GAANN Computing Scholars

1 ITSC 8665 Fall 2014 Semester Activities Completed

1.1 Teaching Mentor’s Assigned Activities

The course that my teaching mentor Dr. Mohamed Shehab teaches, Mobile Application Development, is very popular in the department, and this semester saw a larger than normal enrollment. As a result, my mentor has been working with two Teaching Assistants and two Graders, in addition to my help, whereas in the past offerings it has just been two Teaching Assistants (of which I have been one for the previous two semesters). Some of our responsibilities overlapped, but the activities I specifically accomplished included preparing some of the course examination material, particularly the Midterm and Midterm Bonus material, course Moodle page management, and attending some of my Teaching Mentor’s lectures.

1.2 Professional Development Seminars – Grad School

I attended two professional development seminars offered by the grad school this semester, both of which took place in the month of November. The first was titled “Preparing For Your Oral Defense,” and it was led by a panel of doctoral faculty members from various colleges, and intended to provide some practical tips on how to best prepare for your oral defense. I learned that preparation and execution are key in a successful defense. One of the most significant pieces of information that I learned from the seminar is the piece of advice to take the time to write a “mini-bio” for myself, as it’s a reflective way to answer those “WHY” questions that committee members will inevitably have about your defense. Similarly, giving group mock defenses to peers for practice and feedback is another thing I took away from this, and certainly things I plan to do in anticipation of my own proposal and dissertation defenses.

The second CGL seminar I attended was titled “Becoming a More Confident Public Speaker,” facilitated by Debbie Baker, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Communication Studies at UNCC. This talk addressed learning to use nonverbal communication strategies to minimize anxiety, develop effective presentation skills, incorporate visual aids properly, and build a better connection with your audience. I really benefited from this seminar, having gained a better understanding of how to use nonverbal skills necessary to minimize anxiety, which is something I personally struggle with often, regardless of the experience I have in oratory situations. I learned a few ways to apply knowledge gained in this session to my graduate and professional career, particularly concerning “Self Concept Theory” and its impact on my own impression management, as well as proper preparation.
1.3 Professional Development Seminars — Center for Teaching & Learning

The two CTL professional development seminars I attended both took place in October. The first one was titled “Problem-based Learning to Promote Student Engagement.” This seminar intrigued me because I was familiar with problem-based learning from a presentation in class, but at the time, I was having trouble differentiating the different active learning techniques. In this setting I learned about the principles of PBL from Dr. Rock, someone who actively employs them in the courses she teaches. Furthermore, I learned about the distinction between problem-based and project-based learning, and was introduced to a hybrid approach Dr. Rock uses to teach where I can rely on the key characteristics of both under different circumstances. The major takeaway for me was that structured collaboration plus feedback are necessary to build problem-based learning.

The second CTL seminar I attended was titled “New Ways of Engaging Students: Google Apps.” Presented by Sam Eneman, it addressed how to use Google Apps, specifically Google Docs for sharing and collaborating on documents, spreadsheets, and presentations, and Sites for shared web sites or a course wiki. The event was straightforward in teaching the use of these Google Apps. I was only familiar with Docs, but Sites I was relatively new to using. However, I would only recommend this event to other students if they were completely unfamiliar with using Google Apps. Although the seminar was introduced as a “new way” to engage students, I found that the seminar did not actually focus on how to use Google Apps as an instructor in order to engage students in the classroom, as I’d hoped. However, I can at least rely on my experience using these tools as a student, and leverage that knowledge as an instructor.

1.4 Research Papers

The two research papers I chose to read and present on in class were the following:


1.5 Master Teacher Lecture

For the master teacher lecture, I observed Dr. Celine Latulipe (and Bruce Long) as they taught about 30-35 undergraduates in the “Intro to Media Programming” course. The course was a flipped-class session where the students first reviewed what they learned about Threads previously by taking a group “clicker” quiz. The quiz portion of the class took about an hour. Following this, students were provided an in-class task to develop a GUI for a dating service targeting “political junkies.” Finally, students were assigned the next assignment, which would prepare them for the next week’s topic regarding input validation. Students actually have the opportunity to see what the finished product of the assignment would be. Concerning the teaching methods and techniques applied by the Master Teacher during the lecture, I learned the advantages of collaborative/cooperative work in the classroom. During the quiz, for example, I overheard discussions between and within groups about answers to each quiz question. They were openly learning from one another, and validating one another’s answers, which made for a really engaging class!
1.6 Computing Leadership Service

Earlier in the semester I was invited by Karen Bean to attend the Annual National SACNAS (Society for Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science) Convention, hosted in Los Angeles, CA. Through the leadership and personal development sessions I attended during the convention, I learned (or re-enforced my knowledge) that the well-rounded, “T-shaped” individual is now more than ever, especially in the STEM field. More importantly, I had the opportunity to be an “exhibitor,” taking time throughout the conference to be behind a booth and represent the College of Computing and Informatics as well as the Graduate School at large, the Center for Education and Innovation, and the STARS Outreach group. This is where I accumulated my service hours, sharing information about our college and the various graduate programs we have to offer. Through this experience, I aimed to broaden participation in computing and recruit students to our school, but I learned so much about the other graduate programs in STEM related areas that are offered at our school.
2 ITSC 8665 SPRING 2015 SEMESTER ACTIVITY REQUIREMENTS

2.1 FUTURE TEACHING MENTOR REQUIREMENTS
Besides the previously mentioned teaching assistant activities, my Teaching Mentor and I discussed a distinct and unique role for me among the other teaching assistants, extending from the responsibility of the course Moodle page management. Next semester, I will be responsible for aggregating and analyzing information on the activities of students in the Moodle page, from video view to forum posts, all of which can be extracted from Moodle. Taking this information, I will perform statistical analyses, trying to correlate it to the performance of the students on assignments week to week. In this way, we can visualize the performance of the class in new ways, based on the online resources provided and utilized in a flipped classroom setting.

2.2 FUTURE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SEMINARS – GRAD SCHOOL
Although the seminar sessions for the Spring 2015 have not been posted, I definitely plan to take advantage of the seminars.

2.3 FUTURE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SEMINARS – CENTER FOR TEACHING & LEARNING
Similar to the Grad School, the Center for Teaching & Learning has not posted its seminar series for next semester yet, but when they have been posted, I will indicate the ones I intend to attend.

2.4 INTENDED RESEARCH PAPERS
If following the same format as the Fall semester, where we provided a list of 5 potential research papers, then I hope to read and present on two of the following five (in order of preference):


2.5 INTENDED MASTER TEACHER LECTURE
Next semester, assuming the same lecturers are available to observe, I would take an opportunity to observe Dr. Maher, Dr. Souvenir, and Dr. Latulipe once more.

2.6 INTENDED COMPUTING LEADERSHIP SERVICE FULFILLMENT
This past Fall 2014 semester, I was fortunate to achieve all of my computing leadership service hours in one event. For the Spring 2015 semester however, I think I will take a different approach, by trying to fulfill my service hours in different events or activities in order to broaden my service experience. Most likely, I will draw from the events that the STARS organization will be involved in, as I have been a member of STARS and am familiar with the varied types of outreach they do, ranging from learning robotics with middle school students, to discussing college options with high school students, to providing lab tours within our department.