

John Homer's Recommendation Letter

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I am a 2013 ACU computer science graduate. I have known Dr. Homer for a long time as a student, and I would like to recommend him for tenureship. The following are some reasons why I would like to recommend him, including experiences with him both in and out of class.

I had Dr. Homer as a professor for three upper-level computer science classes: Analysis of Algorithms, Programming Languages, and Theory of Computation. I enjoyed having him as a professor for many reasons. He is an excellent lecturer and has a gift for conveying information in a way that students will easily comprehend. He also makes the subject matter interesting by giving practical examples. For example, in Programming Languages, he often demonstrated the concepts we were learning about functional programming languages by typing code into the ML interactive prompt. In Algorithms, he would show us how the relative speed of different algorithms by running programs on his laptop and comparing the amount of time it took them to complete. Sometimes, he also did in-class activities to demonstrate a point. For example, in the first Programming Languages lecture he split up the class in two and had both sides of the room debate over whether there should be only one all-purpose programming language or many single-purpose programming languages. Doing these things helped solidify the material we were learning and made it more relatable to the real world.

While he was a great lecturer who made the subject matter interesting and easy to follow, he did not make his classes too easy. The classes he taught were among the most challenging courses I took at ACU, but at the same time were some of the classes in which I learned the most, and they prepared me quite a bit for my current roles as a computer science master's student and as a software developer.

Another thing that I appreciate about Dr. Homer as a professor is that he doesn't take himself too seriously. He would often make jokes during class about the subject we were covering. During the lecture about the pigeonhole principle in Theory of Computation he drew an illustration on the whiteboard of pigeons in pigeonholes. He also offered a small bonus to any of us in the class who would make up and perform a song about the Pumping Lemma. Doing these things made the classes more fun and helped us students create a sense of camaraderie with him as a professor.

I also have a few reasons I'd like to recommend him based on my experiences with him out of the classroom. Dr. Homer really cares about students' success. He would sometimes come to the tutoring lab in the evenings and help students with the homework, even though there were already tutors hired by the computer science department to do that. One semester he also held Monday evening office hours at 8:00 at night, to be more accommodating to students who had other classes and work during the day. He also had a final exam review in the evening in which he brought pizza and soda to encourage students to come. The fact that he had late office hours helped me a great deal as a working student who could never attend professors' office hours during the day because of my schedule, and I'm sure it benefited many other students as well.

He was active outside of classes as well. He and another professor teamed up to teach a robotics class to high school students during the summer of 2010. He would also often come to board game nights along with students at another professor's house just to socialize with students and get to know them better on a personal level.

Finally, he is a good mentor to students when they are seeking professional or academic advice. I went to him when I was considering going to graduate school for computer science, unsure of whether I was good enough to get into any programs. He encouraged me and told me an M.S. program would be a great fit for me. This conversation I had with him boosted my self-confidence and helped me solidified my decision to go to graduate school.

Dr. Homer is a great professor, inside and outside of the classroom. I sincerely hope he gets tenureship and achieves his academic goals.