

CS Town Hall Fall 2021 Notes

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Actionables

Play-by-Play Notes

Opening Statements

The event started with opening statements from Chair Gafni, Professor Reinman, and Dean Santos. Here is a summary of Dean Santos' opening remarks as the Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for HSSEAS:

[Dean Santos]

- Hired 3 mentor professors from last year's search
 - ChemE, Civil & Environmental, ECE
 - Tara Bills (transportation inequity). Joining Civil & Environ Engr
- Second round of hiring for mentor profs is going on this year
- A2A from WE
- ESUC has its own EDI committee
- Every dept in engineering has an EDI chair?
- Associate Wesel + Santos hosting workshops
 - CAPS, Center advancement and teaching
 - Help profs teach inclusive course design
- Support student initiated events that are frontward facing
 - Some engineering something?
 - Equity in AI, transportation, and water something

Diversity and Inclusion

We first went through the event slides.

[Sun]

Role

- Work with faculty students to make dept more inclusive and diverse
- Her door is open if you need someone to talk to for any issue
- <https://samueli.ucla.edu/equity-diversity-and-inclusion/>

Ongoing efforts to promote edi

- Many profs work hard to enhance course to make it more accessible / inclusive
 - Ex: CS 30
 - Aimed to enhance experience of women and underrepresented minorities
- Smallberg tries to highlight contributions from women and minorities

Mentorship, courses, TA training

- Try to mentor all students, esp marginalized students (women, LBGTQ+, underrep minorities, disabilities)
- Train TAs (Korf in charge)
 - Provide ppl from LBGTQ+ communities, CAPS (?) to train TAs and make class more inclusive

Diverse Professorship

- Problem for whole country
- Dept try make future professorship diverse (UCLA one of 11 countries participate in this program, Millstein leads this. Train PhD students who are underrep to be future professors)?
- Student group is not as diverse as some other dept. Solution from UCLA: This year, launch CSSI and we try to reach out to HS students, esp for students who are underserved, who do not have resources in their community / local school

Efforts in Research

- Several colleagues dedicated to EDI research (Kai Wei for NLP).
 - Female student is student of Kai Wei and passed her dissertation and will become a prof → working to build more diverse professorship
- PhD students (Arjun, someone else) looking at QWER in AI?
- Can't hear so I missed some stuff but sounds like she's going on about NLP stuff
- Ofstravsky participates in anti-harassment/ discrimination committee

Outreach (EDI)

- Prison Mac Project?
 - Connect incarcerated individuals from mentors to the outside world
 - Sahai is on leadership team
 - Anyone interested can contact him
- Exploretch.la
 - Initiated by our own students
 - Darwiche is advisor
- CSSI
 - Provide diversity scholarship for students who are underserved to have opportunity to come to UCLA and experience high quality education
 - Supported by gafni, korf, and smallberg (on advisory board)
 - Several professors gave small specific talks to show CS is interesting (Palsberg, Cho (?), Eggert (?))
 - Hired lots of undergrad students to become tutors for HS students

Q&A

1. What is the department doing to support LGBTQIA+ students? (do not mention QWER Hacks, in which the department did not play a role)

[Sun]

- All of us needed to be educated on what we can do (we want to keep the convo open)
- Some possible things we can do as a dept:
 - Use proper pronouns
 - Don't say names incorrectly
 - Course content (some of ex might be inappropriate)
 - For historical reasons, we say gender is binary variable in data science
 - We should have discussion on how we can change this and
 - Open the conversation (eg. gender)
 - Point to more recent research on the harm of just making gender binary (mentioned Kai Wei's (?) research)
 - Provide financial aid

[Cho]

- Went over material to make sure things are neutral
- If any student notices something, Cho will debug his courses better since Cho only knows so much

[nachenberg]

- Students have come up after lecture and tell him that some of the content was uncomfortable for them
- Carey encourages students telling profs so that the profs can incorporate feedback
- Carey also has an open door policy and is always available to talk about anything

2. If students want to discuss issues, etc, who should they contact?

[reinman]

- **Go to faculty**
- **Lots of EDI resources available on campus**
 - **Talked about the EDI link on cs website**
(<https://samueli.ucla.edu/equity-diversity-and-inclusion/>)

3. How is the department measuring and improving the retention of Black, Latinx, and Indigenous students, especially without further burdening minoritized faculty?

