtual Halligan/Sococo**
  - Scavenger Hunt this Friday
    - 1 to 2:30 pm.
    - Participate by yourself or in teams
    - Pizza delivery for the winners
  - Plenty of space available
    - Let us know if you’d like some for a study group

- **Virtual CS department**
  - We’d like to have a discussion about
    - What’s going well? What could we do better?
    - Q: Is this sococo or everything?
    - A: Everything. One challenge has been casual interactions.
    - Donna: If you want to email me anytime about things which might be helpful.
    - Feedback: I believe that as a transfer student, I’ve never been to the original building and it’s hard to integrate with the other students. It doesn’t really feel real. It’s as if you’re watching a video. I don’t know how to fix this in the short term, but if there’s any way we can get a better social experience among the community it would be good.
    - Feedback: I’ve noticed work ethics, either people are working too much or people are procrastinating way way too much. Maybe have workshops to help students better manage their time during covid.
    - Feedback: It’s difficult to get people to socialize on a computer screen.
    - Feedback: I feel like when I go to sococo I’m there for a purpose.
    - Feedback: I think mental health in computer science is something we should work on.
    - Q: What kind of space would you want to talk about mental health?
    - A: We could absolutely create a room where the rules are not to talk about CS.
    - Q: Have you seen that in any other department?
    - A: Not sure, but some of my friends are in sociology and they do that. I’ve had a good experience with WIT.
    - A: Trivia night. Discord channel.
- A: We could create a room or panel with upperclassmen to offer advice to lowerclassmen. Create a guide for what classes are prereqs. Tailor it to athletes if possible.
- A: Focus on fostering community in class environment since there’s less selection bias.
- A: Focus less on productivity. More on social engagement.
- A: Maybe we can get professors to help foster social spaces for passive interaction.
- A: I think sococo is not the best channel. I think we should use discord.
- KFS: We could use sococo as a launching point.
- Q: Could we foster mentoring / peer guidance like WIT?
- A: Maybe we could set it up to do it in small groups or 2 or 3.
- A: Maybe groups of freshman, sophomore, junior, senior.

- Q: How do we get people engaged?
- A: Free Pizza
- A: Maybe getting TAs to go to a mentorship event as part of their TA role.
- A: I think anyone would be interested in having some people they can talk to.
- A: Postbacs need mentorship too.
- A: Maybe mentorship could be an automatic enrollment.
- A: Maybe we could think of different ways to get information out that’s less formal.
- Q: Does CS have an Instagram?
- A: Yes we do (Donna). We don’t have a social media person in the department but anyone who has any suggestions, I’m happy to hear.
- A: Maybe we could have social media takeovers.
- Q: Are there volunteers?
- A: Sam Testa, Alyssa Vargas-Levine, Kate Hanson, David Massart, Juliana Vega, Ben Landon, Janny Huang, Kate Epifano

- **External Advisory Board: 10/16 2:45 - 3:15pm**
  - Volunteers to be somewhere on main floor
    - Edit: now can be anywhere in Sococo because we’ve fixed login issue
  - Q: Are we doing this, this year?
  - A: Yes. It is in sococo. But we need your help with meeting the members in sococo to help the EAB form connections with tufts students.
  - Q: Are board meetings the only time the students can interact with EAB?
  - KSF A: Other interactions are possible but limited. That’s something I can discuss with the EAB: how to have extended relationships and further interactions.

- **Chair Updates**
  - [Hiring a 50% time Diversity Program Administrator](#)
- ME gets the other 50%
- Fingers crossed: finalist interviews this week and next
- Q: What sort of things will this person do?
  - A: Unknown, but probably working with student groups. Training on microaggressions and implicit bias. We want to measure the demographics of classes at the beginning and end of the semester to determine where we are leaking students. This is a task we hope this person will be able to spearhead. Organizing events, panels, and speaker series to showcase role models. Conducting focus groups and talking to students from different backgrounds to seek insight into places where we can improve things. The job isn’t well defined so we don’t know yet. But these are the things we are talking about.
- Q: I’d like to see addressed Imposter Syndrome.
- Feedback: I think it’s important to catch people early on to help avoid them developing imposter syndrome.
- Q: When would they start?
  - KSF A: My hope is by January.
- Q: Would it be feasible to add another option to TA duties to identify TAs who are interested in mentorship/diversity role.
  - KSF A: We could. That would be something that the new diversity coordinator could work on.
- Q: Maybe we could have the Lab TAs reach out to the students and talk about diversity to their students.
- Q: Would the person think about how we could incorporate social aspects into our classes?
  - KSF A: That’s definitely something that’s in our strategic plan. We are working on how to address social good in the department and the profession.

- **Faculty Searches**
  - Looking for faculty in Quantum Information Theory
  - Because of a grant from the NSF
  - Also looking to hire a teaching track faculty member.
  - Also looking for a tenure track faculty member who does research on how to teach an engineering science.

- **Cummings Center update**
  - The building is on track, maybe move in Jan 2022 or summer 2022

- **Mentoring Connections [request from Chris Phifer]**
  - Chris Phifer, Tufts alum, asked about future mentoring opportunities along the lines of InterHacks organized by Surpriya Sanjay.
  - Volunteers to talk to Chris
- David Massert (david.massart@tufts.edu) said he’d be interested in talking to Chris.
- CSX, Jumbo Sec, Robotics Club
- People interested in helping with mentoring:
  - William Kandianis, Sam Testa, William Scott, David Massart, Maitreyi Kale, Sam Berman, Igor Felipe, Megan Gelement

- Other topics
  - Restart some sort of graduate student group.
  - Jared would be willing to do this informally.