Minutes of the CS Townhall 10-28-2020.

Hiring more faculty

The Department is still growing. We have a number of new faculty starting this year:

- Dave Lillethun (Systems Teaching Faculty) who is currently teaching Comp11 and Comp111 and will be teaching Database Systems in Spring 2021.
- Bert Huang: Teaching Machine learning w/limited annotations in Spring 2021
- Dan Votipka who will be teaching Human Factors in Security and Privacy in Spring 2021.

While Tufts in general has a hiring freeze, we are still hiring for next year because of external funding or additional revenue streams. Specifically, we are looking to hire a teaching track faculty member and a tenure track faculty member focusing on Quantum Information Theory supported by a NSF grant. The school of engineering is also looking to hire a faculty position focused on Engineering Education.

We are also hiring at the staff level. We hired Jenny Mooney who is the new graduate program coordinator. We have hired a new Diversity Program Administrator, Edward Alexander, who is currently working at the Sloan School on diversity programs. Edward’s time will be split 50% CS/50% ME. He will report to Ellise Lamotte in the CSD. We’d like student feedback on what you would like to see him focus on.

Cummings Building

Updated news: The new building is on track for completion in Fall 2021. It will likely be ready for department occupancy for Spring 2022.

Student Resources

The department has been working on reorganizing the student resources section of our webpage: https://engineering.tufts.edu/cs/student-resources.
Jobs and opportunities posted on the Comp199 Piazza board:
https://piazza.com/tufts/fall2014/comp199

The department has launched the Student Resource Request Survey for funding to address short-term hardship:
https://tufts.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_a052TjW0P5opGeh

The Department has also been working on a site with mental health resources spearheaded by Donna Cirella. Please take a look and give us feedback:
https://spark.adobe.com/page/967b7ghINpoNq/

The department announcements will be posted on piazza per requests from the CS student council meeting.

Student Requests

We have heard of several requests from the student body.

- Students have expressed interest in a mentoring program. We are working on creating groups of senior and more junior students. The deadline to apply to be a mentor is November 6. If you are interested, please apply.
- We have heard that many students don’t like the isolation of online learning. We think that students don’t want to socialize online. We’d love to hear your ideas about how we can improve this given the current situation.
- We are working on providing advising resources specifically for student athletes with regard to course selection and sequencing.

Questions and Answers

**Question (Student):** What is the timeline for some form of mentoring program?

**Answer (Kathleen):** We haven’t hammered out all the fine details. We’re hopeful we will have it sorted out in the next few days. We are especially interested in reaching freshmen due to the pandemic.

**Question (Student):** How many students is each mentor responsible for? Could we make it so we can choose how many people to mentor?

**Answer (Kathleen):** We are still thinking about this. We are tending towards 1 or 2.
Idea (Student): There is something the iclub (International Club) is doing to have a coffee selecting 3 students at random in person. (Student) : I believe the econ club / department is doing something similar.

Kathleen: It would be interesting to try it and see what happens. We will investigate.

Sarah Richmond: Do you have any ideas about categories? Maybe we could match people by interest.

Kathleen: How many people do you think would try it?

Student: I think lots of the transfer students would be interested in it.

Question (Student): How will spring be different / the same?

Answer (Kathleen): The spring semester starts Feb 1st. There will be a spring break weekend. Tufts wanted students to have a long winter break. Tufts also wanted every month to have a long weekend, but didn’t want people to leave campus. Most of our classes are still too large to be in person. So most of our classes will be online. We will continue to leave the modality choices to the people who are doing the teaching. So far people are mostly choosing to do so remotely.

Question (Student) : Can you talk more about a task force to review the curriculum?

Answer (Kathleen): J.P. de Ruiter is chairing the task force. The goal is to learn about the workload and the distribution across students.

Question (Student): Where can students from other departments post projects to find out about getting help with technology from CS people?

Answer (Various) : The entrepreneurship piazza. I think that’s the right forum for things which bridge CS and other disciplines.

Question (Kathleen): What are things people miss about halligan?

- Seeing friends
- Seeing instructors.
- Being able to teach labs.
• Seeing new random people.

**Question (Student) :** Is there a plan for bringing back Comp 121? Something for people who want more web exposure.

   **Answer (Kathleen):** Not sure offhand. Right now it’s just 120. We are a small department and have to balance between breadth and depth in the courses we offer.

**Question (Kathleen):** How can we get people to use sococo more?

   **Answer (Student) :** Having a room which was designated for post-bacs was helpful.

   **Answer (Student) :** We use a room for 160 homework. It’s like an ongoing webcall. People come in and drop off as their schedules allow.

**Question (Student) :** How many transfer students there are?

   **Answer ( Sarah Richmond):** We can look into that and report back.

**Question (Student) :** How did the scavenger hunt go?

   **Answer ( Sarah Richmond) I think it went really well. People seemed very excited about it.**