**Teaching Philosophy**

When I accepted a full-time faculty position at Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana, it was a significant career change for me. However, as I look back at particular events, I realize that I have been preparing for this position for most of my life. As I’m sure most teachers would report, and, quite frankly, I hope that they do for the sake of their students, I have always enjoyed school. I enjoyed every aspect of it. I loved the crisp autumn days and the crisp unopened textbooks filled with information ready to be absorbed; the weight of a stack of uncreased books in my hands was invigorating. I loved the cool spring days and the opportunity to demonstrate my accomplishments from the school year through testing; putting my No. 2 pencil down and being the first to turn in the exam provided a satisfaction that is difficult to describe. I was always an eager student, the “teacher’s pet” I suppose, and I particularly enjoyed bringing homework home, sitting at the kitchen table or lying on the floor with my books and notes spread out around me. Throughout my middle school and high school years, I was an active participant in The Boy Scouts of America through the accomplishment of the rank of Eagle with bronze, silver, and gold palms (palms are five merit badges each beyond those required for Eagle). It was through this experience that I began to realize how much I enjoyed teaching and mentoring. When I was a teenager, I worked for three consecutive summers at a Boy Scout camp. One of my responsibilities was to teach younger Scouts merit badges: instructing them on the requirements to achieve each specific merit badge and answering their questions. My favorite merit badge was “Pioneering” which included teaching other Scouts knot-tying, lashing, and splicing rope. Upon graduation from Indiana University in Kokomo, I began my career in information technology as a programmer. As my knowledge of technology increased, I attained a position in which I began mentoring and training other programmers. I particularly enjoyed this aspect of my responsibilities. I can see clearly now that this experience and this enjoyment of mentoring and training prepared me for this current pedagogical journey.

Perhaps due to my IT experience, I believe that education, particularly computer science education, should equip students to function effectively in an economy that is totally dependent on information systems. Educators should facilitate critical thinking and encourage the development of problem-solving strategies. I believe that the traditional method of teaching is the best delivery system for these objectives and works very well in a computer science classroom. New material should be presented first in a reading assignment; this allows the student to absorb the material at his or her own pace and begin to formulate ideas and questions. Then, I prefer to introduce that new material in a classroom presentation while soliciting student questions, observations, comments, and ideas. In my lectures, I include teaching styles which appeal to the visual learner, the auditory learner, and the active learner. Despite the traditional format, I encourage students to “think outside the box” as I challenge them to apply analytical and critical thinking to new situations. In computer science, there are many “right” answers, much as in mathematics or chemistry, but there are many different ways to arrive at these answers and even more ways to use these answers to improve computer systems for academia, industry, and personal use. Basically, there are several ways to solve each problem. In class, I like to lead students in analysis of sample problems that come both from the text and from my personal experience in information technology. I encourage students to try their own approach and use their own style of creativity rather than just copy what has been presented in class. I also like to encourage students to share their work place knowledge of our subject. Computer science students are often employed in the field even while they are taking classes to further advance their educational and professional goals. I truly enjoy the blend of academic discussion with the students’ IT development in the workplace, and I believe that it is this practical application that makes the computer science classroom conducive to learning. I can actually see the learning put immediately into use. During class, I also try to stress what has not changed since the previous assignment to aid them in viewing the class experience as a continuum of learning. I teach students that they should question everything they do not understand. I like to ask many open-ended questions to foster discussion and brain-storming, and I ask for alternative solutions. Finally, I believe that the students should then be given assignments that require individual work and utilization of that new material.

The traditional method of teaching, however, is not flawless, and thus, I continually evaluate and revise my classes as needed to keep up with changing technologies. I also prefer to stress theoretical concepts as they are the basis for all practical applications, and I have found that students are quite receptive to this format. I fully understand and appreciate that my classes are not the only classes these students will complete in their goal of a computer science degree; my colleagues and I work together in a symbiotic relationship to provide a quality educational experience. What I teach students in my classes will directly affect their performance in my colleague’s computer science class and vice versa. Thus, I do enjoy observing other instructors frequently as it provides insight into alternative teaching techniques or approaches.

I also believe that instructors need to “look outside the box” of their own offices and seek ways to contribute to the furtherance of their departments and the college. I mention pre- and open registration periods frequently in all classes, and I work extra office hours during registration periods. I also help students evaluate their transcripts to be certain they are taking all the classes required for their desired degree. I regularly attend graduation, and I enjoy celebrating that accomplishment with my students. I also look for ways to make the CIS curriculum more available to students; thus, I developed CIS113 Introduction to Programming Logic and Design as a course to be offered on-line. In the future, I would like to develop a Data Mining course to be offered as part of the Computer Information Systems curriculum.

Punctuality is important to me as I believe it demonstrates respect for the event and the people involved, thus my classes meet on time, for the full time, and my materials are always ready (as much as it is within my control) for distribution. My personal goal is to have materials prepared about a week in advance to allow those students who are quick studies to proceed on their own. During a typical class, I prefer to use the text, the white board, various handouts as applicable, and the data projector. In order to make material available to the students 24 hours a day, I try to provide as much material on Canvas as I can for all of the courses that I teach.

I believe that students are allowed to concentrate on their studies when they are fully informed. A student that has to track down the instructor to find out about assignment requirements or due dates, for example, is wasting valuable time. Thus, I distribute and discuss the course syllabus at the first class of the semester. This syllabus details all of the course specifics that are necessary for completing the course successfully, including objectives, prerequisites, class meeting days and times, assignment due dates, test dates, rules, expectations, and information on how to contact me. I am available to my students in many different ways: posted office hours, appointment, e-mail, and telephone, as well as before and after class.

Effective teachers, of course, are always continuing their own education in some manner, whether formal or informal. In the field of computer science, continuing education is especially critical as technology changes at an ever-increasing pace. To effectively advise students on their courses of study, a professor of computer science must be abreast of current technological trends. For example, I am frequently asked by students which programming languages are best to learn. In August 2006, I completed a Master of Science in Computer Science from Purdue University at Indianapolis. In the course of this study, I investigated and learned new software. I read new texts and reviewed older ones. I completed many assignments of my own. In the time since my graduation, I have used the Web and various texts to learn of new and innovative technologies as well as to learn new programming languages. Due to my love of learning, my desire for intellectual challenge, and my interest in technological trends, I earned a Doctorate Degree in Educational Leadership from Oakland City University in May 2021, I also have obtained a Master of Science in Health Informatics from Indiana University and a Master of Science in Computer Science from Purdue University, 2006. As I discuss these educational pursuits with my students, I demonstrate to my students the relevance of education as it correlates to technology in our everyday lives. There simply is no other discipline like computer science because technology is continually evolving.

At institutions of higher learning, we are educating Indiana’s, the nation’s, and perhaps the world’s next workforce generation. It is imperative that we strive together to build a new society with an improved work ethic, unlimited economic potential, and healthier values and mores. We can contribute to this goal course by course, student by student, as we work together to change lives.