Introductions

The meeting started with each person naming one thing going better than expected and one thing where we'd like things to improve. Here are the collective lists:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Better than expected</th>
<th>Needs to improve</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I like being at home.</td>
<td>Office hours for 105 are taking too long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course load has been manageable.</td>
<td>Covid cases rising: Not sure what to do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching comp11 lab is going better than I expected, even virtual.</td>
<td>Running out of tokens in 105, quickly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not as burnt out from working at home as I expected.</td>
<td>In 170 and I feel morale is low.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We had a workshop w medford GirlScouts.</td>
<td>We have low registration for our virtual events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online classes pros have become apparent.</td>
<td>Missing social in person aspects of Jumbocode/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blown away by how flexible people have been.</td>
<td>Harder to collaborate on work with other students, makes it less enticing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can meet my advisor more often.</td>
<td>Groundhog day w same grad students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New job, exciting.</td>
<td>Getting oriented to all the new faces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting help is going better than expected.</td>
<td>Haven’t met a ton of new grad students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office hours are much more accessible. Easier to take advantage of.</td>
<td>Engagement inside class could be improved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s great that you all keep showing up to these meetings.</td>
<td>I miss everyone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy to see the department try to make the best of the situation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allocating time to bake more and cook more.</td>
<td>Need to do better with time management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like the online format of classes. I like being able to go back and review.</td>
<td>It’s harder to engage professors, whereas in class you could do it by lingering.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I really enjoy how instructors are adapting</td>
<td>For comp15 being recorded doesn’t sit well with me. I think there’s something good about watching it live.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like working from home.</td>
<td>Difficulties w internet connectivity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Actions/updates since last meeting

**Piazza for department announcements**

The TUFTSCS piazza board has been created and is being actively used for department announcements, including chair office hours, colloquium talks, new courses, demo lectures for faculty hires, etc. So far 196 students have subscribed. If you haven’t already, please subscribe!

**Peer mentoring program: applications being processed**

We are going to try a pilot in the spring. We will keep getting your input as it goes forward.

**Mentoring events for grad students**

We had an event for grad students. Grad students talked about upcoming classes, and got to meet different grad students from different areas.

**Meetings with advisory board members (thank you!)**

This event took place and was successful. The advisory board members were super excited to meet with members of the council who participated.

**Hired DPA: Edward Alexander (started Monday!)**

Edward is super excited to get started. Faculty have already reached out to get help with how to better foster diversity, community and inclusion in their classes. For students, I’m interested in finding ways to keep an ear to the student experience to help better foster community. One thought is a panel on imposter syndrome in early January before people come back to “campus”. The department is super excited to have something focusing on diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging full time. Edward has an office on the Main VH level of Virtual Halligan right next to the Halligan Main Lobby. Feel free to stop by and say “Hi!”

**Teaching faculty candidates**

We are working on hiring a new teaching faculty member. We are hopeful we will be hiring some excellent teaching faculty. Please attend if you are able. It will be helpful for us in gauging what will make for an engaging teaching experience.
Cumings Building update

The building is on schedule to be finished October 2021 with move in expected for January 2022.

Items from the floor

What are you hoping for from graduation?

Student: What are the options?

Kathleen: It’s unlikely that covid will be under control. The Class of 2020 had virtual, with promise of in person later. Maybe in-person graduation will be possible in August.

Donna: I’d like to throw a big party when we are able to do it in person.

Kathleen: One thing which was nice about the virtual graduation, was the slideshow. We could start collecting pictures of students prior to make the experience much more personalized. We’d like to hear more of your ideas.

Faculty and student events update (donna)

Donna: We don’t have any events setup yet, nor did we think they would be good at the end of the semester, but we are hopeful in the spring we can do some. Especially in the time when people arrive back but are quarantining. If anyone has ideas, please send me an email: dcirelli@cs.tufts.edu.

Effects of new covid restrictions

Student: You have to get tested every other day and they’re expanding the facility to do higher volume of testing.

Kathleen: How long does it take?

Student: It probably took 5 minutes, it used to take only a minute.
Student: I’ve heard of 25 minute waits, but that may depend on timing.

Student: Because we are testing more often, we are getting shoehorned into time slots.

Student: You can choose your own time slots, but hopefully it’s no more than 35 minutes round trip.

Student: It’s not great that they closed the gym. It’s hard because that’s one time students could get out of their house to exercise.

