



Date: January 29, 2019

To: To Whom It May Concern

From: Dr. Shalu Wunnava, Associate Professor (Business Administration Department)

Re: Supraja Gurajala: Teaching Evaluation

To whom it may concern,

It is my pleasure to recommend Supraja Gurajala for reappointment at SUNY Potsdam. I had the opportunity to observe Supraja's teaching. Supraja's knowledge and experience clearly shine through in her teaching, organization of materials, and comfort level with the course content. And it is obvious that students see this and respect her. She is confident, is interactive in her teaching, and challenges students.

I had the pleasure of attending Supraja's CIS 475 – Introduction to Cryptography class on January 28, 2019. During this particular lecture, Supraja taught about integer rings, affine and shift cyphers, encryption and decryption algorithms, and Euclidian algorithm.

Cryptography requires a strong understanding of mathematical theory. Therefore, I found it very interesting how Supraja gave a background of number theory, followed by an explanation of the mathematical algorithm, and then an explanation about the cyphers. This style is unique because rather than teaching the theory and mathematical algorithms separately and the cyphers separately, she is making the connection for the students. This helps the students in two ways: (1) it helps them to understand and clearly see the connection between the mathematical algorithms and the cyphers they are working on in class, and (2) for those students who either don't have the mathematical background or understanding or have forgotten, which often happens, this teaching methodology offers a refresher of the relevant mathematical concepts and it makes the connection of how these algorithms are used in the encryption and decryption process. So this puts all students on the same page and will not discourage and turn away students who may not have a strong mathematical foundation and understanding. I think this is a great strategy to break the fear from the minds of the students and will encourage more students to take up such courses and take Computer Science as a major.

When instructors use PowerPoint and technology to teach difficult subjects such as mathematics and computer science, a lot of students might not be able to learn at the same pace and may feel overwhelmed or left behind. It was therefore, refreshing to see Supraja work out all the mathematical algorithms and the cyphers on the blackboard in class. She challenged her students who worked with her in completing the exercises, This method of teaching by doing and getting students to stay engaged and participate in the process was very refreshing. As Benjamin Franklin said, "Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may

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remember, involve me and I learn.” And I could clearly see that students liked Supraja’s teaching methodology, and were involved. All of them felt challenged and were actively giving answers and trying to move to the next step of the process. Especially for a discipline like Computer Science, “a learning by doing” strategy is very important not just for student learning, but it is also critical for student retention, graduation, and job placement success.

Another interesting thing I discovered during the class was that Supraja posts her assignments on Moodle, but unless the students decrypt the cyphers she posts they don’t have a way of knowing when the assignments are due. The assignments are all cryptography algorithms that the students have to work on from scratch. All the assignments are in cypher text and the students won’t even know the due date for the assignment unless they decrypt the cypher. The students seemed excited about it.

Supraja is a friendly and down to earth person. And she carries this personality into the classroom also, which creates for a welcoming and inclusive classroom environment that obviously seems to put the students at a comfort level that is conducive for learning. And from what I could see it looked like students find Supraja to be very approachable both in class and after class. It is very important for an instructor to maintain that balance of respect and approachability to ensure a relaxed environment, while at the same time exercise control over the classroom. Supraja’s teaching style definitely accomplishes that delicate balance, because I found that students not only found her approachable, but also respected her, and she had a good control over the class.

I therefore strongly support Supraja Gurajala’s application for reappointment.

Sincerely,



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