

### **Quality of Work:**

My robotics courses are taught using a laboratory style of pedagogy, with a lecture followed by laboratory work in which students work collaboratively on the problem-solving activity of the day.

Though he is only an undergraduate, Josh seems much like a seasoned professional colleague. In the laboratory setting, it can be difficult to give the right level of support to students in order to guide their learning and support collaboration between learners. Being able to guide students by asking them questions which help them to find their own answers is a skill which typically takes professors years to develop. The inclination of many less experienced TAs is to offer too much "help" sometimes even pulling away the keyboard away and "showing" students how to solve a given problem. Though extremely well-intentioned, this has several negative impacts on student learning, undercutting the construction of knowledge and disempowering the students as well as their teammate. This challenge is made even more difficult by the fact that students sometimes lose sight of their own learning and so often greatly appreciate the TA who will simply "show them how to solve the problem."

Since Josh works an in-class teaching associate, he works side-by-side with me in the classroom. His affable and unflappable demeanor set students at ease, and I have been extremely impressed by his ability to identify student misconceptions and then to ask students just the right question so the students themselves are able to experience the epiphany of learning. If Josh were a junior colleague, I would rate his level of skill in developing student learning as unusually high; as an undergraduate, I rate his quality of work as a TA as truly exceptional.

### **Initiative:**

Josh's capacity for understanding how to take appropriate initiative is excellent. He is able to operate independently, and understands when to check in, report back, and ask to questions.

Berea College's full-tuition model impacts the responsibilities of instructors in unexpected ways. At most colleges and universities if a student fails to attend class or fails to submit assignments, they are wasting their time and money. At Berea, they are squandering our investment in them. Hence, taking attendance is important to our institution in ways that might seem unusual elsewhere. Though I recognize the importance of this duty, I am sometimes more focused on the students in the class that I am negligent about taking attendance. Josh is mindful of this and takes initiative to simply make sure the task is always completed, and that student absences are recorded in such a way to be communicated to students in the learning management system, Moodle. Recently, in the Software Design and Development course, I was giving an exam. There are 38 students in the course, so it is a big class for Berea. I handed out the exams, and saw that a student was missing. Josh knew before I did who was missing and was able to send her a text to get her to class.

Josh also takes initiative to email students who fall behind with notes of encouragement and offers of help. It is this kind of proactive work which helps students to feel supported, and it is that level of support which helps students to move through conceptual challenges and to develop confidence in their abilities. His calm and supportive demeanor and also helps students to feel that they can succeed even if they initially lack confidence in themselves. These stories exemplify the kind of proactive initiative Josh consistently demonstrates.

**Professionalism:**

Josh has an absolutely Impeccable sense of professionalism. As a teaching associate, he is caring, organized, proactive, and forward looking. He is an effective classroom leader while also being able to foster collaboration between students in the classroom, a critically important learning goal of the computer science program at Berea College.

He also helps me to remember things which might otherwise be overlooked, and he does so privately without ever undermining my authority. There are many details in numerous sensors and robots to keep track of and batteries to keep charged. He is diligent with security and meticulous in his attention to helping me to protect and maintain Berea's investment in this large amount of expensive robotic equipment, keeping the equipment secured when not in use but available and ready for students to students use in class, in the evening lab, and during outreach to the public library.

The fact that I trusted Josh so completely to run my classes in this past fall term absence is a very high compliment about his level of professionalism.

**Uniqueness of Contribution:**

Life as a college professor has many benefits, but flexibility of taking time off during the academic year is not typically one of those benefits.

My mother-in-law passed away on October 1 with her entire family around her. I feel very blessed to work at an institution which made it possible for me to be fully present with her during that time. Of course, as a computer science professor, it would have been possible for me to give my lectures via Skype. But, my level confidence in Josh made that unnecessary. Because of the technical nature of the course, I have only one colleague who I would have had as much confidence in as I had in Josh. Given that Josh is an undergraduate, this is an extremely high compliment which serves as a testament to his professionalism and competence not only with the technical elements of the course but also in creating a positive learning environment in my classroom.

During the two and a half weeks that I was away from campus, Josh ran my two robotics courses, setting up the equipment, creating and delivering the lectures and keeping me posted on how my students were doing. My full confidence in him made it possible for me to focus on caring for my mother-in-law and my husband instead of splitting my attention between family and work.

In the 21 years I have worked at Berea College, I have supervised labor students in every term as well as in many summers. In all that time, I have written only two "perfect" labor evaluations. Josh's was one of these two perfect evaluations; he is a truly unusual undergraduate student worker.