Teaching Statement

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Introduction

My first exposure to professional teaching was as a Teaching Assistant during my years as a Ph.D. student at the University of Oklahoma. I began as a TA for an Algorithms course (Fall 2004) where I helped with grading assignments and exams, and prepared homework solutions.

In Spring 2005, I was appointed as a Teaching Assistant for a C programming course. My duties consisted of grading weekly quizzes, programming projects as well as exams. In addition, I was also the lab instructor where I had to teach the concepts involved in the programming projects. I continued as the Teaching Assistant for this course for a total of 5 semesters (until Spring 2007). As I gained more experience, the instructor gave me additional teaching responsibilities for conducting the class lectures (for classes which regularly had more than 100 students). During my final semester as a TA, I conducted about a third of the class lectures.

Teaching philosophy

My teaching philosophy derives from observing a number of professors deliver lectures and trying to understand the strengths of each professor’s style, in addition to my own experience with delivering class lectures. I believe that good teaching requires an enthusiasm for the subject and a passion for presenting concepts as simply as possible.

From the feedback I received from my class lectures, I understood that during the times when I was willing to step outside the bounds of the regular course material, the students both enjoyed the subject better as well as understood the concepts a lot more clearly. Being able to relate the concepts learnt in the class to real world problems we face every day made the students more involved in the class lecture. I received similar positive feedback from students while presenting the same material in different ways (for e.g. drawing pictures on the whiteboard, as well as demonstrating running code on a computer) This reinforces the subject matter for students and helps students with different learning styles. An enthusiasm for the subject helped me generate relevant real world examples, as well as explore the various ways of presenting concepts so as to make it possible to see the same ideas from multiple perspectives.

It is well known that keeping things simple is a very effective method for conducting class lectures. While delivering lectures, I try to use a presentation style where the
concepts are explained clearly so that the core idea is emphasized. I have received feedback from many students mentioning that they have understood the material much better after attending my class or lab lectures.

Teaching plans

I am comfortable teaching introductory programming courses on C, C++ and Java, as well as Data Structures and Operating Systems. I am particularly interested in teaching courses like Data Networks and Database Management Systems.

I am interested in an academic job as it allows me to pursue two passions together: teaching and research. Good teaching often inspires future researchers by bringing them to the forefront of research, while innovative research increases the cumulative knowledge and generates new ideas for future teachers. Having received quality mentoring from many wonderful teachers which helped me with my research as well as teaching skills, I wish to give back by following in their footsteps.