Teaching Experience Plan Documentation

Tyler W Thomas

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In an effort to satisfy the teaching experience plan requirements of the GAANN fellowship, I first met with my advisor, Dr. Lipford, at the beginning of the semester to discuss what role I could play in the management of ITIS 2300 Web Application Development. We decided that I would serve as a TA this semester and next semester. Next year, I am to begin teaching the course.

Throughout the semester, I have overseen the various labs that were held each week. During that time, I would assist students in Javascript, HTML, and CSS. Additionally, I held office hours and met with students to provide tutoring. I also graded most of the homework and projects, and I took notes during Dr. Lipford's lectures. If I identified an opportunity for improvement, I would promptly mention it. Several changes on the course Moodle page were completed as a result of this. Additionally, I modified a program to manage seating charts, and I uploaded the resulting webpage every week, so that students were effectively randomized into two person teams. Moreover, I have proctored an exam, and will help grade the final exam.

Throughout the semester, I learned a lot about what is involved in managing a course. Namely, that specific wording matters. The lab documentation seemed very straightforward in most cases. However, some students always seemed to have a different interpretation. Next semester, when Dr. Lipford is out on maternity leave, I plan to play a more active role in solidifying my current understanding of the course lectures. I also plan to teach several of the...
lectures. I will also attempt to implement many of the suggestions for improvement that I made this semester. During the next academic year, I plan to take over the course as the primary instructor. I hope to remain in this role for as long as possible, in order to build up experience for the future.

I also attended two professional development seminars offered by the graduate school this semester. The first was called "The Organization of Academic Writing." In this seminar we discussed various ways of writing research papers more clearly. However, what really struck out at me were the various methods of abstract writing. Since I have taken the seminar, my abstracts have become much clearer and more concise.

The second graduate school seminar I attended was called "Leveraging Effective Conversation for Success." This seminar discussed the importance of communication in today's society. It seemed to focus on a job interview theme. As a result, I learned several ways in which body language can be mastered to communicate effectively under stress.

In addition to the professional development seminars offered by the graduate school, I also attended a seminar by the center of teaching and learning and a reading group which was approved as a substitution for a center of teaching and learning seminar. The seminar by the center of teaching and learning was titled "SOTL Open Swim." At first, I seemed out of my league, as everyone else in attendance was a faculty member and the purpose of the seminar was to explain how to write good SOTL grant proposals. However, since I plan on becoming a faculty member one day, these skills may be very beneficial. I took the time to learn as much as I could about proposal writing to better prepare for a future faculty position.
The reading group that I attended as a substitution for a center of teaching and learning seminar was also very helpful. During the meeting, one of the members presented a current paper on continual course feedback techniques. Throughout the meeting, we discussed which parts were viable and which ones were not. As a result, I plan to implement the viable portions into my future teaching. All in all, I am looking forward to attending future reading groups as well as seminars by the center of teaching and learning and the graduate school next semester to enhance my teaching knowledge and ability.

In addition to the seminars I attended, I also presented on a research paper this semester, and a webinar the first week, which was approved as a substitute for the second research paper. The research paper was titled "Identifying Proactive Collaboration Strategies for Teacher Readiness For Marginalized Students." and it discussed the need catch students which are about to "fall through the cracks" or be marginalized, and help get them back on track. Although the research was focused primarily on elementary or high school students, many of the suggestions may still apply to teaching undergraduates at the college level. As a result, I felt that their approach of using a collaboration template and collaborative reflection will be very effective in future teaching at the college level.

The webinar presentation which was approved as a substitute for a research paper presentation, entitled "Teaching Secrets That'll Make Students Say 'Wow!" was also very interesting. Although the findings were not backed up by research, they were very intuitive. The webinar explained what should and shouldn't be in a syllabus, along with several techniques for obtaining and keeping the attention of students. These covered ideas such as grouping students into zones and giving each zone a different task to handing out different colored index cards.
which students can display when they are confused. Since many of the techniques seemed intuitive and effective, I intend to use them in my future teaching.

In addition to the seminars, I also attended a master teacher lecture by Dr. Richard Souvenir. I was very impressed at the way he taught. He constantly kept eye contact with the students and would occasionally point at the slides. He also asked difficult questions to keep students thinking and would then answer them himself. Sometimes he would ask simple questions and wait for the class to answer, to encourage participation. He stopped regularly for student questions and displayed great enthusiasm when teaching. Since students seemed to like the teaching style and pay attention, I plan to mimic this style when I teach in future semesters.

In order to satisfy the community outreach requirement for GAANN, I decided to embark on an ambitious goal. I decided to found a student computing charity organization with the focus of providing computing services to non-profit organizations and low income individuals in need. Once I cleared the idea with my adviser, I began thinking about what this process would entail, and what kinds of services non-profit organizations might actually need. I then created a logo of three hexagons, and a name, Hexarity. I then drafted a recruitment form, passed it out during one of our HCI lab meetings, and gave a presentation in an effort to recruit members. It was a success, and several members joined. I then determined what sort of skills we had, what sort of services we could realistically perform, cross referenced with what non-profit organizations and low income individuals might actually need. Ultimately, we settled on four broad categories: web application design, cloud services, network management, data recovery, and computer repair.
Once we had our plan, I put together a website and deployed it on a raspberry pi at home, after setting up all the necessary infrastructure. It was created to look professional and convey our general hexagon theme and identity. It also explains what sort of services we can perform, who is in our organization, and how to contact us. It can be accessed at the following url. Note that it is only supported in Firefox and Chrome, not IE: http://tylerthomaswebsite.net/hexarity

Once we website was created, it was time to make a real impact. Since a large amount of effort had already been invested in laying the groundwork for the organization, we decided to focus our efforts on low income individuals. We posted a short ad on a poster-board near Fretwell and almost immediately received a call. We then used remote control software to observe his computer, and we noticed it had been infected with malware despite Norton being installed. We were only able to remove part of the malware through the use of virus scanners, but we were able to remove the rest once we located a removal tool for the specific malware program. However, he had an annoying popup saying that files needing to be burned to disk. Windows refused to delete the "temporary" files, even after the use of unlocker programs. Finally, we were able to modify the registry and add a key to dismiss the popup.

Since Hexarity was a big success this semester, I plan to expand Hexarity to include not just members of the HCI lab, but members of other research labs next semester. Now that the groundwork for the organization has been laid, I also plan to approach non-profit organizations next semester and deliver more complex services, such as network or cloud management. Perhaps even dynamic websites complete with database interactivity can be designed and delivered for non-profit organizations next semester.