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Statement of Teaching Philosophy

I have been privileged with the opportunity to teach in several different capacities: as the primary instructor in three undergraduate courses, as a teaching assistant in six others, and as a teacher and mentor in other community-related organizations. Reflecting on these experiences, I have identified three key strategies that I believe promote effective teaching: employing a variety teaching methods, assigning interesting and relevant homework, and maintaining open communication through regular, mutual feedback. As I have strived to incorporate these methods in my teaching, I have been rewarded with highly positive ratings.

First, I employ a variety of teaching methods. It is important to understand that students learn in different ways, and thus it is important to teach using multiple approaches. I have spent time in class periods lecturing with a slideshow for student reference, using a whiteboard to illustrate abstract concepts or demonstrate the execution of an algorithm, writing code snippets in class, or answering questions posed by students. Each of these methods has been highlighted by students as what they believed to be the most useful portion of class time.

Second, I assign interesting and relevant homework. This is a powerful motivation for students and reinforces course concepts in a way that classroom lectures typically do not. One homework assignment I gave in Programming Paradigms was a network-enabled multiplayer game, and I used extra credit as an incentive to be creative with certain aspects. Students have contacted me more than a year after the course ended and told me that they still use their own implementations of that project as reference material for best practices and common patterns of problem-solving. By working on projects that pique their interest, students are better motivated and can more easily retain information as abstract ideas are grounded in concrete, hands-on examples.

Finally, I maintain open communication through regular, mutual feedback. Teaching involves not only the dissemination of information, but also an open environment of learning. By providing students with regular and frequent evaluations throughout a course, I am able to quickly identify points of weakness, whether they arise due to an unclear lecture or a disconnect between the method of delivery and the way students learn and understand new topics. I have implemented this approach in courses I have taught in the form of an evaluation quiz at the end of every week, covering key points introduced that week and leaving a space for student feedback. A short portion of the first lecture of the week was then used to review the quiz, focusing on topics with which students most struggled. This constant source of evaluation enables both myself and my students to optimize learning. Furthermore, it cultivates a feeling in students that I am working hard and am actively interested in their progress and success.

Teaching is one of the most rewarding tasks I have ever undertaken, and is well worth the diligent effort it demands. It is a tremendous opportunity to guide students on the path of knowledge and to shape the next generation as humanity continues to advance.