

Teaching Statement

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I believe you become a good teacher by observing good teaching in others and by actively applying what you learn to your own teaching efforts. I have had the good fortune to have been taught by some exceptional instructors. I have also had the experience of being taught by some less than exceptional instructors. As a student, it is easy to distinguish the good from the bad; however, as an instructor, emulating the outstanding instructors takes time, effort, and a dedication to students.

Throughout my graduate experience I have had many opportunities to improve my teaching skills. I was a teaching assistant for two artificial intelligence courses and two computer architecture courses, all upper division. I was responsible for developing and grading assignments, holding office hours, and managing weekly discussion sections. These sections ranged from open question/answer sessions to lectures introducing new material. Intermittently, I also gave a regular lecture to the entire class.

Besides my hands-on experience, I have also tried to obtain as much information as possible about educational theory and good teaching practices. I attended a 10-week workshop entitled Preparing Professional Faculty provided by the center for teaching at UCSD. This course covered cognitive strategies, course and syllabus design, preparing presentations, classroom management, and instructional technology in the classroom.

From all of these experiences, I have learned many good practices and try to employ these in my own classroom. I've learned that one of the biggest challenges is to keep students interested and motivated. I try to accomplish this by actively engaging them in discussions, both by asking thought provoking questions and by encouraging class participation. I make myself available and approachable both inside and outside the classroom. It is crucial that students recognize that their learning is a priority for me. I respond quickly to e-mail, I show up to class and office hours on time, and when I meet with students, I make sure that they have my undivided attention.

Another crucial component of good teaching is knowledge of content.

Computer science is a rapidly changing field. Effective instructors need to be knowledgeable, not only about the fundamentals but also about current trends in the field. I feel fortunate for the learning experiences I encountered in my graduate work at UCSD; they provided me with a solid background that allowed me to organize and present ideas in a clear and coherent manner. In addition, my ongoing research efforts have allowed me to present state of the art material to my students.

To put it simply, I like to teach, and I believe my student evaluations reflect my growth in this area. Students generally respond positively to my instructional efforts with positive quarterly TA evaluations and comments such as “Dave is one of the BEST TA’s I’ve had,” “explains difficult subjects well,” and “well spoken, easy to understand, sympathetic to students.” Teaching, like any skill, requires time and effort to improve. I am willing to invest both of these and believe that I have the potential to become an exceptional instructor.