Thanks Xiao for presenting 😊
I’m graduating!

• Defense exam passed
• Dissertation submitted
• Job obtained
  o IBM Research Almaden, Text Analytics Team
  o Say hi if you’re in the Bay area!
• So I’m going to take this one appropriate time & try to offer what small measures of wisdom I can
Do you know what it is that you know?

• Publishing is very important…
• But, are you aware of all the other skills you’re learning?
  o How to identify and define an interesting problem, and convince other people that it’s worth addressing (the “so what” factor)
  o How to scope a project, whether for one paper or a sequence of related papers (not too little work, but not too much either)
  o How to work with other people, and have them be happy to contribute to your work, just as you are happy to contribute to their work (because everyone benefits from more successful projects)
  o How to give constructive criticism, not with the goal of tearing down other researchers, but to help them improve
  o How to read critically, learning from the knowledge of other researchers and actively thinking how to improve on their work
• These are all important skills to have, and will serve you well for many years and in many other jobs
• Cultivate them consciously! Be able to talk about them!
Talk with other students about how grad school is going

- Do you sometimes feel like you are in over your head?
- That’s actually good 😊 because it means you are being challenged by a good, difficult program
- Dr Han oversees a really high caliber group of researchers
- Working with so many smart people makes you a better researcher
  - it’s never good for personal growth to be the smartest person in the room, you always want to be learning from others
- But the process itself can sometimes feel frustrating & lonely
  - the PhD process is designed to be lonely (“the independent researcher”)
An unhappy, frustrated grad student is an inefficient researcher

• Don’t say, I should not feel this way, I bet no one else is feeling like this, everyone is doing great, and getting papers
• Don’t just say, I will ignore this and just try to do my work
  o You may lose weeks and months, and still continue to feel like you are not succeeding at grad school, and having nothing change
• Say, I feel like I am not currently able to do my best, and that’s good to be aware of, everyone has these times
• Now I can think, why is this? How can I fix it?
  o Talk to the other students, ask them for help, not only with research, but how to think about the PhD, how to deal with the bad stretches
  o Talk to Dr. Han! Besides being brilliant, he is incredibly kind. Ask, why do you think I am stuck? What do you suggest I should do?
We are a team

• Help each other!
• Help with research projects, offer your expertise
  o We have a lot of respect from other people for being such a collaborative group
• Help with going through the PhD, offer your experience
  o Ask each other how the process is going
  o Tell stories about successes but also about failures, share your knowledge and your stories with each other
  o We are data miners! We know that more data is always good 😊
Last bit: Grad Council Survey Results

• My GSAC project: two surveys about our department’s students
• Some insights about the students in the CS department, according to the students who filled out the surveys:
  o Did you know that nearly all of us believe we are of average or worse intelligence, and of average or worse success, than others in the same research group?
  o Did you know that this is particularly true of 2nd, 3rd, and 4th years?
  o Did you know that over half of the students who responded declared they’re interested in an industry job, and about 30% are interested in academia?
  o Did you know that DAIS students come here to work with a particular advisor, but that all the other research areas have students who just come to the department, but settle on an advisor later?
• To see all results (they’re really interesting!)
  o https://wiki.engr.illinois.edu/display/csgacnews/CSGAC+News
  o Your Life In Graduate School Results (pdf)
  o Your Graduate Program Experience Results (pdf)
  o I also put them up on our semester summary page, links are S1 and S2
Thank you!

I am very lucky to have been part of this group

Please stay in touch!

(marina.danilevsky@gmail.com)