

## **CIRTL Postdoc Pathway Program**

### **Mentor Observation Letter**

May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2025

To Whom It May Concern

It is my pleasure to write this letter in observation of Dr. Boris Benedikter's teaching, conducted within the framework of the Postdoctoral Teaching Program of the University of Arizona's CIRTL Postdoc Pathway Program. I had the opportunity to act as his teaching mentor throughout the Spring 2025 semester. In this role, Dr. Benedikter co-taught alongside me in an advanced undergraduate/graduate engineering course offered through the Systems and Industrial Engineering Department: Robotic Systems (SIE 496/596), delivered in a hybrid format (both in person and for remote students). Dr. Benedikter taught the entire module on the Robot Operating System (ROS), focused on the development of simulated environments for robotic systems.

We met in advance to discuss the goals and structure of his teaching, and I appreciated the opportunity to learn more about his instructional approach during that conversation. We also followed up with a post-observation meeting shortly after the class to reflect on the experience. During the classes, he demonstrated thoughtful planning, clarity in communication, and an admirable level of attention to student engagement, especially given the complexities of the hybrid format. In our pre-observation meeting, he shared his goals for the module, including his aim to bridge the practical use of ROS and Gazebo with the theoretical foundations introduced in other parts of the course. I also noted his practice of starting each session with a brief review of the previous class to refresh students' memory and encourage delayed questions. His intention to provide continuity, encourage reflection, and support asynchronous learners was clear, and these goals were effectively realized in his teaching. His slides were clean, visually appealing, and closely tied to his verbal explanations. He contextualized the technical material in a way that helped students see its relevance to the broader course objectives.

He navigated the hybrid format with care: screen sharing, recording the session, and actively monitoring the Zoom chat for questions. I was particularly impressed by how he addressed students watching the recording, prompting them to pause and reflect at key moments. This kind of inclusive instruction can make a significant difference for students balancing different learning modalities. He closed the classes with practical exercises, encouraging students to try out the tools on their own. Although these exercises were not graded, he emphasized their importance for the final project. This approach communicated trust in students' independence while guiding them toward effective learning habits. He prepared a comprehensive software repository containing example problems, training scripts, and a detailed user guide. This repository was shared with students in advance on GitHub, and during class, he walked through the code line by line, ensuring students understood the implementation. He also co-designed and co-graded one assignment on the use of the ROS environment to simulate the motion of a robotic system. Moreover, Dr. Benedikter designed part of the final project, which involved simulating a rover exploring the Martian surface while avoiding obstacles.



In our post-observation meeting, I reflected thoughtfully on the session and expressed satisfaction with how it unfolded. I recognized areas of strength, such as the student engagement strategies and his clarity in delivering technical content, while also identifying opportunities for growth, such as finding ways to encourage more live interaction from remote students.

Overall, his session reflected a strong commitment to student learning and a well-developed teaching style grounded in clarity, structure, and inclusivity. His ability to connect practical content to theoretical foundations and to support students' reflection all speak to his effectiveness as an instructor.

Please do not hesitate to reach out if you need any further support. I look forward to seeing your continued success.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'F. Curti', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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