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TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

“Give a man a fish, and he eats for a day. Teach him how to fish, and he eats for a lifetime.” – Chinese proverb

The curriculum in the College of Information Sciences and Technology is frequently designed to impart upon students a set of skills, as opposed to specific knowledge. This is a conscious design choice on the part of professors and lecturers, who recognize that while teaching a student about a specific technology may only serve the student for a year or two, teaching a student to think critically and problem solve when confronted with an unfamiliar system will serve that student for the duration of their lifetime. Thus, I view my role as a teaching assistant as facilitating students learning skills, as opposed to just giving them the grade that they want from the course.

To this end, I attempt to challenge students to step back when they run into a challenge in the classroom, and think about the steps they had previously taken that led to the roadblock. I attempt to guide their thinking in the direction of the solution or answer, but in a way that requires them to undertake a majority of the thought required to successfully solve the problem that they face. I developed my love of this form of the Socratic method by taking classes in pedagogy at both the undergraduate and graduate level. I view this form of teaching as one well suited for a variety of disciplines, but particularly in information sciences and technology because of the swift evolution of both information and technology. By challenging students to think through the problems they encounter in my class, I can encourage the development of skills that will serve them in their eventual careers, particularly when they are tasked with dealing with an unfamiliar piece of hardware or programming language.