[Santos]

- **Working with campus admissions in terms of which students are applying, who is admitted**
- **Wesel might have some of this data but Santos encourages taking a closer look over longitudinal 4 years and do more of this**

[Smallberg]

- **CEED has been doing this tracking for decades**

4. Are there any updates on the situation with Gafni?

[Reinman]

- Dept of CS and University as a whole take these issues seriously.
- Prof Gafni and student reps had independent and group meetings with Dean Dear (?) and it was decided to pass investigation to Discrimination Office (it's independent from UCLA)
- CS Dept not privy / told updates so we don't know what office decided?

How are professors supporting disabled and neurodivergent students outside of testing accommodations? (e.g. through accessible course materials, classes, etc.)

[Reinman]

- Online materials helpful for students w/ disabilities who need more time
- CS has active connection w/ CAE. Faculty will do what they need to do when CAE says specific students need more accommodations

[Korf]

- Reinforce what Reinman said...There's a very well structured / through process for providing accommodations through CAE.
- Korf gets letters about indiv. Students and says a student has been approved for certain accommodations. Doesn't say why the student needs it.
- Korf says him and colleagues religiously follow and give these accommodations
- Profs also go to pains to provide accommodations that respect the confidentiality of the students
 - Korf has students turn in exam at end of regular time but students can come back and get the exam from his office afterwards to continue working on it

[Millstein]

- If there are specific things profs can do beyond the accommodations from CAE, tell the profs so they can be aware and try to better support students

[Santos]

- Faculty are mandated to abide by CAE stuff
- If a student feels unsafe going to class (eg. bc peers aren't answering daily symptom monitoring survey correctly), the student should tell the profs

- Profs need to be very understanding to support students (eg. immocompromised, students living with elderly)
- Profs should provide materials where students can catch up offline so students don't feel like they must attend lecture in-person.

[Reimain]

- Students should feel comfortable taking care of themselves and not forced to attend classes when they're unwell
- If profs aren't being clear that there are accommodations to catch up, let the prof / reinman know

Curriculum & Academics

Guiding Q1: Are there talks among professors on developing and releasing grading scripts so students can get immediate feedback on projects and homeworks? Professors Palsberg, Cho, and Reinman have implemented this; many students have expressed interest and support for other classes to take this on.

Guiding Q2: Is the department able to offer courses like game development and graphics courses in the CS 174 series more often? What are some limitations that students may not be aware of in providing elective courses?

[Reinman]

- **Debriefing about the 8 year review and how our feedback from town hall surveys**
- **Postponement b/c covid and it should be next year if postponement goes thru**

Q&A

1. Would you be open to adding faculty or curriculum to tie UCLA closer to game development/interactive entertainment with game studios and Hollywood nearby? [Christian L. from ACM Studio]

[Reinman]

- Short answer is yes.
- We are interested and looking rn into hiring new professors, esp from industry
 - Eg. Google, symantec
- We will look thru Blizzard and other companies as well. Student input is much appreciated.

2. Is the department doing anything to make it easier for undergraduates to get find opportunities and get involved with CS research labs? (Mentioned MIT's centralized system)

[Reinman]

- Yes, it's a great idea
- Getting industry support / mentorship is a good way to start this

[Alina]

- New class started ~2 years ago, ENGR 24 talks you thru how to find research opportunities
- Relationship with TA is also a way to get in
- SRP office has a whole page on research and has examples of drafts on how to email faculty
- Will Herrera's office does research (?)

[zhang]

- Zhang is looking for undergrad students to help
- Zhang tells TAs to find students interested and motivated in networking to invite them to do research
- OH should be utilized to discuss research, esp later in quarter when not many students come

[Millstein]

- We tried centralizing a few yrs ago.
- One challenge:
 - Rarely is it that Millstein has an open space and is like "Hey I have an open space and I want undergrads!"
 - Usually it's case by case where student comes in and is interested, and they talk it out to see if there's space, etc
- Not always like how Alina says where you could email and just ask around

3. Can classes publish their autograder or test cases? Especially in intro classes like CS31/32/33? [anonymous]

[Smallberg]

- Does not understand question bc we do send out our test cases

[Reinman]

- Interjects and tries to explain

[Smallberg]

