Opportunity and Responsibility

Working with students is one of the unique experiences that a university environment has to offer. The opportunity to teach and advise students is a major motivation for me in choosing an academic research career. In addition to an opportunity, I also view teaching and advising as a key responsibility. I believe providing students with a positive university experience through effective teaching and advising is an important obligation of a professor.

Below, I describe why I want to be a professor in computer science by outlining key opportunities I see and key responsibilities I will strive to meet.

Opportunity to Pursue Research: An academic environment provides access to a key resource for building an effective research program: bright, motivated students. Working with students provides a tremendous opportunity to explore exciting research ideas and make significant advances in the field.

Opportunity to Influence the Field: Students that I teach and advise will go on to careers in industry and/or to develop their own research programs. My ability to impact the perspectives they take with them is an enormously effective way to influence the field of computer science.

Opportunity to Improve Communication Skills: “Good teaching will help you give better talks, and write better papers”, according to Richard Korf, who is a recipient of UCLA School of Engineering Student's Choice Award for Excellence in Teaching. Indeed, I view excellence in teaching as a way to improve my presentation skills and communication of technical ideas.

Opportunity to Continue Learning: Exploring new topics is one of my prime motivations for wanting to teach courses. Teaching courses provides a natural source of learning because one is forced to deeply understand concepts in order to present them well to others. Discussions with students are a great way to view old concepts in a new way.

Responsibility to Assist Students in Achieving Their Goals: Teaching and advising is extremely rewarding chiefly because one assists students in achieving their own goals. I believe that helping a student to grow and be successful is a key function of a professor. I will always strive to provide my students with the same constructive encouragement, invaluable advice and positive direction I received during my own education.

Responsibility to Create New Courses: I am committed to creating engaging high-quality courses exploring new frontiers in AI and Intelligent Systems. I am also open to teaching courses on other topics depending on the needs of my department. However, a new course in Multiagent Systems is one that I would be particularly interested in developing.

Responsibility to be Prepared: In giving courses, I will ensure that lectures are adequately prepared and assignments are meaningful. It is something in which I will take personal pride. For many Computer Science courses, I believe homework assignments should be “hands-on”, requiring writing software and building working artifacts. Assignments requiring more theoretical analysis are also important.

Responsibility to Provide Objective Feedback: Feedback is essential to the learning process so that students can be confident they have mastered concepts or strive to improve when necessary. I believe a teacher must be firm and fair in providing evaluation and eliminate subjective biases as far as it is possible.

Teaching is a challenging task and requires hard work. I hope I have been able to communicate why I want to do it and what I think it requires. My previous experience as a TA and advisor of undergraduate students was a great learning experience and extremely rewarding. I expect that the task of university level professor will be more of the same. I am excited to begin.