**(1000 characters for all essays)**

**One of your students is struggling in the course - they did poorly on midterm 1 and have also been having trouble completing assignments. They've asked you for advice - what would you say?**

The first thing I would suggest is to try and identify what went wrong during the midterm; there are a lot of non-academic factors that go into a bad midterm result than simply not understanding the material: stress, lack of sleep are just two of many examples that come to mind. These factors are more important than you might think!

In terms of content, possibly the best (and only) thing you can do to improve your conceptual understanding of the material is through practice, especially in an intense class like CS70. This practice will certainly involve working through problems alone and struggling with them, but you’ll eventually walk out with a stronger command of the material. As a tutor I will do my best in guiding you through solutions, but the more important thing is understanding the motivation for the steps used in the solution - these principles will take you far beyond the solution itself, and will allow you to solve even more problems, while also boosting your confidence.

**Why are you interested in mentoring for CSM? What do you hope to contribute? What do you hope to gain?**

CS70 is not an easy course by any metric - while I come from a strong mathematics background, I still found myself having to spend hours doing homework and exam problems. Also, I just find that the resources allocated to every student is simply not enough, especially considering that some students tend to require more help than others. By joining CSM, my goal is to help as many people as I can through mentoring and also motivate people to enjoy learning and the learning process, all the while gaining valuable teaching experience.

Furthermore, I’m also interested in mentoring because I want to give back to CSM - as somebody with no prior coding experience, CSM really helped me through CS61A and allowed me to understand the material to a deeper level, so in some sense, I do feel a responsibility to give back in any way I can, and for me I believe the best way I can do that is to mentor students CS70, a course whose content I am comfortable in teaching.

**CSM is dedicated to making CS/EECS at Berkeley more accessible to students of all backgrounds. We are always working to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion within CSM, as well as within the CS/EECS department and community. As a CSM mentor, how would you personally contribute to improving diversity, equity, and inclusion both within CSM and the CS/EECS communities?**

As a CSM mentor, my primary goal is to provide students of all backgrounds the opportunity to seek the assistance they deserve and allow them to succeed in their courses. This means supporting students throughout the mentoring process, and also giving them guidance on how to succeed in the future. I truly believe that any student has the ability to succeed in the courses they’re taking regardless of their background, and I hope to instill this confidence in all the students I mentor as well.

Furthermore, I believe that engaging with the general CS/EECS community is one of the most impactful ways to include diversity and inclusion, as they encourage anybody to participate in the conversation. As a mentor, I get the opportunity to interact with all kinds of people (both students and mentors alike), and positive interactions with them is one of the main ways I can help encourage CSM’s values.

Personally, the most impactful way I can contribute to these goals is to encourage students of all backgrounds who are interested in CS/EECS to pursue their interests.

This can be done primarily by encouraging students in section, but also in my day-to-day life as I advocate student

Further, as a CSM mentor, my goal is to provide an avenue through which students who are struggling can receive the assistance they deserve, as I believe that every student deserves a fair chance at earning a high grade regardless of their academic background.

**Why do you want to be an academic intern for CS 70?**

CS70 is not an easy course by any metric. While I already had a strong mathematics background, I still found myself having to spend hours doing homework and grinding exam problems. Also, I just find that there are simply not enough learning resources provided to students in the course - there are almost always at least twice as many students as there are course staff during office hours, meaning that students who need more assistance are often left without help. These students are then put at a huge disadvantage as CS70 is an incredibly fast-paced course, causing them to be placed even further behind, and thus require even more assistance. By becoming an academic intern, my goal is to help as many people as I can in learning course content, and allow for more students who need help to receive the help they deserve. In doing so, I also hope to convince students that the content is worth learning, even if they don’t choose to pursue computer science in the future.

Furthermore, I’m also interested in becoming an AI because I want to contribute and give back to the course staff that helped me so much throughout CS70. By attending discussions and also (more importantly) asking questions during office hours, I gained a much deeper understanding of the material, no doubt contributing to my success in the course. Therefore, in a way, I do feel a responsibility to give back in any way I can, and for me I believe the best way to do that is to become academic intern and mentor students in a class I am comfortable teaching.

**Any other comments that you'd like to add to your application? (e.g. teaching accolades, what skills/perspectives/etc do you bring to the table, etc.)**

In my own view, I believe the best way to learn any concept is to establish a very strong understanding of the fundamentals, then any problem you encounter in the future will simply build upon these fundamentals. When I assist students, my goal is to make sure that students understand the fundamental reason why a certain proposition is true. This way, the student not only walks away with the solution to their particular problem, but hopefully a deeper understanding of the underlying concepts used which will allow them to solve similar problems as well.

