Teaching Statement

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One great advantage of being a faculty member is the opportunity to teach and work with students. I love teaching and enjoy passing my knowledge onto students and sharing my experience with them. I also enjoy working with students on research topics where I can potentially encourage their critical thinking and empower them to solve research problems they are interested in. Based upon my background, I am qualified to teach introductory CS courses, advanced courses on distributed systems and networking, and research-oriented seminars.

My first teaching experience was being a TA for an advanced course on distributed systems at University of Southern California (USC). The class was open to both master’s and Ph.D. students with a few undergraduates. My responsibilities included guest lectures, holding office hours, and grading homework and exams. I gave two guest lectures on the fundamentals of today’s distributed systems, e.g., remote procedure call and replicated state machines. I used my weekly office hours to answer questions the students had on the lectures and assignments, and to help them better understand the material. Because the class was a mix of students at all levels, I gained great experience in teaching students with a high variance in their background.

In addition to serving as a TA, I also gained teaching experience from giving guest lectures. I gave one lecture in a graduate-level databases course at USC. The topic of the lecture was modern distributed data stores and a study on the consistency properties of Facebook’s production system. I also gave a guest lecture in an undergraduate-level distributed systems class at Princeton University. In the lecture, I discussed distributed transactional systems with a focus on latency-optimal designs of read-only transactions. I found both experiences rewarding as they exposed hot topics in distributed systems to students, helped students in different areas with their own research, and also increased the visibility of my work.

I enjoy working with undergraduate and master’s students on research projects. I worked with a few undergraduate students during my Ph.D. on different projects. The most successful experience was with a student from Rutgers University during his internship at USC. His contribution earned him the second author position on my SNOW work. More importantly, his experience at USC made him decide to apply to graduate schools as he found he loved doing research. Now he is a Ph.D. student at Princeton University. I currently work with a master’s student and a first-year Ph.D. student at Princeton on projects related to my future research directions.

I also find reading groups and seminars very helpful in keeping up with recent work and introducing our own work to the community. I have been organizing weekly systems seminars at Princeton University. In each seminar, I either invite outside speakers from industry and other universities to give a talk on their recent work or organize a discussion on recent papers from top conferences. I also schedule student meetings with the speakers on their visit so students have a chance to introduce their projects to more senior researchers.

I enjoy teaching and believe teaching plays an important role in being a faculty member. Doing great research is important as a researcher, while teaching is how we can make our research and knowledge have a broader impact, i.e., by passing knowledge onto students and advising students on becoming good researchers. I look forward to contributing to the university and the community with my enthusiasm and ability in teaching.