Panel on imposter syndrome is planned for the second part of January

Special Guest: JP de Ruiter, Chair of the Intro Sequence Task Force

Student: I’d like more information about the task force. Seems like there is a lot of flux in Comp 11 and Comp 15. That gap can be a bunch of extra work or a bunch of busy work.

JP: These are exactly the reasons we have the task force. The point of the task force is to find a way that 11 and 15 are well connected. And also that this is documented in such a way, that we can ensure a core set of material is taught. This isn’t as easy as it sounds, as people have a difference of opinion as to what should be taught. And even if you have agreement, people like to teach in different ways, either very improvisational, or very exact and scheduled. Regarding overlap, it is good if there is a little bit of overlap, but we need to find the right amount. We are making good progress on this actual item. Even within a course it is sometimes a good idea to have some overlap. We are busy doing this, and we hope that we will be able advise the faculty soon about a manual covering 11 and 15. What questions, suggestions or complaints do you have for me?

Student: One thing I’d like to see is how well these courses are doing preparing students for higher level courses.

JP: We are looking at how 11 and 15 prepare people for 40, but 160 is less of our focus as it is more theory based.

Student: We also need to worry about all the people who also want to learn just a little computer science. We don’t want to make 11 a weed-out course. There are CBS majors who take 11 and 15.
**JP:** I have heard that students perceive 11 as a weed-out course. Whether or not it is, we still need to be concerned about that. Because that is not the intent. There are some courses which are aimed for people who want to learn a little computer science without necessarily preparing to be a software engineer. It is a dilemma. We had experiments with two tracks in 11, which we didn’t think worked, but we aren’t sure it was executed well.

**Kathleen:** It has been executed well at other places.

**Student:** I want to add the CS Minors don’t have to take 40.

**JP:** The fact that some people have to take 40 and some don’t shouldn’t be a problem. I don’t think there is a problem as such, but we need to make sure that 11 and 15 address this.

**Student:** We are trying to get more data on tracking how many hours students are spending on their courses. It seemed pretty bad.

**JP:** Yes, we have been working on this as well. We are aware and are thinking along the same lines. We don’t want it to be unsustainable.

**Donna:** JP what should students do if they have suggestions after the fact?

**JP:** If you send me an email with “CURRICULUM TASK FORCE” in the subject, that will really help: [jp.deruiter@tufts.edu](mailto:jp.deruiter@tufts.edu)

**Student:** I heard from a couple of 11 TAS that a lot of the students dropping Comp 11 are which they felt were underrepresented in technology. Is there something to help us better understand who’s dropping and why?

**Kathleen:** That’s one of the first things I’ve asked Edward to do. Building a dashboard to track our demographics at the start of the semester and at the end.

**JP:** What incentive could we give to students who have left the course to fill out the survey?

**Various:** Pizza, Gift Cards

**Collectively:** We have lots of ideas about how to identify instances where people dropped.

**JP:** We really want to try to understand more about the reasons why people left, both incentivized and anonymous.

**Student:** A lot of people who drop classes, drop classes and then re-enroll next semester.

**JP:** We could ask if students are planning to re-enroll.
JP: I wanted to bring to your attention that this is a COVID semester. This both amplifies the problem and makes it more obvious. We have learned that students transitionally rely on other students and TAs. However with COVID they have less access to TAs and students and are struggling accordingly. What are your thoughts on this?

Student: We have seen a marked decrease in people coming to office hours in 40.

JP: There may be a confound here. Comp 40 has had some pedagogical changes which may be decreasing workload.

JP: Why do people not start earlier?

Student: People like the thrill. Maybe have an enforced wind-down period.

Student: I think TA reliance may be part of the problem. Students may put off the homework because they feel TAs will be able to help them complete it faster than doing it on their own.

JP: It is a tough problem.

Student: I think it’s a problem of wanting a break from the last homework which self perpetuates. I think one reason the queues have been longer is that we are missing the ambient learning while waiting in the queue.

Sarah: JP there are a few groups which are doing homework in sococo. WICS, for example with 160.

JP: Maybe we should advertise this option.

Kathleen: I think we should postpone the remaining items until the next meeting.

Students: [Consensus agreement]

**Items pushed to next meeting**

- What can we do better for Spring 2021?
- How are we doing with notices? Is the Piazza page helping? (donna)
- How would it make you feel if you received a care package during Covid? (donna)