**Why do you want to teach / grade for CS70?**

I started out my CS70 journey this spring by becoming a CSM mentor for CS70 and also being an academic intern for Jet’s discussion section. Throughout this experience, the one thing that stood out to me was how much I loved teaching - watching students finally get that “aha” moment, then use what they learned to solve new problems was one of the most rewarding experiences I’ve had this semester.

Personally, becoming a reader is what I believe to be the next natural step in this journey. By becoming a reader I gain the ability to help more students by assisting in office hours. In addition to this, one of the primary reasons I want to become a grader is to give back to CS70 course staff, as they have helped me immensely when I took the course. By attending discussions and also asking questions in office hours, course staff has been invaluable to my understanding of the material and subsequent success in the course. As a result, I feel a responsibility to give back by any means possible; perhaps the best way to do so is to help students in their understanding of the material in the same way I was helped.

**Diversity, equity, and inclusion are core values in CS70 and the EECS Department. Our mission is to serve the communities to which we belong, at local, national, and international levels, with a deep awareness of our ethical responsibilities to our profession and to society. How will you contribute to our mission to support diverse students with a welcoming course climate? (Feel free to talk about what life experiences and skill sets you bring to the table, activities you've led in the past, or initiatives you might implement this semester.)**

As a reader, my primary goal is to not only provide students from all backgrounds with equal opportunities to seek the assistance they deserve, but also to grade assignments fairly and holistically. Primarily, this means supporting students through the mentoring process, giving them ample guidance on how to succeed in the course. I truly believe that every student has the ability to succeed regardless of their background, and I hope to instill this confidence in all the students I help.

Furthermore, I believe that by becoming a reader (and by extension, a part of CS70 course staff) is one of the best ways I can engage with the local community of CS students, as I am able to interact with all kinds of people, students and TAs alike. In addition, by becoming a reader, I am directly giving back to the community and course staff that aided me throughout CS70 by mentoring students, something that I thoroughly enjoy doing and also something I believe is absolutely necessary to ensure the success of all students in the course.

**What do you think is the biggest barrier to student achievement in this course, and how would you address it?**

Personally, I think that self-confidence is the largest barrier to success in CS70. Oftentimes, I find that students can’t solve a problem not because they aren’t capable of understanding the solution, but instead because they hesitate to think outside the box - they’re afraid that trying alternate approaches won’t be helpful at all. However, I would argue that utilizing this creativity is one of the fundamental keys to success in CS70.

Here’s why: even if your alternate approach is wrong, you still learn something about the method you used - does your method rely on a specific piece of information to be given? If so, what would that be? Is there a way to get that information by any other means? Even if the answer is no, in doing this you have discovered a method where if the correct information was given in the future (say, on an exam), you now know exactly how to solve it. If your method ends up working, well you’ve now solved your problem.

Being able to have the confidence to try new approaches, acknowledging that it might fail but you’ll still learn something, is one of the best ways to improve in a class that demands a lot of practice. Throughout CS70, many questions will be given where the solution is not immediately obvious, and requires creativity to solve. More often than not, the problems will require hours of effort, but as long as you’re confident that you will arrive at a solution and not be afraid of making mistakes, you will succeed in CS70.

**What's one piece of advice you would give to a first time Junior/Content/Associate/Senior Mentor?**

For incoming JMs: one of the most crucial things about being a mentor is to be able to understand the content you’re teaching from different perspectives, and one of the best ways you can accomplish that is by shadowing SM’s or watching experienced mentors teach the content. Through my experiences as an AI for CS70 (an opportunity for me to basically shadow my TA every week), I found that my understanding of the material has increased significantly as I was not only exposed to my assigned TA’s teaching methods, but also the novel and creative approaches that students in the discussion section come up with to solve problems. By listening to their thought process, I truly feel as if I’ve grown and now understand the material to a much greater depth than before.

In addition, make sure that when you are preparing for section, take note of the crucial steps that the solution makes use of to solve the problem, and make sure to emphasize these steps when teaching. This is incredibly helpful since these crucial steps are often common in many different problems, regardless of the problem setup. By training them to start noticing these crucial steps, they will be able to make connections between concepts much easier, and as a result this will significantly increase their studying efficiency.

Finally, learn to enjoy teaching your section! Personally, I find it very rewarding to see the “aha!” moment when students finally understand a concept, and accomplishing this is oftentimes the highlight of my week.

**How do you describe your leadership style?**

All SM roles are responsible for cultivating a sense of community amongst the Junior/Content/Associate/Senior Mentors that they work with and helping them grow. How do you see yourself fulfilling these responsibilities? What are your strengths and weaknesses as a leader? Please keep your answer under 300 words.

