

Dr. Ryan Jessup brings a presence to COBA and ACU not like any professor I encountered in my undergraduate or even graduate education. I have taken four courses from him and served as his undergraduate research assistant across two different projects. Dr. Jessup's mentorship contributed greatly to my success in college and choice of career path, and is almost exclusively responsible for my success in graduate programs.

In contrast to many others, Dr. Jessup's teaching methods were firmly rooted in the realities of business and science. The courses always revolved around helping students retain the most important information while acknowledging how messy the real world can be. A great example of this is the way he structured data mining projects, which involved going to a local business and using real data. The reality was messier than if he had simply generated data for the class and had everyone analyze as part of a test. This was reflected again in his consumer behavior class, where he offered encouragement regarding our methodology despite the lack of interesting findings. In yet another class, our market research for the Abilene Zoo showed the same trends, and we were, as always, encouraged not to find wildly interesting things, but to use strong methodology and learn to relate findings to the business client.

The three major projects in the three aforementioned classes were far and away the three best project experiences I had in my undergrad, ousting both my business and psychology courses in terms of level of feedback, focus on course content, and the level of guidance Dr. Jessup was willing to provide outside of class. Students would regularly check by his office for help, and he absolutely refused to give half-hearted answers – On multiple occasions I would drop by his office, sometimes with members from a project group and sometimes alone, to ask a small question, and would end up being kept there for 30-40 minutes so Dr. Jessup could be absolutely certain I understood the concept perfectly. I know for a fact many of these meetings caused him to leave his office later than normal. Never in my entire life, much less my undergraduate education, have I known any instructors who would go to the same lengths to ensure their students succeeded.

My experience as a student researcher for Dr. Jessup was far more in-depth than the experiences of my peers. Rather than making me a lackey for busywork or tasks things too tedious for his liking, Dr. Jessup required me to think critically as I helped with every stage of our research task on the too-much-choice effect, from the design stage to parts of the final manuscript. As with his role as my instructor, his mentorship role found me in his office for hours on end as he carefully taught me details of our research at a graduate level. He also recommended certain classes, like a python programming class, that would make me more competitive for graduate programs. As a result, I felt very prepared going into a Ph.D. program in cognitive psychology, having much more specialized experiences in both statistics and programming than even the second and third year students at A&M.

Dr. Jessup took the time to ensure I was seeing success at every step from ACU to graduate school. He had me give my conference presentation to him several times in order to refine it, and as a result the presentation won awards at both ACU's undergraduate research festival and the SWPA conference. Most importantly of all, my conversations and research with Dr. Jessup instilled in me a sense of scientific integrity and curiosity that would lead to radical changes in my career path after leaving ACU: I chose first to enter a cognitive psychology program because of my interest science, and later a transition to MIS because of my interest in data mining and analysis. Both of these were the direct result of Dr. Jessup's mentorship.

Nowhere at ACU did I encounter a professor with the same critical thinking skills and the willingness to share those skills with students. To this day, my encounters with COBA alumni are filled with jokes and anecdotes about Dr. Ryan Jessup's classes, a testament to how engaging they were to students. I often wonder how anyone could make as much time as he did for mentoring. For these reasons, I am certain that ACU and COBA gain immensely from his presence. If you have any questions about Dr. Jessup, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

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