

Mark Kim

Essay 3

When I re-entered college I never expected to have an interest in serving a college or university as a member of the faculty. In fact, my return to school was predicated entirely on a business idea and personal interest based in fueling people's career decisions from latent passions that may be found through data mining. It wasn't until I stumbled into a student led supplemental instruction course in introductory programming that a spark of interest in academia as an instructor was kindled within me. As I became more integrated with the amazingly inclusive and supportive academic community at San Francisco State University, I could increasingly imagine myself contributing to it as many of my faculty mentors do.

The supplemental instruction program that I so fondly participated in as a pupil unveiled the possibility that I, even as an undergraduate student, could also lead and facilitate such a course. Before this, I assumed that my knowledge and past endeavors in the field of Computer Science and Mathematics were insufficient to be of value to other students. Still uncertain of my abilities, I found a position that I thought I could manage: grading math homework assignments. In doing so, I also learned that my work served to refresh and solidify my understanding from the courses that I was grading for.

During my stint as a grader, and in response to COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns, I was provided the chance to assist a math education professor do academic literature review on remote learning pedagogy. Both fascinating and eye-opening to me, this study introduced me to the complexities and challenges of educating students remotely. As I read and reviewed more articles and research papers, I contemplated the hypothetical scenario of how I would teach students in Math or Computer Science if I were given the opportunity. Likewise, my supervising professor ruminated over the underdeveloped state of research into Computer Science education

when contrasted against Mathematics education. Since I had one foot firmly in each discipline, I experienced this disparity directly.

Shortly after completing my brief encounter with Mathematics education research, I was awarded the opportunity to become a supplemental instruction facilitator in Calculus. Armed with my prior experiences, the prospect of applying my newly gained knowledge thrilled me. I was determined to apply what I learned and attempt to deliver an experience that not only inspired students, but also significantly improved their learning outcomes. Then after two semesters, I able to move laterally into Computer Science, where I believed that I could provide even greater impact. My time in this program was deeply fulfilling, which resulted in my continued participation in this capacity through my completion of my undergraduate degree.

The intrinsic rewards of teaching and witnessing student success drove me to seek other ways I could contribute to the community of students. As a result, I accepted the role as president of the student chapter of the Association of Computing Machinery to spearhead a post-pandemic revival. Furthermore, I took the program lead position for AI-STAARS, a scholarship program aimed at under-represented minorities in the field of Computer Science. The responsibilities of this role were far more extensive than as a facilitator. In addition to preparing and executing weekly lesson plans, which was familiar to me from my other role as facilitator, I was tasked to lead a week long winter coding bootcamp and an entire ten week summer pathways Artificial Intelligence internship.

All these experiences exposed me to a diverse collection of students, all of whom carried fascinating stories. I believe this exposure has initiated my preparation for serving a diverse student body and I am eager to continue to improve. I am incredibly grateful of having been given the chance to get to know these students and am looking forward to meeting and becoming acquainted with more.