



UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

COMPUTER SCIENCE & PRE-ENGINEERING

Dec 1, 2010

Todd S. Peterson, PhD
Computer Science Department
Utah Valley University

Rank and Tenure Committee:

This is a letter in support of Chuck Allison's request for promotion to Full Professor. I have been asked by Professor Allison to evaluate his teaching performance.

I had the opportunity to sit in on a few of Professor Allison's CS 3450 -- Principles and Patterns of Software Development classes. When I attended, this was a new course, which had only been taught one time previously. Professor Allison developed this course to fill a need for a course that taught more software design principles that were needed for our Computer Science B.S. Degree. This course is also required by our new Software Engineering Degree.

This course was well designed. The course followed the "Head-first Design Pattern's" book. The course covers principles that lead to well-structured computer software code. As a result, it is impossible to teach this course without looking at a lot of computer code. However, you also need to teach the principles behind the computer code that you are looking at. In this course you need to look at lots of well-structured code and also understand the general design principles that lead to good coding practices in general.

Each chapter in the book covers a new design principle surrounding well-structured code, and offers a coding example for this principle. Professor Allison also followed this format. However he offered other examples of his own, and went more in-depth on how the principles taught in the course applied to the coding examples.

The lectures were well structured. He introduced the new principles for the day's lecture and then demonstrated the principle in code. If not done well, this could lead to a rather boring lecture. However, Professor Allison managed to keep things interesting. He also responded well to student's questions without getting off track.

I think Chuck's biggest strength is presenting appropriate material that is insightful, but neither too difficult, nor too easy for the students to understand and appreciate. This is more difficult than it sounds. Most of the time coding examples in a Computer Science text book are as simple as possible to get the main point across. This has the students wondering why this example is applicable to their professional careers. They understand

the concept but can't see the relevance. Chuck's examples are well pointed, but are also situated in a context that would really happen in a day-to-day computer science job.

The best teachers are those who don't shy away from teaching difficult concepts. Professors who simply choose the easy path in the hopes of good evaluations miss the point of teaching completely. Professor Allison does exactly the opposite. He goes after the difficult concepts, but presents them in a way that a good student can understand and appreciate them. Students in Chuck's classes feel that they are really getting a good education.

Professor Allison is one of our department's best teachers. Anecdotal student comments consistently report that they really like his courses. They are challenging and informative. I fully support Chuck's Promotion request.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Todd Peterson", with a stylized, flowing script.

Todd S. Peterson, Ph. D.