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To: Dr. Ulrike Stege, Associate Professor, Chair

From: Mary Sanseverino, Assistant Teaching Professor, Dept of Computer Science

Re: Peer teaching evaluation of Dr. Celina Berg

During the summer 2014 term I had the opportunity to visit and review a class in SENG310 (Human Computer Interaction) taught by Dr. Celina Berg. Celina had approached me in earlier terms to undertake a peer evaluation of her work, but nothing worked with my schedule until recently. I have known Celina for several years and we have often discussed teaching and the scholarship of learning and teaching. It was a pleasure to see her put in practice concepts and ideas she has long championed. It is clear, from her work in the classroom, her Teaching Dossier, and her supporting materials, that she has thought long and hard about the teaching of computer science and obviously enjoys it on many levels.

Let me say at the outset how much I enjoyed Celina's class. Not only is the topic of HCI interesting to me personally, but Celina's class, even though it started at 8:30 am, was full of engaged student-student and student-instructor interactions.

SENG310 Human Computer Interaction

Visit: May 15, 2014, 8:30 – 10:00 am

Approx. 40 students in attendance.

Lecture elements

The teaching method observed in this face to face classroom was a combination of expository lecture with interactive sessions around questions and problem-solving.

Organization and clarity

The purpose of the class was well stated and began with a thorough review of last day's work – including examination and feedback on select class work from the previous lecture. An overview where today's work would take the class was given.

Overall, the session made explicit the relationship between the current topic, what was done earlier, and where the course would be going in the future.

Lecture	Engagement with the students during the class was excellent. The class was clearly focused on the material at hand. Everyone was engaged – especially in the critique of peer-driven examples and when doing the in-class exercises. Examples given in class were directly applicable to problems students were engaged in solving. Everyone was focused and interested.
Computer / slides / demos	<p>Technology and slides were very well used – slides supported topics, everyone could see them easily. Student generated material from the learning management system (Connex) forum was used to highlight the topic of the day: Affordance. As well, student-created material from previous in-class activities was used to get students to reflect on topics covered, and apply techniques/theory to the task at hand.</p> <p>A brief overview of the current lecture was provided on slides, and homework for next class was also presented.</p> <p>Demos of in-class activities, including work completed in class, were given using the look-down document camera demonstrating an excellent application of this technology.</p>
Questions	Questions were clearly addressed in a respectful and positive manner. Dr. Berg posed a number of questions throughout the session. Students responded well, especially given the early morning class time (8:30 am). Celina handled the questions extremely well, giving students enough time to formulate answers. This is sometimes a difficult skill for an instructor to master – the time between asking a question and getting an answer from one or more students can be the longest 20 seconds of your day! Students in the class were responsive, especially when working on in-class activities and/or critiquing their own work.
Problem solving / in-class activities	A key component of the class – well handled, not rushed, nicely integrated into the lesson.
Communication	Celina is a clear and knowledgeable presenter. She showed excellent classroom control, moved and spoke confidently. Her timing with the material was good and she was able to quickly and easily get students to work in groups. She moved amongst these groups easily and confidently. When moving through the class space and working with the groups Celina modelled good group work methodology.
Overall assessment	The class session was inspiring. The students were engaged, and it was evident that everyone took a lot of pride in their work and research. Overall, an excellent session – I'd like to take the class myself. I have only one minor point that might or might not necessarily be an improvement: I would like to see a syllabus a bit more closely ties core readings and resources to a given lecture/topic. By this I don't mean to spoon-feed students with point-by-point detail – these are senior students and more than capable of organizing their own time , but simply putting a bit more explicit structure on the flow of the course.

As well as observing SENG310, I prepared for class as a student might by looking at the course website, reviewing the assignments for the week, and looking at the group project specifications. I found the course website to be efficiently laid out, and well used by everyone (students and professor). I looked at a lot of the messages and postings from everyone and the air of deep engagement found in-class was certainly echoed on the course website.

My only suggestion for improvement is around providing a bit more scaffolding for the class through a syllabus that is a bit more closely tied to the lectures. I surmise this would let students be even better prepared for each lecture. So, in sum, my only suggestion for improvement (and it is a minor one) is around providing a bit more intentional connection between reading/resources and classroom material.

Dr. Berg also provided me with a copy of her recent Teaching Dossier. I found it a very convincing and interesting read. Moreover, I noted that many of the goals and ideas espoused in the Dossier were followed through in practice in the classroom, in project and assignment design, and in student problem solving. In the Teaching Statement Celina says *"I look to students to understand what inspires them to learn, be it research, industry or entrepreneurial endeavors ..."* I feel she has followed through in this with projects, activities, tests, and assignments that both challenge and support students. For example, the project in SENG310 uses industry-standard techniques in HCI design. To help students connect these techniques with industry Celina has guest speakers from industry come in later in the course and reinforce the importance of the very techniques the students are learning and applying.

Celina and her TA are online in the course web page offering assistance, answering questions, presenting options, and supporting students in all sorts of ways. As well, they are available for considerable face to face assistance. My office is right down the hall from Celina's and I can attest to the time and effort she gives in support of her students.

In my estimation, Celina definitely "walks the talk" found in her teaching dossier.

I hope that my comments have been of some use. If you have any questions / comments, or would like to discuss this peer teaching review further, I would be pleased to meet. I have already taken the opportunity to apprise Dr. Berg of my assessment and felt she took my comments in the collegial manner in which they were offered. I have enjoyed many lively conversations around teaching and learning issues with Celina and find her stated commitment to developing successful teaching strategies and motivating students to be borne out by her actions both in and out of the classroom.

Sincerely,

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