
ASMITA SODHI, Dalhousie University

To project or not to project: Alternative assessment in first-year linear algebra

Late March 2020, in the living room of a one-bedroom apartment which has been converted into a makeshift office. Asmita is sitting at their computer. They have just received a job offer, and now realize they have to plan a fully-online offering of first-year linear algebra within just a few weeks.

A question many of us have grappled with in the last two years is: how do we fairly evaluate students in an online, heavily computational class, where there are online calculators freely available that can do most of the work for you? To give myself an opportunity to evaluate students on work that a calculator couldn't do for them and to get students engaging with the course material in new ways in an asynchronous class, I chose to include a final project in my class, which asked students to write about an application of linear algebra that was of interest to them. The result was a number of wonderfully creative projects, and the sense that many students had a better appreciation of linear algebra than they did before. In this talk, I'll speak about the evolution of this project, and what I (and my students) learned from it.