- Part of learning programming is learning how to develop test cases
- We do for many projects have sanity checkers
- To release all the test cases goes against learning how to develop test cases
- Several students don't even use the sanity checks to begin with

[Evan]

- Clarifies that Reinman, Cho have stuff with more immediate feedback
 - Reinman bomb lab gives immediate feedback
 - Cho uses gradescope autograder

[Smallberg]

- Well between examples in spec and test cases we provide, you should be doing pretty well in project if you pass them
- We don't want to do every corner case b/c students should develop that skill

[Reinman]

- **Agrees that part of what students should be learning is a robust program instead of just building towards the grader**
- **Reinman says he can go back to talk to faculty on how to give students more immediate feedback in general courses**

What is the department doing to integrate ethics into every class that students take?

[Reinman]

- **We are trying to solve and work on this (it's currently work in progress so won't comment too much on it in case it doesn't go thru)**

[Korf]

- **Try to educate students on Academic Honesty and proper scholarship**

[Matt]

- **Working with Wesel to integrate ethics into CS and should be a years long transition**
- **In work / in progress**

Recently took CS M148 under Majid. He mentioned there is a Data science minor in the works. Can't find anything about it online, etc. Is there any status update? **Akshay Gupta**

[Cho]

- **At the dept level, we are done**
- **At the school level, we are waiting**
- **We hoped we could get approval by end of summer**
- **On Friday, there's another meeting on the minor that Cho will be attending**
- **Cho is optimistic it will be approved by end of quarter**
- **Then it will come back to dept and they figure out who leads and teaches it, etc**
- **Confident minor will officially start by beginning of next year, but possibly earlier**

Are there any plans to offer CS144 Web Applications this year or the following year? [Akshay Gupta

[Cho]

- Is going on sabbatical and needs a break

Q: Can the physics requirement be lessened and/or dropped? I feel like ABET accreditation is no longer useful for CS degrees

[Reinman]

- Idea towards ABET: gear our degree towards relevance beyond today
- Goal is that we are engineerings / scientists for entire career
- Reinman had some feedback that physics is useful for some courses (autonomous systems, more EE related topics).
- End point: ABET is something we need to have for our degree

[Korf]

- We used to require two physics labs (4AI and 4BL)
- We ma

[Smallbeg]

- Dropped chem 20A
- ABET requires certain amt of physical sciences and we worked it where we dropped chem 20A so not sure we can cut much more... unless we drop physics for chem

[Cho]

- I was physics major in undergrad
- For a while when I was in CS grad school, i doubted why I did physics
- But after 5 yeras, he sees how useful physics is
- Even in current research, physics is useful
 - B/c of ML and NLP. Physics is very useful for those topics

- **Physics not necessarily useful for every CS major but it is very good for ML / AI**

Q: can we get more non-STEM offerings for sci-tech requirements? or can you accept the non-STEM courses that are petitioned?

[Reinman]

- **Have seen petitions that go beyond that. When there's some science / tech component, we try to accept**
- **When it doesn't have that component, we're not saying it's not important, but it's not sci-tech**
- **Reinman knows that talks among student for more diverse offerings**
- **Reinman will need to have a faculty talk about this to make a change for this req bc it's only a CS req rn**

[Alina]

- **Sci-Tech is CS specific, TBA is entire engr school**
- **Michel spearheads the petitions for TBA to Wesel**
- **Michel looks thru all the pttions every summer and they make new TBA tracks if it's been petitioned a lot**

[Michel]

- **Recently added 5 more classes to ENGR + envr bc a student submitted a very detailed request towards expanding that area with more choices. Michel and Wesel looked thru all the petitioned courses and looked towards expanding the allowed courses**
- **There's a log of all accepted petitions so that's how TBA grows**

Q: One of the areas I am interested in is Computer Vision. But currently the only open area is in a CS 188 course. Are there plans to expand on this field? [Brandon Hsu]

[Korf]

- **There are several faculty doing CV but they usually only teach 1 undergrad and 2 grad courses.**

- Encourages students who are interested to look into the grad classes and possibly take them. These grad classes can satisfy your sci-tech
- Don't just restrict yourself to undergrad classes

[Millstein]

- We have a new faculty member joining in January so that should lead to more offerings of these kind of courses in the future