Dr. Binh Tran
"Making a Life" for My Students Inside and Outside the Classroom

Helping Tech Camp middle and high school students experience virtual reality using the latest Digital Media hardware and software (Summer 2018).

ITEC 4400 – Cloud Computing Technologies students on a field trip to NanoLumens. The 25 of my students who attended were able to meet NanoLumens' Director of IT (pictured left) (September 2018).

In ITEC 3100—showing students how to connect and configure a RAID array with multiple hard drives and run performance speed tests (Spring 2018).

Georgia Gwinnett
COLLEGE

Office of the Senior Vice
President for Academic &
Student Affairs/Provost

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Dear Members of the Selection Committee:

Dr. Binh Tran came to us after spending 8 ½ years in the information technology industry as an engineer, and the **IT industry's loss has been our gain**. Or rather, I should say, *our GGC students' gain,* since he is one of the most well-respected and highly regarded faculty members we have.

Many of our over 1300 IT majors know that Dr. Tran will "*go the extra mile*" to help them, not only to do well in their classes, but also to get internships and obtain "first jobs" in the highly competitive, "hot" IT field. As a matter of fact, *at NanoLumens, in Peachtree Corners, GA*, a company for which Dr. Tran regularly "recruits" IT student interns and fulltime professionals, *there now are 25 GGC graduates who have full-time IT positions*; and this would not have happened without Dr. Tran's constantly giving so much help to his students. His students constantly report that "Dr. Tran gives us professional advice and tips about how to get into the IT industry."

Because *Dr. Tran has earned 15 industry certifications himself*, he knows that usually, to enter the IT field these days, one must have not only a Bachelor's degree but also at least one certification. So, in 2015, Dr. Tran worked directly with Microsoft to bring the **Microsoft Technology Associate (MTA)** certificate to GGC. So far, of the 349 students who have taken it, 314 have passed (*90% success rate*).

However, *it is not only Dr. Tran's students who love him; his full-time colleagues and his part-time colleagues also speak highly of him*. In fact, Dr. Tran chairs the GGC Part-Time Faculty Committee, and each year, his committee gives the "GGC Outstanding Part-time Faculty Award" to a high-performing part-time faculty member in each of the seven academic schools. Every semester he also attends GGC's two-night Part-time Faculty Orientation in order to welcome our new part-time faculty and tell them how he and his committee members can help them throughout the semester.
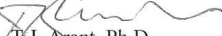
During the summers, Dr. Tran also has volunteered to teach at both our Tech Camp and our STEM Academy which middle and high school students attend. *Apparently, the high students and middle school children also adore him*, for these students recommended Dr. Tran for the Tech Camp "Outstanding Faculty Award" in 2016 and the STEM Academy "Outstanding Faculty Award" in 2017.

On a personal level, **Dr. Tran is one of the most humble faculty I have ever known.** His accomplishments are many, but one would never know this while talking to Dr. Tran. Whenever he talks to me, he tells me what his students are doing or what his next project will be.

Here at GGC, where we have a number of excellent faculty, Dr. Tran stands out as *exceptional*.

For all these reasons, I wholeheartedly recommend him for the Felton Jenkins Jr. Hall of Fame Faculty Award.

Sincerely,

T.J. Arant, Ph.D.
Senior Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs/Provost

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November 9, 2018

Dr. Martha L. Venn
Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs
Board of Regents, University System of Georgia
270 Washington Street
Atlanta, GA 30334

Dear Dr. Venn:

It is my privilege and pleasure to recommend Dr. Binh Tran, Assistant Professor of Information Technology, for the Felton Jenkins, Jr. Hall of Fame Faculty Award.

As one of Dr. Tran's students said, "You can truly tell that Dr. Tran was meant to teach." Perhaps this explains why Dr. Tran has received over 280 "Thank-A- Teacher" letters that our Center for Teaching Excellence collects from those students who want to thank an outstanding faculty member. Out of this large accumulation of student notes, almost every student graciously thanks Dr. Tran for his selflessness and compassion, with descriptions of Dr. Tran "going out of his way," and "teaching with patience, enthusiasm, and being very helpful inside and outside of class."

Since arriving at Georgia Gwinnett College (GGC) in fall 2014, Dr. Tran has become known for his compassionate manner, his endless energy, and especially for his willingness to go out of his way for his students. No doubt, this is how he came to be nominated and selected for GGC's own internal award, the "Top Claw" Award, which recognizes those faculty and staff who "routinely go above and beyond."

