Virtualizing Office Hours in CS 50

David J. Malan
Harvard University
malan@post.harvard.edu

www.cs50.net
This is CS 50.
Prior Experience

- "none": 45%
- "a little": 45%
- "a lot": 10%
O: Scratch

O, hai!
Binygv

2: Crypto
3: Game of Fifteen
5: Forensics
Teh Computer Science 50 learnz you about intertubes in teh cloudz. David J. Malan will pwn u ftw so watch out!

6: Mispellings
7: C$50 Finance
Address:
1 Oxford St
Cambridge, MA 02138

Get directions: To here - From here
Search nearby - Save to My Maps
Edit

8: Mashup
Implementations

- Acrobat Connect Pro
- Blackboard
- Dimdim
- Elluminate Live!
- Saba Centra
- WebEx
- Wimba Pronto
- WiZiQ
welcome to the Virtual Terminal Room
It was Prof. Plum in the conservatory with the lead pipe!
Attendance
Comments (+)

- “I think they’re a great idea. Help is just as good, and I find that I think much better when I’m not in the stress of physical office hours.”
- “Virtual office hours are definitely more convenient. And while I’m waiting to be helped, I can just keep coding.”
- “... they’re great for shorter questions.”
Theory != Reality

- “I think it’s a really cool idea, I just haven’t gotten around to trying it out.”
- “A neat idea. Haven’t used it though.”
Comments (-)

- “They are not as effective as the physical ones. The [TFs] can’t really give their full attention to the student.”
- “They are helpful for small questions, but not for understanding larger concepts.”
- “I really like the idea. I’m just more comfortable with someone physically there.”
- “... nothing beats physical office hours.”
Non-Attendance

- Prefer physical: 80%
- Long waits: 40%
- Technical difficulties: 10%
Problems

- Latency
- Moderators can’t be in multiple breakout rooms.
- “When a [TF] greets you, it’s easy to miss.”
Conclusions

- A net positive.
- Not some revolutionary new technology but, rather, another resource (imperfect but still useful) that we now make available to students.
- Perhaps best suited for courses that are already keyboard-based.
- Audience was self-selecting: those who liked opted in, those who didn’t opted out.
Virtualizing Office Hours in CS 50

David J. Malan
Harvard University
malan@post.harvard.edu

www.cs50.net