Education Award Winner

It was extremely gratifying to be honored with the 2018 TCDE Education Award. While I've received various research awards over time, this is the first time I've been recognized for my educational endeavors. The truth is that most of my career I've been only an adequate teacher, certainly not among those who are truly gifted at the craft. I steadfastly taught my undergraduate and graduate classes to acceptable student ratings, and I dutifully updated the material periodically without being especially creative.

That all changed in the fall of 2011, when I jumped on the bandwagon with my faculty colleagues Sebastian Thrun (AI) and Andrew Ng (Machine Learning) to create one of Stanford's three inaugural free-to-the-world online courses, now known as MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses). Even though I was chair of the Computer Science department at the time, and running a research group, I threw myself into the creation and delivery of the Databases MOOC with a passion for teaching I hadn't known that I possessed. The excitement and immense gratitude of tens of thousands of students was invigorating and inspirational. The Databases MOOC is still online in a self-serve modular fashion, and I continue to get a steady stream of thank-you's from students worldwide. Creating that course may turn out to be one of the broadest impact endeavors of my career.

Fast-forward to the fall of 2016 when it was time for a sabbatical. I wasn't especially interested a typical sabbatical that expands my own research horizons; I wanted to have direct impact on people. I combined my long-standing love of exotic travel with my MOOC experience to hatch a concept I jokingly call the MOIC, or Massive Open *In-Person* Course. With logistical help from ACM and many international students and colleagues, and with financial backing from ACM, VLDB, Google, and Stanford, I traveled to about 25 locations in 15 developing countries offering free short-courses on Big Data, workshops on "Design Thinking" (a wildly popular problem-solving methodology from Stanford's d.school), and roundtable discussions for women in technology. Once again I found myself deeply engaged in a teaching endeavor that reaped many rewards. Although my sabbatical was cut short when I was named Dean of Engineering, I endeavor to carve out at least two one-week periods per year for travel-teaching, and I've stuck with it so far. To date I've visited 18 countries and reached several thousand students in person across the globe.

I used the material I developed for my travel-teaching to launch a new Stanford class: Big Data Tools & Techniques for non-Computer Science majors. I'm not sure if it's the MOOC or MOIC experiences, the timeliness of the topic, the fact that (as Dean) I'm teaching for fun and not because I'm required to, but I'm enjoying my Stanford teaching more than I ever have before, and getting excellent student ratings to boot. Who would have guessed? Thanks again to TCDE for the recognition and honor.

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