

Mentoring Record II

Wed 3/13

I think 'Three Ideas' day went okay for us. "Jo" showed up from her sick leave for the presentation, but as she was not involved in making the slides or in running through the presentation, her intro was cringingly rough. The others on the team made a good recovery though. I realized that I would need to facilitate more practicing for the 'Tech Spec' review.

Thurs 3/14

Unfortunately, the specifics of instructor's feedback from the 3 Ideas Presentation went right over the freshmen's heads and confused/disheartened them. I tried my best to rephrase/re-spin the feedback. At the time I agreed with the instructor's comments. In hindsight, however, I wish that we had not assumed they was right or so quickly given up on our initial projects in favor of the much narrower (albeit 'universally applicable') suggested project. By the end of class we had decided to start over to rather than selecting one of our three ideas to continue with. We didn't assign any specific assignments for the weekend as I think everybody was tired and needed time to digest and accept the events of the past few days.

Tues 3/18

The challenge in today's class was interesting. When "Jo" asked what a ring oscillator was, I was reminded (from 3/14) that a lot goes over their heads and also the value of our team's open-to-all-questions environment. Personally, I was unclear as to what my role was supposed to be as mentor for this assignment. How much was I supposed to help them? I thought it would be best to let the freshman work through this assignment as independently as possible. They left to collaborate with another table and when we joined back in they definitely did need help and I was honestly shocked at how little understanding they had of the basic concepts of transcription/translation/molecular biology techniques. I still think, however, it was good to have let them flounder around on their own for a while.

Wed 3/19

I had planned to get together with "JS," another BE major who knows a lot about this project area for lunch from 1-2 on this day to bounce around ideas/etc but then I realized I had my presentation on this day too, so another 20.902 mentor went to meet "JS." In class she went over ideas they had brainstormed over lunch, and we divided up research into 5 big areas. There were still tons of open issues, but the project was feeling much less formidable and we made a lot of progress in identifying potential inputs and outputs for our system.

Wed 4/2

We decided firmly on our system input and output. The details were still pretty sketchy on how these parts worked, however, so I assigned everybody to read the Abstract/Figures of any 3 relevant papers and to summarize each in 1 minute in class on Thursday.

Thurs 4/3

I chose to read bioluminescence papers, but nobody else followed through on reading/summarizing papers. I found this annoying given how close we were to 'Tech Spec'. The freshman's plan was to **for real this time** read over the weekend and to

accordingly update the slides for 'Tech Spec' for the mentors to make comments on Tues 4/8.

Tues 4/8

To my dismay, nobody had done any work on the project (at all) over the weekend. I definitely went into super-stress panic mode as 'Tech Spec' was 24 hours away and there were still about 20 open issues (okay, slight exaggeration), essentially no slides, and nobody really even knew how the basics even worked. I felt I had already contributed a lot in coming up with the idea and that it was not unreasonable to have expected the freshman to have researched and reported back to us the details/specific questions on these proteins. This is their project right? However, it was obvious that this sequence of events was not going to happen and that a plan B was needed. We met to pull together the 'Tech Spec' presentation at 9pm and I pretty much taught everybody present how our project works, and then once everybody was on the same page we split up the slides and worked simultaneously and very efficiently on a google doc/ppt. It was actually from here on out a lot of fun and I enjoy working with them. Han had to leave at midnight, so I stayed to clean up the slides with them (eliminating about 1/2 of the text per slide and adding in pictures), and made them split up the slides and run through then-and-there a 'dress-rehearsal' presentation once. We decided that "Jo," who wasn't at the meeting at all would have to present the conclusion as that part had conceptually changed the least amount since 1pm in class.

In conclusion, I feel that the fact that I had to put a disturbingly large amount of last-minute work into the 'Tech Spec' reflects negatively on my team and on me. I feel that more accountability and intermediate goals need to be put into place in the future to prevent this from happening again. However, the job did get done and everybody present did awesome work on Tuesday 4/8.