

First IITMUG meeting meant to share knowlege, code

By Pranava Teja Surukuchi
IT MANAGER & LAYOUT EDITOR

The first IIT Mathematica User Group (IITMUG) meeting successfully took place on Thursday. You might already know that Dr. Grant Bunker conceived the group with the help of Dr. John Erickson and the main purpose of the group is to form a group of Mathematica enthusiasts to discuss and share coding in Mathematica.

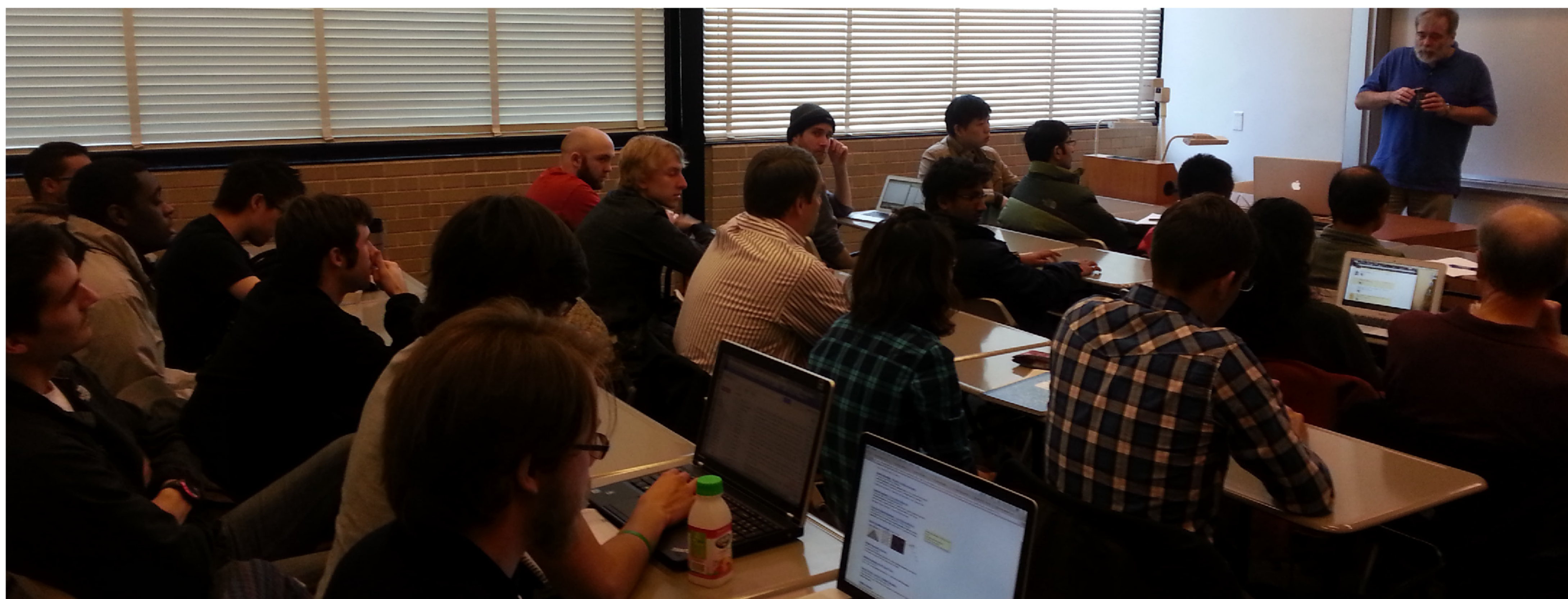
Dr. Grant Bunker talked about the objective of the group and he also laid out the format of the meetings.

He said that the meetings are a way to share knowledge of the code among the group, which composes of Mathematica users with all levels of proficiency and from a starter to an expert. This means not only do people who are using Mathematica in their research can come and discuss how they use the language, but people who are just interested in Mathematica but are not quite familiar with the way it works can also go to the meetings and discuss it with their peers. The meetings are tentatively scheduled on Thursday every other week.

As a way to show the power of coding in Mathematica he showed a few examples, one of which showed dynamically rotating cube onto which live video feed from the laptop camera was projected onto it in just a couple of lines of code.

Finally, Bill Molchan, an undergraduate student then came up and talked about the idea of introducing a 400 level course next semester in Mathematica. The exact format of the course is still under discussion, and anybody with an idea of how they want to see the course format to be can send an email to Dr. John Erickson at john.erickson@iit.edu.

Photos by Pranava Teja Surukuchi



SGA hosts Teaching Methods Forum

By Utsav Gandhi
CAMPUS EDITOR

The Student Government Association organized a very productive and interactive session about instituting fundamental academic change which can be completely student driven. The tagline for the “Teaching Methods Forum” Facebook event itself asked a very fundamental question – “Do you like how your classes are taught? What have you seen in one class that you would like to see in others? What motivates you to learn?”

It was an incredibly productive conversation with a lot of very constructive ideas brought to the table. SGA will be using suggestions and thoughts from this forum as a framework for future proposals to be put forward to administration. It's important for students to take part in conversations like this because teaching and learning are topics we are all affected by. If SGA is going to make

proposals concerning these things, they need student opinions to be able to do that in an effective and representative way.

