

Changwoo Ahn – Mentoring Statement

It is an extremely humbling and rewarding experience to be a mentor for undergraduate students. I want my students to be empowered and transformed through my mentoring on their research and scholarship activities, so that they can develop not only much-needed skill sets, but also gain an ability and insight to integrate the things that they have learned to be able to understand the larger context of learning.

Each semester on the first day of class I talk to all my students about OSCAR's research and scholarship program while strongly encouraging the students to get research and scholarship experience in their college education. Still, only a handful of students may pursue that experience in reality. Regardless, I passionately explain the importance of having a caring mentor(s) for the success of their college education. The first 15 to 20 minutes of my first class always does this as I strongly believe that student research and scholarship is pivotal to improving the quality of current college education.

Research and scholarship activities often require countless hours of keen attention even to minor details in every step of their learning process. It is also a process of truly understanding and building a character for each student. I make continuously conscious efforts to make myself available whenever students need me no matter what. I make sure they are heard, seen, and appreciated for their inquiries, actions, and progresses during the project, which I have observed truly motivate and empower them to move on to the next step, leading a necessary progress in their learning.

Students have to feel comfortable and confident with mentors to be successful with their projects. They should feel comfortable enough to ask questions and raise any concerns on their projects without hesitance. The mentor must be patient and should be able to show and communicate with students clearly that he or she cares. I am culturally sensitive and compassionate with my mentoring to address each student's unique character and learning progress. What I have learned from my mentoring experience is that patience, flexibility, preparation, and communication are imperative to being a successful mentor. I provide specific knowledge, skills, and sources of information, and share my experience through meetings, conversations, and activities with students. These are all important ingredients in mentoring, yet nothing beats sincere and continuous "encouragement" and "praises" considerately tailored to each student.

Mentoring constantly challenges me to grow as a professor. I believe that I can make a difference if I provide supportive and effective mentoring in the lives of many students, and I have been fortunate enough to actually experience that to some degree. I often say to my students "Don't suffer from learning, but it is necessary to struggle to learn, and let's struggle to learn together".

Thanks to many supports around the campus I had the most memorable moment of my mentoring experiences so far during the "Rain Project" last year. I have mentored over two dozen undergraduate students in this project. As much as I mentored through the many phases of the project it was the students who truly challenged me to become an aspiring teacher and mentor, so I am extremely grateful to all the undergraduate students who have worked on the Rain Project with me. I am humbly grateful to mentoring opportunities and will continue to do my best.