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SUNY Potsdam Personnel Committee

I have had the pleasure to teach with Dr. Laura Grabowski since she was hired into the SUNY Potsdam Computer Science Department, sitting in one of her early special topics courses, designing changes in the introductory curriculum, from the course to the outcomes to the assignments with her, and providing a temporary presence in *Software Engineering* to enhance the realism while students apply classroom theory to programming practice. I have seen her unvarnished (yet always polished) teaching from a student's seat, a colleague's seat, and, almost, a co-instructor's seat. Our students are lucky to receive instruction from such a deeply-knowledgeable and gifted educator.

Dr. Grabowski taught CIS 495 *Bio-inspired Artificial Intelligence*, an almost perfect fit for her research interests, in Fall 2017. I sat in the back of the class for the whole semester, indulging my interest in genetic and evolutionary computing.

Dr. Grabowski is a very prepared teacher. Slides, sample code, and assignments, all were ready as the class reached a new topic. Her presentations and answers to student questions broke extremely abstract topics into smaller, simpler to understand pieces, not something all domain experts excel at. Dr. Grabowski made it look easy. Her assignments included half a dozen programming assignments and several rounds of student presentations from the primary literature. The importance she places on *student* communication will come up again below.

Just before the COVID semester, the Department began discussions to improve retention of majors through the introductory sequence. With pandemic-induced delays, the new, three-course sequence replaced the previous two-course intro in Fall 2022.

Though, on paper, the change was the addition of a *Computer Science III* course to the end of the existing two, rearranging topics to maximize student success required Dr. Grabowski, teaching *CS II*, and I, teaching *CS III* to collaborate closely.

Dr. Grabowski's attention to detail helped us connect the outcomes of individual labs and programming assignments to course SLOs and, in turn, to Departmental SLOs; the detailed course redesign took a couple of years and it would have been easy to lose the thread.

Dr. Grabowski was able to balance the desire for a shallower learning curve for incoming students and academic rigor. She is also, always, evaluating our students' success and our assessment of that success. This spring, Spring 2024, for example, she has made large changes in how lab exams are handled in *CS II* as a result of recognizing them as a point of stress for students and that they were ineffective in assessing student learning outcomes in the overall course. This is just a very current example of how Dr. Grabowski demonstrates her ongoing concern for our students' successful learning.

CIS 405 *Software Engineering* is the "crown jewel" of our majors; by mirroring work on a real-world, team project, the course starts the transition from student to practitioner for our seniors.

Dr. Grabowski's experience with teaching courses like this smoothed her transition into teaching *Software Engineering*. While discussing the lack of a *product owner*, a role on a real software development team representing the client's interests, Dr. Grabowski and I thought it might be educational if I played that role in the course. I have been attending the class weekly every spring since 2017.

As mentioned above, Dr. Grabowski makes liberal use of speaking assignments. The software engineering project has weekly team presentations to the product owner. Dr. Grabowski has developed a detailed rubric for the presentation as well as required supporting documentation. This lets her give tightly focused feedback quickly, maintain high standards of professional behavior in the students, and carry over changes or problems from one week to the next.

Overall, Dr. Grabowski is a great college *teacher*. Every decision she makes is examined through the lens of enhancing student success: use rubrics to make grading more transparent; make sure SLOs can be and are assessed; drive changes in the classroom with assessment results; and always have the best, clearest resources to support students in and out of the classroom. I cannot recommend Dr. Laura Grabowski's promotion to full professor highly enough.

Sincerely,

Brian C. Ladd
Associate Professor of Computer Science