Subject: 6.005 final project grade

Dear Dr. Miller,

Thank you for teaching me so many useful things about software design and implementation in 6.005. For example, the idea of test-first design was completely new for me but now I will always use it in large projects.

Before the final project, I thought I understood the course material pretty well; for example, I got 100/100 on quiz II. That is why I was very surprised by my group’s grade for the final project. We got 72/100, which would be equivalent to a C-. However,

My group got a 72/100 on the final project (significantly below average), which we definitely weren't expecting.  Our first two TA meetings went very smoothly and we did our very best on the coding.  We worked pretty much non-stop during the two weeks leading up to the deadline making sure we had complete tests, specs, etc.  We turned in our project fairly confident that we would get an A, since we looked over all of the requirements and checked our code for readability issues and the like.  In the end, even though we had a functioning and correct chat system, our project lost very many points (enough to bring it below the average) at the last stage based on the design of our code.

I understand that having functioning code is not enough - there were many important lessons in 6.005 about readability, maintainability, and reusing code - but it was very jarring turning in a project that we thought was very good and getting back something like a C-.  Is there any way we could have identified problems with our project and fixed them before turning it in?

I'm planning on taking 6.813 next semester and 6.170 at some point, and both of those are project-based classes that will probably have a similar style to 6.005.  An important element of doing well in a class for me is being able to self-check my assignments to predict what grade I'm going to get.  Do you have any advice for how I could be more sure of my grade for a project before I turn it in?

Thanks,  
Oleksandr Stubailo