Notes:
~ 10-15 people attended

Anthony and Hassan gave introductions and shared their experiences. Issues pertained to the following :
- Class-based imposter syndrome
- Stress over financing oneself while being in the dept.
- Financial struggles involved in interviewing
- financial struggles before and at the beginning of a job

Opened up conversation to group and discussed:
- "Mystification" around older, more experienced CS students in the department who can be both inspiring, but also intimidating and mystifying
- Distinction between social and monetary capital amongst students and how both seem to be important in the dept.
- Concerns over whether students are doing the "right" thing by studying CS - are they "selling out"? What are their motivations in concentrating in CS? How much does the salary matter?
- Resources available in our department and at Brown - **Brown emergency loans** - and how these can be good but also that there need to me some others
- Can companies give us money up front when interviewing/ finding housing, etc.
    - *Could we maybe work with IPP to set up something to help finance the process?*

There seemed to be a shift in the conversation after this and broader department issues were then discussed:
- Toxic TA environments wherein TAs would openly pick on students "by name" behind their backs
- Can we increase empathy and awareness in our TAs through trainings, workshops, or some other form of collaborative education?
- Can we increase HTA trainings in running inclusive staffs?
- Mentioned the incident report form
- Some students feel there is a correlation between the diversity of TA staffs and the ability with which all students can interact and succeed
- Mentioned that Paul Valiant's class does a great job of fairly encouraging collaboration in a way that does not disadvantage students (i.e. those who may have less social capital or who work and can't make hours)
- Suggestions brought up for the classes with open collab policies: have Piazza threads open for students who want to work to find each other, have classes/TAs/the dept. host casual events for people to come and collaborate
- While collaboration is good, classes that REQUIRE it in order to succeed are a problem for those with less time, fewer connections in the dept., etc.
- Shout out to CS15 for hiring a diverse staff

- Concerns raised about the hiring policies of courses, the lack of diversity in some staffs (CS 33 for Fall '16), and difficulties in both interviewing and recruiting for TA staffs
- There seems to be confusion about what TA staffs are looking for and how students are hired. Do the HTAs/professors only want students who got an A as TAs? Is there bias in hiring friends of the HTAs? Do you need to have taken the class at all? What are they looking for in the interview?
- Suggested a mid-semester, more casual info session on TAing. Or perhaps more frequent ones, as there seems to be a lot of mysticism around it
- "Intellectual elitism" also was said to be an issue in the department, based a lot on how many classes one has taken, where they have interned, and how long they have worked on CS

Takeaways:
- Monetary resources need to be set aside and publicized for low income students
- Interviewing and fronting money for the companies is major stress for students
- TA staff's and their demographics have huge impacts on students' performances in and perceptions of the department and currently, there is still work to be done on making these staffs more inclusive and diverse
- Collaboration-requiring classes can disadvantage students and should be made aware of this along with providing students who do not have tons of connections in the department with alternatives/resources
- Overall though, this was "one of the only events [of this nature that the student has attended] that just feels good"

Laura Notes:

Issues:
- Migroaggressions and othering: "Where are you from"
- Brown makes assumptions about students' backgrounds, privileges
- Are you in CS for the right reasons? Implication that wanting a high paying salary is not the "right reason"
- Student responsible to pay for their own food for TA training
- Stress securing funding sources to purchase laptop
- Limited support at home because parents cannot relate to being in college or provide advice (first-gen)
- Social capital vs actual capital > TAing, long hours and low pay, difficult to balance with work-study and other higher paying jobs on campus
- Cognitive dissonance > feel disconnected from friends and family at home, who can't relate to experiences at ivy league college
- TA program inflexible, time heavy
- TA's not diverse, intimidating if none of the TAs look like you, CIT intimidating if you don't have friends in CS

- Students can't easily socialize with others due to financial constraints
- Feel disconnected from family and friends, and a profound sense of responsibility moving up in socioeconomic status
- Unofficial referral system for CS FB page and TA program can be discriminatory
- Toxic TA Environment (example for 2 years ago): culture of TAs denigrating students that come regularly for help in TA hours. TAs would laugh and make fun of students (call them dumb) for come into hours every week
- Competitive culture ostracizes students from groups and group work
- Cliques form in intro classes, ostracizes students
- Intellectual elitism -- failure and help seeking looked down upon, judged
- Non collaboration policy in intro sequences can feel isolating, difficult to make friends

Suggestions for Improvement:
- Provide all meals to students for TA training
- IPP or CS Dept provide advanced funding for students to travel for interviews
- Companies provide advanced internship stipends to help with moving costs for summer internships
- Normalize help seeking, break down assumptions of "CS isn't for everyone"
- Encourage TAs to empathize with students; focus TA training on empathy, compassion and discouraging gossiping, talking badly about students who seek help
- Diversify TA staff
- Look into Paul Valiant's collaboration policy; good guideline for collaboration policy
- Faculty explicitly states collaboration policy at beginning of course, and encourages group making (facilitates process through online course tools)
- Normalize failure as a united front from TAs (instead of 1-2 TAs sharing stories of failure, all TAs in the class share experiences of failure, so those who share are not ostracized or looked down upon by the students)
- Increase transparency in TA grading; ensure personal biases cannot affect grading (standardized grading scale, rubric, guidelines?)
- CS18 -- Fridays URM TAs share their experiences and struggles (could be expanded upon for other classes)
- Provide diversity training for all CS concentrators or intro sequences, help create more welcoming culture, so less students feel like outsiders
- Student Mixers Ideas: "Have no friends in CS? Come here!"; TA mixer (diversify TA applications/interviews; "New to CS?" (1st year support group)