

WILLIAM LI:

So the class was started in 2011. That was the first time it was offered in the fall semester of 2011. It was founded by Professor Seth Teller, who has done a lot of work over the past couple of decades, particularly in computer vision and in robotics. And over time I think he saw that a lot of the work that he was doing could also be applicable to assistive technology or technologies that can help people with disabilities live more independently or help them in their day-to-day lives.

So I think over the past maybe decade or so, he's been involved in a lot of course creation and creating robotics courses and other undergraduate courses in electrical engineering, computer science. And I think that this class was in a lot of ways kind of an extension to that to some extent, focused on assistive technology.

Over the years, I think Seth had a chance to work in assistive technology in research projects and then interact a lot with people with disabilities in the Cambridge area or the Boston area and really get a sense of the kinds of practical challenges that they face and how technology could help.

So that really I think was the motivation for starting the class, trying to work with this group of people and also to tap into the interest of undergraduate students to work on service learning projects or to apply their design and engineering skills to something meaningful. So he taught this class of the past three years, and we're fortunate to be teaching it this fall.

GRACE TEO:

In terms of departmental support for the class, so because Professor Teller was part of the electrical engineering and computer science department at MIT, that's mainly where it has been housed for the last three and this year as well-- so four years-- going forward, we're actually looking to cross list a class between electrical engineering and computer science, mechanical engineering, as well as health sciences and technology.

And so I would say that when it was housed within electrical engineering and computer science, we had a lot of computer science students come to us. And so a lot of the other projects ended up being software-related projects, because that was their skill set, and that's what they were comfortable with.

But we've also seen that a lot of assistive technology requires hardware design as well, and so that's why we're bringing in mechanical engineering support for the class. And as for health

sciences and technology, their role at MIT is really to serve as this integrated force between different facets of engineering and the medical community.

And so what we're hoping to do next year with HSTS, Health Science and Technology Support, is to bring in occupational therapists into the class as well to help the students with their projects. So yeah. Just in thinking about the different skill sets that go into the projects, we do think software, hardware, and then being able to interface with the health side of things is very important.