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RE: Actions Taken to Address Comments in 2014-2015 Evaluation

To Whom It May Concern:

My evaluation team last year gave me a delightfully favorable review, but it also identified two areas for improvement. Let me provide some background, and indicate how these issues have been addressed so far.

Organization and Preparedness

First, one observation of the course, CIS 255, was “a lack of organization and preparedness of the subject covered.” The team suggested “shifting to a more conventional lecture style” and “better organization and preparation.”

I must admit I was unprepared for CIS 255 and CIS 355, both web development courses. Both required access to web servers to teach properly, but no such resources were available through SVSU at the time. So I purchased my own hosting at GoDaddy. I consulted with fellow faculty, local employers and students to identify the most relevant subject matter. I quickly added Github and Angular to the CIS 255 curriculum. I invited some SVSU staff developers contribute lecture material. I built the courses and the course platforms as I taught them. Admittedly, it was disorganized. It was like trying to rebuild a house while a family was still living in it.

I don't know how this course was taught before, considering the dearth of material. The sheer volume of work it took to build those courses was staggering. Now the courses are good, and moving toward awesome. I believe SVSU's CSIS will soon be seen as a web developer powerhouse.

Shortly after the evaluation committee review, CSIS got a web server. I did lecture more often, and I found a book that had decent course material, including code. **The CIS 255 student rating went from 2.07 in fall 2014 to 1.60 in spring 2015—quite an improvement.** I hope this gives the reader confidence that I am on the right track regarding teaching this material.

Challenging Advanced Students

Second, the team indicated I could improve my teaching by “challenging advanced students.” This is a harder problem. I have inquired high and low regarding how to challenge advanced

students, but I have received few concrete suggestions. The only solution I have been able to apply is to offer very difficult extra credit to all students. Only the advanced students can complete the work, but they don't always take the bait. I have had advanced students work on projects far beyond what the course covers, even presenting material as part of the class. Two have even helped me submit a paper for publication at an IEEE conference. But I also had one advanced student tell me he wanted an easy course in his schedule and he didn't mind the lack of challenge. My desire is to push each student to their particular point of maximum learning and enthusiasm, but I am finding that this is not always in my control.

My alternative may be to require all of the students to do more advanced work. My concern about this approach is that the advanced students still will not be challenged enough and I will lose more of the mainstream people. I am still testing to find the right level of pressure to exert on the learners. I am on the lookout for a technique or two to add to my repertoire here.

I would add finally that I spend a great deal of time working with advanced web development students outside the classroom. Aaron Hooper is working with me on a vehicle networking research grant. Aaron Hooper and Bradley Chippi are developing a web application called Teacherati (www.teacherati.com) as part of my Dow Professor Award for collaborative computer science education. Ryan Moorman and Ryan Castiglione are working with me on a real world interdisciplinary project for Cardinal Solutions. Dustyn Tubbs and Anthony Ventura have developed an amazing web-enabled vehicle network visualizer for my own research, which is also the basis for a paper submitted to IEEE VIS 2015. In other words, I am trying to think outside the box in addressing the issue of challenging advanced students.

The evaluation team provided constructive observations regarding my teaching. I hope this letter makes it clear that I strive to improve my teaching skills, not only my subject matter expertise but also my classroom management and course preparation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "George Corser". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "George" and last name "Corser" clearly distinguishable.

George Corser