May 19, 2015

Dr. Ali Mahdavi-Amiri
Department of Computer Science

RE: Sessional Teaching in CPSC 589/689

On behalf of the Department of Computer Science, I would like to thank you for teaching CPSC 589/689 for us in Winter 2015. I know that teaching consumes a lot of time and energy, and detracts from your research time as a PhD student, but we are very grateful for the high-quality instruction that you provided to our students.

I would also like to thank you for the opportunity to observe your class on April 1, 2015. I learned a lot about your teaching from this lecture, and was certainly impressed. I was very pleased to see the strong USRI results from your course, which you should be able to view now in your MyUofC portal (Academic – View course evaluations). Copies of the written student comments from your course will be available within the next week or two.

I observed many positive things in your classroom that day:

- Preparation: It was clear that you were well prepared for the class. You arrived early, and had things set up ready to go well in advance of the lecture.
- Technology: You made good use of a mix of technologies, including slides on the projector, and chalkboard for the examples and derivations. You even had coloured chalk in hand to make very clear diagrams. This mix of teaching methods helps provide variety to the lecture, and helps support students with different learning styles.
- Slides: The slides were very well-designed, both visually and content-wise.
- Names: You knew many of your students by name, and had some sort of tally scoring game to incentivize them to participate in the classroom. These can be tricky to do, but you have obviously found something that works for you, at least at this scale. Nice job!
- Energy: It was abundantly clear that you were enthusiastic about your material, and had deep understanding of it. You handled questions very capably, and showed great pleasure in interacting with the students. You were knowledgable and confident, while also being relaxed and very approachable. Your students seemed highly engaged, and ready to learn. You reminded me a lot of Majid Ghaderi, who is one of our award-winning teachers!

Some suggested areas for future improvement are the following:

- Transitions: It is a bit disruptive to switch between projector and chalkboard and back again, particularly when the screen position or the lights need to be adjusted. The mixed methods are good, but transitioning between them too many times can be distracting. You should
have a plan in mind for how long you need each, in which order.

- Demos: If it makes sense, you could consider running some live demos of your examples in class. This might make particular sense for 3D objects, or hollow objects, or object collision modeling, since not everyone can think spatially in three dimensions.

- Pacing: The material seemed to move along quite quickly for me, as a non-graphics person. I think most, but not all, of your students were following along. There were some that were clearly guessing at the “Inside versus Outside?” calculation. Might need an occasional sanity check to see if anyone is confused or has been left behind.

Once again, my thanks to you for teaching CPSC 589/689 this semester. You should be very proud of what you have accomplished. I certainly am!

Sincerely,

Carey Williamson
Professor and Head