15.053x, Optimization Methods in Business Analytics

Fall, 2016

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A glossary of notation and terms used in 15.053x

Weeks 1 and 2

(The most recent week's terms are in blue).

NOTATION AND TERMINOLOGY

The purpose of this document is to provide a glossary of notation and terminology relevant to 15.053x. We will add notation and terminology throughout the semester, and we will update this document once a week. If you would like terms or notation added, contact the TA, Khizar Qureshi.

For a comprehensive (and mathematically advanced) glossary of mathematical terms used in optimization, see the Math Programming Glossary, which was developed by Harvey Greenberg.

MATHEMATICAL NOTATION

- $\sum_{i \in S} x_i$ = The sum of x_i where the sum is over all indices i in the set S. We refer to this type of notation as *summation notation*.
- $|x|$ = the absolute value of x. (This assumes that x is a single variable.)
- $\lfloor x \rfloor$ = the *floor* of x. That is, x rounded down to the nearest integer. For example, $\lfloor 2.3 \rfloor = 2$; $\lfloor -1.1 \rfloor = -2$; $\lfloor x \rfloor = x$ if x is an integer.
- $\lceil x \rceil$ = the *ceiling* of x. That is, x rounded up to the nearest integer. For example, $\lceil 2.3 \rceil = 3$; $\lceil -1.1 \rceil = -1$; $\lceil x \rceil = x$ if x is an integer.
- $x^+ = \max\{0, x\}$. This is often referred to as the *positive part* of x.
- $x^- = \min\{0, x\}$. This is often referred to as the *negative part* of x.
- $\{(x, y) : 1 \le x \le 2, x + y \ge 0\}$**.** This is interpreted as "The set of points (x, y) such that x and y satisfy the following conditions: $1 \le x \le 2$ and $x + y \ge 0$.} The ":" following (x, y) can be interpreted more quickly as "such that". Usually the conditions that need to be satisfied are separated by commas, but occasionally they would be separated by semicolons (";").

TYPES OF OPTIMIZATION MODELS.

By an *optimization model* (or *optimization problem*) we mean a problem in which there is a single objective function (max or min) subject to constraints. An alternative term that is commonly used is *mathematical program*. We also refer to them as *maximization problems* or *minimization problems*.

- *Linear Program*: an optimization model in which the objective is linear and the constraints are linear.
- *Mixed Integer Linear Program*: an optimization model in which the objective is linear and the constraints are linear, and some (or all) of the variables are constrained to be integer valued. It is called a *Pure Integer Program* if every variable is required to take on an integer value. It is called a *Binary Integer Program* (or a 0-1 Integer Program) if every variable is required to be 0 or 1.
- *Nonlinear Program*. This is the common name that refers to any possible optimization model. Remember that nonlinear programs include linear programs as a special case.

OTHER TERMINOLOGY

- *Bounded feasible region*. We say that a feasible region is *bounded* if there is some positive number M such that every decision variable is guaranteed to be between $-M$ and M. If a feasible region is not bounded, we say that it is *unbounded*.
- *Convex function*. Suppose f is a function in which the domain D is a convex set. Then f is *convex* if for every two points $(x, f(x))$ and $(y, f(y))$ on the "curve", the line segment joining these two points lies on or above the curve. Equivalently, for every two points x, $y \in D$, $f((1 - \lambda)\, x + \lambda\, y) \leq (1 - \lambda)\, f(x) + \lambda\, f(y)$.
- *Convex set*. A set S is *convex* if for every two points $p_1, p_2 \in S$, the line segment joining p_1 to p_2 is also in S. Equivalently, for all $\lambda \in [0,1]$, the point $(1 - \lambda)\, p_1 + \lambda\, p_2$ is in S.
  Note: the feasible region of a linear program is always convex.
- *Constraints*: Inequalities (or equalities) to impose limitations on the decision variables.
- *CBC.* The solution algorithm that is freely available and is commonly used in conjunction with OpenSolver to solve linear programs and integer programs.
- *Decision variables*. The variables that represent the decisions or choices to be made. If you are using spreadsheet optimization, these variables are the values in *Changing Cells* or *Changing Variable Cells*.
- *Edge of the feasible region.* A line segment on the boundary of the feasible region that joins two extreme points. These extreme points are *adjacent*. (Every two extreme points can be joined by a line segment. For the two extreme points to be adjacent, the line

segment must be on the boundary of the feasible region.)