Some of the preliminary suggestions brought forward were applicable to a variety of majors. Regarding higher-level classes, especially Math and Physics, students felt enough examples weren't being used to supplement instruction. They also suggested more discussion-based classes, especially Humanities and Social Sciences – more so like the Shimer College style. They wanted to see more of an exploration of the subject and the field when taking the Intro to Profession classes. In Business classes, they wanted to see more real world examples and perspective-based discussions rather than theory and its applications. For computer science classes, they wish to see more web apps incorporated to supplement instruction.

Students also want to see more problem solving during class time with

constructive feedback rather than wait for TA's to grade homework sessions. They recommend that professors actively take the effort to suggest supplemental resources such as relevant Khan Academy videos, reference periodicals and textbook choices; along with best practices like group study. Other topics discussed were the use of PowerPoint slides for lectures and how well they were utilized. Students want more freedom to prove learning rather than just the traditional exams – suggesting revolutionary ideas like a 30-minute discussion with the professor about topics covered throughout the semester instead of a final to gauge how much the students had really grasped. They also suggested that professors use only relevant notes in class – so that students don't need to cram everything from the textbooks and then not have more than half the material show up on the exam.

The discussion then shifted to what motivates us as students to learn and how

that can be tied up to academic performance. Peers, the level of preparedness of professors, their openness, how caring and empathetic they are, the stress on real world applications, the prospect of changing life status, doing something challenging, and meeting life goals. Some of the deliverables decided on at the forum were to come up with a scheme about real world applications, more detailed syllabi, to clarify expectations right at the beginning, more of a hands on approach to learning, to encourage discussion and communication, awareness of external resources, generalize TA standards, have more regular quizzes, varied options for examination, and similar standards for two professors teaching the same class.

If you would like to contribute to the discussion, be updated about more events like this, like SGA's Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/iitsga> and visit their website at sga.iit.edu

Office of Spiritual Life organizes trip to Bahai Temple

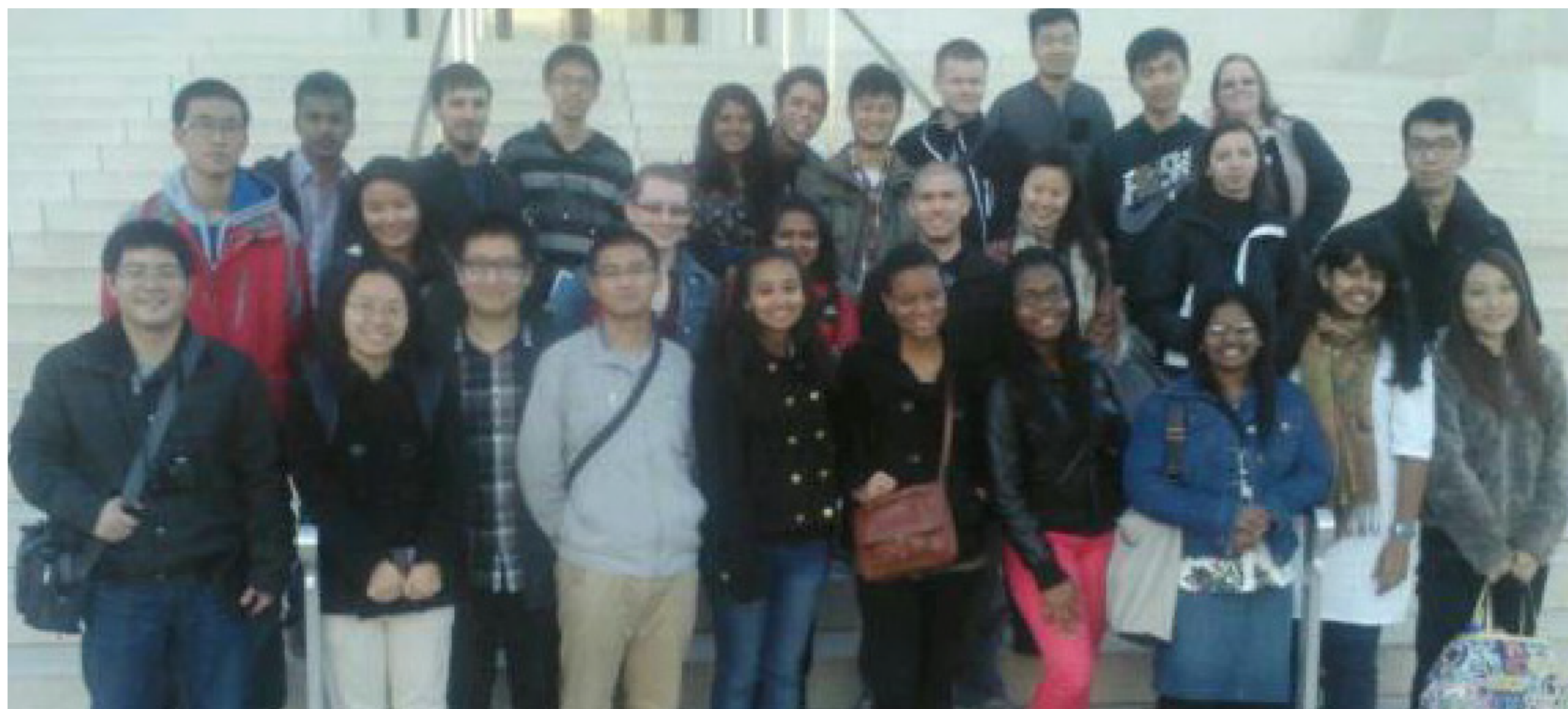


Photo by Lynne Meyer, Director Office of Spiritual Life