Teaching Statement
Berto Gonzalez

My overall goal as a professor is to see my students grow in knowledge and skill. As a lecturer, I am beaming with enthusiasm, which captivates my students. As a teacher, I want to challenge students to think beyond their specific discipline, engage them with material that is relevant and applicable, and provide them with an environment that supports different learning styles. As a mentor, I believe that every student is different and each can leverage their unique set of experiences to make them successful.

Classroom Teaching
In the classroom, I focus on demonstrating the relevancy and applicability of the course material within the context of different computing disciplines. This works well in my Human Computer Interfaces (HCI) course, where in-class examples are taken from my eight plus years of experience in software development, research, and interdisciplinary (e.g., dance and computing) collaborations. Students have reported that they appreciate the “real world examples that helped retention of materials.” From students who enjoy reverse engineering to those who just want to design websites, my broad set of experiences allows my teaching to come across as highly idiosyncratic (e.g., students report that I “know what I’m talking about” and show a lot of enthusiasm), rather than sounding formulaic or teaching verbatim from a course book.

I use opportunities such as department presentations to learn about what topics or skill sets our local industry partners are searching for in students. Topics that I teach of current interest to our partners include: rapid prototyping, novel interaction techniques, and tangible interaction. I also make it a point to incorporate industry driven methodologies and approaches, back into the classroom. One such method, used by UX Designers, is Guerilla Usability Testing, a very quick method for getting feedback on a design.

It is important for the curriculum to reflect the needs of today’s diverse student body; therefore I have collaborated on the redesign of the HCI course, in terms of class content and style of teaching. As a graduate student, I served as both a technical and a pedagogical resource to the faculty as our department adopted a more active learning style of teaching using the flipped-classroom method. This style of teaching has students view the lectures outside of the classroom, while in-class, students do hands-on activities with minimal lecturing from the instructor. I am able to create a dynamic learning-style environment where students can learn from each other, hands-on instruction from the professor, or engaging visual presentations. As a faculty member, I am an active
participant in the Connected Learner group, which focuses on supporting faculty interested in better engaging their students. We continually evaluate and revise our teaching techniques to improve the quality of education our computer students are receiving.

**Mentoring**

I make it a point to help guide students both inside and outside the classroom. I have been privileged to invest my time into many undergraduates. Every student has a unique set of life experiences and skills, and as their mentor, my role is to help them discover how they can leverage those skills and experiences to make them successful. Between 2010 and 2014, I have been a mentor to 11 participants of the Summer Research Experience for Undergraduates. One undergraduate, in particular, I mentored from his first year until he left for graduate school. While his background was in music, I encouraged him to use that knowledge base to his advantage. We collaborated closely on a project on manipulating multiple sound parameters, which led to his first full conference paper publication at CHI 2014. By including students in my projects, they can put classroom knowledge to practical use, re-enforcing programming concepts, as well as enabling the students to branch into new knowledge domains they may otherwise not be exposed to in a traditional classroom setting. In addition to undergraduates, I have been meeting with several PhD students to provide feedback and guidance on their current research endeavors. I am also currently serving on the thesis committee of a Master’s Student.

**Future Teaching**

I am very interested in teaching HCI and Design courses. In the future, I will want to develop a course that focuses on design patterns and rapid prototyping techniques, a topic that tends to be a favorite of students who’ve taken my course. I am especially look forward to engaging with students working on projects as part of their senior projects or thesis. As I get to know the students, I will introduce a hybrid flipped-classroom approach. I will continue to evaluate my teaching methods and the flipped classroom approach using a combination of student grades, course feedback, and peer-teaching evaluations.