- *Excel Solver*. The optimization software that is included with Microsoft Excel. (With Google Sheets, the free software is called *Solver*.) It can be used to solve linear programs (simplex method) or integer programs (simplex method) or nonlinear programs (GRG Nonlinear).
- *Extreme point* (also called *corner points*). In two dimensional LPs, these are feasible points where two different constraints hold with equality. If we are solving a linear program with non-negativity constraints, and if there is some optimal solution, then there is an extreme point that is optimal. More general definition: A feasible point *x* of an LP is an extreme point if *x* is not the midpoint of two other feasible points.
Two extreme points are adjacent if they are joined by an "edge," which is a line segment on the boundary of the feasible region.
- Extreme ray. It is a ray whose endpoint is an extreme point, and such that the ray lies on the boundary of the (infinite) feasible region.
- *Feasible*. A point is said to be *feasible* if it satisfies all of the constraints of the optimization model. (A point represents the assignment of values to each of the decision variables.) The *feasible region* is the set of all feasible points.
- *Free*. A decision variable *x* is called *free* if it can be either positive or negative. If a variable is free, we also say that it is *unconstrained in sign*.
- *Geometric method.* This refers to a method for solving a linear program in two dimensions. An isoprofit line is drawn on the graph. Then the line is moved parallel to itself in a way to improve the objective function. It is moved as far as possible while still having at least one feasible point.
- *Infeasible*. A point is said to be *infeasible* if it violates one or more constraints of the optimization model. An optimization model is said to be *infeasible* if there are no feasible points (equivalently, there are no solutions).
- *Integrality constraint*. A constraint stipulating that one or more variables of a model are required to be integer valued.
- *Non-negativity constraints*. The constraints that constrain variables to be greater than or equal to 0.
- *Objective Function*. In an optimization model, the goal is to either minimize or maximize the objective function.
- *OpenSolver.* Spreadsheet modeling software that can be used to set up an optimization problem and call an algorithm to solve it. OpenSolver is freely available on the web at www.OpenSolver.org. OpenSolver can, in principle, be used to model and solve optimization problems with any number of variables. (Excel Solver is limited to 200

variables.) In reality, extremely large problems may take up more memory than is available in your computer, and they may require too much time to solve. In 15.053x, we typically use CBC to solve linear and integer programs. In addition, OpenSolver works with other optimization software such as CPLEX and Gurobi.

- *Optimal solution*. A *solution* refers to a feasible point. Suppose that one is trying to solve a maximization problem, and that the objective function is $f(\ )$. A solution x^* is called *optimal* (or *maximal*) if for any other feasible solution x', $f(x^*) \geq f(x')$. If it were a minimization problem, then x^* would be called an *optimal* (or *minimal*) *solution* if for any other solution x', $f(x^*) \leq f(x')$.
- *Simplex Algorithm*. The most commonly used method for solving linear programs. It was developed by George Dantzig in 1947. It finds an optimal solution iteratively. It starts at an extreme point solution. It then moves to an adjacent extreme point solution whose objective value is better. If there is no adjacent extreme point that is better, then (1) there is an "extreme ray" along which the objective value improves infinitely (and thus the optimal solution value is infinite) or else (2) the current extreme point is optimal.
- Solution. Typically a *solution* refers to a feasible point of an optimization model. The term "infeasible solution" sounds like a paradox. But, the term *infeasible solution is widely used to* refer to a point that is infeasible. That is, it is not a solution.
- *Unbounded*. We say that a feasible region is *unbounded* if it is not bounded. That is, for any positive number *M*, there is some feasible solution x' such that some variable of x' has absolute value larger than *M*. We say that the optimal objective value of a maximization problem is *unbounded from above* if there is a sequence of feasible solutions whose objective values goes off to (converges to) ∞. Similarly, we say that the optimal objective value of a minimization problem is unbounded from below if there is a sequence of feasible solutions whose objective values converge to -∞.