ADDITIONAL ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED FOR
EE GRADUATE STUDENT TOWN HALL
2015

The EEGSA conducted an annual survey soliciting feedback on issues relevant to the graduate student community. Due to the limited amount of time at the actual Town Hall meeting on October 12, 2015, the topics to be discussed were narrowed down to:

- GSI Hours Policy
- GSI Hiring Process
- Facilities and Safety
- Diversity and Retention
- Degree Requirements

Below are some additional topics with responses that were not covered at the actual Town Hall meeting. All materials, including information from previous Town Halls, are available on the EECS Town Hall website (http://www.eecs.berkeley.edu/Students/TownHall/).

ISSUE: Students would like to receive teaching credit for being a Course Facilitator in the MAS-IC program.

COMMENTS:
PhD students hired as TAs for MAS-IC programs are not hired as GSIs - this circumvents the intent and protections of the GSI contract, and also means that students can't earn credit towards their GSI requirement by doing this.

RESPONSE:
The issue of students wanting to receive teaching credit for MAS-IC courses has been an issue from the beginning. The information and communications regarding this issue have also been consistent from the inception of the program. Indeed, MAS-IC facilitators do not receive GSI credit.

On the other hand, they earn extra money (they are hired as consultants) on top of their normal salaries. This is in contrast to normal GSIs. MAS-IC is a “self-funding” program that may not impact the normal on-campus operation. Therefore, the EECS department does not want to take away from the GSI pool for on-campus operation. Allowing doctoral students to receive credit towards their teaching requirement would indeed impact that pool. To compensate for this, the consultancy fee concept was created.
ISSUE: 91% of students who do not work with an undergraduate research collaborator would either like to or are unsure if they would like to.

COMMENTS:

- Request for a more formal system to employ undergraduate researchers. If more undergraduates worked for credit or pay, they would be more accountable for working a certain amount of time.
- “The department is not putting enough on research”
- “Most undergrads aren’t resourceful enough to make progress on research”
- Request to advertise better for the currently in place grad-undergrad research collaboration mixers
- Request for better help in understanding when it is or isn’t a good idea to take on an undergraduate research collaboration
- Request for a centralized system to match undergraduates with graduate students and faculty

RESPONSE:

Undergraduates are definitely eager for research opportunities. The EECS Undergraduate Student Services team is grateful to hear that many graduate students are not opposed to working with undergraduate students.

The EECS department currently has several solutions that address the point about undergraduates working for credit or pay. Firstly, there is the beehive (http://beehive.berkeley.edu/) system that graduate students can post research opportunities to and then have undergraduates apply. There's also the campus URAP system (http://research.berkeley.edu/urap/) that serves the same purpose. The URAP program actually has unit-credit built-in, so students can definitely receive credit for the research they are performing. More specifically to this point, any undergraduate doing research within the EECS department can formalize their experience by receiving CS/EE199 credit. The EECS department strongly encourages all graduate students to make sure their undergraduates are receiving at least 1 unit of 199 credit so there is some formalism around commitment and expectations.

Regarding the issue of undergraduates not being resourceful enough, this may be anecdotal and subjective. Many UC Berkeley undergraduates were among the top students in their high schools. Most research relationships can be beneficial to both parties when there are clear expectations, a timeline for deliverables, and regular check-ins. It is true that many undergraduates are not experienced enough to autonomously identify potential roadblocks and independently devise solutions to them, but the majority are very industrious if they have a well laid out plan in advance.
Regarding the advertisement of opportunities, the department currently posts on the undergraduate CS/EECS Facebook pages, sends out announcements on the listservs, and distributes fliers. If graduate students have other ideas for getting the word out, they can share them with Shirley Salanio (Shirley@eecs.berkeley.edu), who can communicate these ideas with the EECS Undergraduate Student Services team.

In addition, SUPERB (Summer Undergraduate Program in Engineering Research at Berkeley) and the other NSF REU’s (Research Experience for Undergraduates) at Berkeley and other campuses offer excellent summer research opportunities for students. Summer programs also offer great opportunities for undergrads to experience research on another campus.

Approximately 30-40% EECS/LSCS undergrads engage in research, but surveys have indicated more would like to do so. Graduate students who are looking for undergraduate researchers could participate with the Center for Student Affairs by hosting one of the workshops that is offered on finding undergraduate research. Students are shy about approaching faculty but often find it easier to approach a grad student. Having graduate students take a more active role in these workshops could help to make it easier for undergraduates to approach them.

**ISSUE: MEng program quality**

**COMMENTS:**

- *Wasting department resources and lower the course quality with increasing student from MEng program.*
- *MEng students I’ve encountered in courses etc. are not of the same calibre as PhD students. It seems like there are a ton of MEng students in 1st-level grad classes these days.*

**RESPONSE:**

The MEng student enrollment in EECS classes is not very big. There are currently 34 students for the graduating class of 2016. Out of a total of 68 classes they are taking this semester, only 9 are in non-mezzanine classes. In all those cases, the Faculty responsible for teaching those courses were consulted before the students were allowed to enroll in the course.

The EECS department is very committed to not "waste department resources" for MEng students. In fact, the MEng program brings resources. For example, the department receives extra GSIs and materials for some courses.
ISSUE: Minority populations would like to feel more included.

COMMENTS:

- Want to see more social events and include things besides alcoholic drinks
- Requested a gender neutral/single stall/unisex bathroom in Cory

RESPONSE:
The EECS department is committed to creating a welcoming environment for all. In the past year, The Department received a grant from the Division of Equity and Inclusion that funded Diversity training for EECS Staff, incoming PhD students, and undergraduate student instructors. In addition, the Department was selected to receive a grant from the National Center for Women in Technology (NCWIT) to provide support for women in computer science.

Regarding social events that include beverages that are non-alcoholic, many of the Graduate Student Association and department run events ensure that non-alcoholic beverages are available. If students would like to see more events that do not include alcohol, they should discuss their ideas with the EEGSA leadership. The current presidents are Leticia Ibarra (ibarra.leticia@berkeley.edu) and Maggie Payne (paynme0@berkeley.edu).

The gender neutral bathroom has been a work in progress that encountered some delays due to campus policies. The EECS Department recently received approval from the Campus to build a gender neutral restroom on the first floor of Cory Hall. The Director of Space Planning and Facilities, Scott McNally, is currently working with Real Estate Services to make this a reality. The estimated completion date is fall 2016.