Personally, one of the things I strive to achieve is a situation where everybody feels comfortable with one another, and that they feel like everybody else cares about them. I find that if this is achieved, then everybody will naturally make it easier for mentors who seek assistance to reach out, and also overall just make the CSM experience that much more meaningful and fun for them. This also happens to be one of my core strengths as a leader: I find that I am always capable of coming up with ways to make people feel included, and also identify when they feel uncomfortable and what’s making them feel that way. That way, I can also take steps toward working out an alternative so that everybody is engaging with one another.

While I am good at identifying these traits in the people I work with, I am not naturally an outgoing person, so I often have difficulties expressing myself out of an irrational fear of being wrong. As a leader, this often presents a hurdle when it comes to encouraging others to feel comfortable, making it more difficult to achieve that inclusive atmosphere I always strive for. This is something I’ve gotten better at controlling thanks to my previous club leadership roles I took on in high school, but I still haven’t perfected it yet, and I think becoming an SM is probably one of the best ways I can further improve this weakness of mine.

**Why do you want to be an SM, SCM, SAM, or SM Advisor?**

Ever since I joined CSM this semester and took up the responsibility of mentoring students through a semester of CS70, I learned that I really like teaching - one of the most memorable moments this semester was getting that “aha!” moment on students’ faces after having resolved their confusion. It was also rewarding seeing them apply what I’ve taught in new, different ways, an indication to me that they truly learned and internalized the material.

In the process of teaching others, I also feel like I’ve learned a lot about how to effectively teach and explain concepts to students in ways that they understand, as well as how to teach to a group of students in a way that makes everybody feel comfortable and on the same page with the material. For me, one of my main motivations to become an SM is because I want to share the lessons I learned and my experiences with incoming mentors, so that the mentoring process (which, for many JMs, is their first opportunity to teach a group) isn’t as daunting a task for them. In addition to this, the LaTeX infrastructure used to make the handouts is wildly outdated, to the point where it’s very difficult to make meaningful edits to the handouts without the entire file breaking on you. This is something that I really would like to change, and I think I can make a greater push to have this change realized by becoming an SM.

—

CS70 Internal UGSI Application

**How, specifically, do you think you contributed to the course this semester?**

This semester, I served as an academic intern for Jet’s discussion on Wednesdays and Fridays. Apart from the obvious responsibilities of being an AI (answering student questions, facilitating discussion, etc.), I also tried to assist the course staff as much as I can, despite my limited capacity as an AI. For instance, I attended the exam review sessions held before reading week despite not being obligated to, a testament to the fact that I genuinely enjoy teaching and being there to answer students’ questions. To me, the ability to be there and clear up students’ confusions is one of the most significant contributions I’ve made this semester, since it allows me to make sure that students have a strong understanding of the fundamentals - concepts which they inevitably use to solve harder problems in the future. I’ve also contributed to this course indirectly through CSM, as I was able to mentor students in a more consistent setting and further help students advance through the course. Through both these opportunities, I saw the growth in students as they progressed through the course and developed a strong critical thinking ability, a testament to my contributions to the course over the semester.

**Diversity, equity, and inclusion are core values in the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Sciences. Our excellence can only be fully realized by faculty, students, and staff who share our commitment to these values. EECS's mission is to serve the communities to which we belong, at local, national, and international levels, with a deep awareness of our ethical responsibilities to our profession and to society. How will you contribute to EECS's mission to support diverse students with a welcoming course climate? (Feel free to talk about what life experiences and skill sets you bring to the table, activities you've led in the past, or initiatives you might implement this semester.)**

Being part of course staff, my primary goal and responsibility is to provide students from all backgrounds with equal opportunities to seek the assistance they deserve. Primarily, this involves supporting students by answering any questions they have, giving them ample guidance on how to succeed in CS70. More specifically, I believe that CS70 is a course where having the confidence that you can succeed is crucial to the learning process, and I want to try my hardest to instill this confidence in all the students I interact with.

Further, I believe that by becoming a TA is also one of the best ways I can further engage with the larger EECS community. Being a discussion AI in spring 2023, my connections to course staff was still relatively limited since I only truly interacted with one TA throughout the entire semester, and I think that becoming a TA is the next logical step to broaden this, as I get to interact with more members of the CS community on a daily basis.

Finally, becoming a part of course staff for CS70 is, in my opinion, the best way I can give back to the EECS community. I still remember how invaluable the TA’s guidance was during CS70 office hours to my learning, and I also admired their dedication to students’ learning as they would often stay overtime just to make sure that students really understood conceptually the problem they were solving. As someone who received this guidance and greatly benefitted from it, I think it’s only right if I give back to the community by doing the same, providing the same level of dedication to future students as the TAs did for me.