Dr. Tran is passionate about the value of experimental learning. He is one of the strongest faculty advocates that we have for integrating what he teaches in his classes to real-world work assignments, enabling his students to obtain IT positions in the Atlanta metropolitan region.
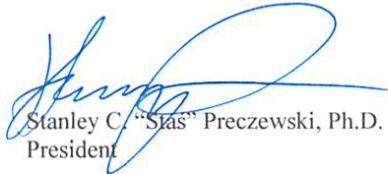
In regard to internship opportunities, Dr. Tran has gone above and beyond as well. Over the last few years, Dr. Tran has taken his IT students to visit local companies such as NanoLumens, GIM Computers, and QTS. Our students, many of whom are first-generation and who come to us academically underprepared, are grateful to Dr. Tran for helping them be successful in both their IT classes and their professional lives. When two of the employers to which Dr. Tran recommended interns learned that he had been nominated for this award, they wanted to write letters of support for him (included in portfolio).

Dr. Tran modestly believes that he is just giving his students the help that they need. He is always eager to assist his students as well as his colleagues, even those outside of his own School of Science and Technology. When the mother of a student from our School of Education wanted to speak to its Dean, Dr. Cathy Moore, and Dr. Moore discovered that the mother spoke only Vietnamese, Dr. Moore called Dr. Tran to see if he could come to her office to translate. Of course, Dr. Tran immediately came to help. Dr. Tran did more than this; as Dean Moore indicated, "Dr. Tran's knowledge and his easy-going style helped to establish a climate for the meeting that was calming for my student's mother [and] my student. Dr. Tran ended up being more than just a translator."

Dr. Tran consistently goes above and beyond to help students by guiding them to success both in the classroom and in their future vocation. His enthusiasm, compassion, and commitment to teaching are invaluable to the GGC community. I recommend him without reservation for the Felton Jenkins, Jr. Hall of Fame Faculty Award.

Sincerely,

Stanley C. "Stas" Preczewski, Ph.D.
President

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November 5, 2018

USG Outstanding Teacher Selection Committee,

It is my pleasure to give my strongest possible recommendation for Dr. Binh Tran for Outstanding Teacher in the University System of Georgia. I have known Dr. Tran since August 2014 when he joined the faculty at Georgia Gwinnett College. I have had the privilege of watching Dr. Tran become one of the most active, vibrant, engaged, and dedicated members of the GGC faculty. I have also watched with admiration as he has begun to establish his reputation as one of our most gifted and valuable faculty leaders. In my opinion, Dr. Tran exemplifies all of the attributes that we seek in our best faculty members in the USG. As his record clearly demonstrates, he has all the attributes that make him an ideal selection for Outstanding Teacher.

Dr. Tran has excelled in every domain where we expect outstanding contributions from our faculty. Dr. Tran has been an outstanding teacher, engaging students in a breadth of courses including general education information technology courses and upper level courses like Networks and Advanced Networks. His versatility of teaching is one of his greatest strengths. He has incorporated the latest concepts from the academic literature, the most appropriate practical applications, and cutting-edge technology. He has incorporated active learning throughout the courses he offers. He has participated at teaching workshops at GGC, and has shared his innovative techniques with faculty of many disciplines. His students repeatedly rank him as an excellent classroom teacher. I frequently get emails from his students reporting that he has helped them and that they want him to teach a class they are taking the next semester.

His teaching has extended to engagement with students outside the classroom. He has been instrumental in building opportunities for students to get the additional certifications they will need in the 21st century IT workforce. He works with students one-on-one and is always willing to meet with students outside of class.

Dr. Tran exemplifies all the attributes that we expect in our faculty. He is a tremendous teacher, an effective scholar, and influential leader of faculty colleagues, a great supporter of students, and a fine example of service. He provides an outstanding model that other faculty members strive to emulate. At root, though, what grounds Dr. Tran is his commitment to teaching and student engagement. I recommend in the strongest possible terms that Dr. Binh Tran be selected for Outstanding Teacher in the USG.

Sincerely,

Dr. Thomas Mundie
Dean, School of Science and Technology
Georgia Gwinnett College

Dear Members of Selection Committee:

It is my honor to highly recommend Dr. Binh Tran for the Felton Jenkins, Jr. Hall of Fame Faculty Award. As a professor, his duties include teaching, research, and committee work for the college; however, I would like to describe how he truly excels at not only those duties but also in areas of service to his students and to his colleagues such as myself.

A few years ago, when I was first hired as a new part-time faculty at GGC, I was relatively new to the world of academia, even though I have numerous years of IT industry experience. Dr. Tran volunteered his time to reach out to a group of us new faculty hires and did everything within his power to make sure that we were ready for the first day of class. *He was available on nights and weekends* to answer our questions about the learning management system, grading, and policies, even though he was not our direct supervisor but instead a consummate colleague who was genuinely willing to help. There were at least 4 or 5 other new faculty hires that had many unanswered questions from our formal training. So, *we even asked Dr. Tran to meet us on a Saturday for extra training—which he was willing to do without hesitation.*

I later discovered through conservations with my other colleagues as well as students that he is one of the most liked, helpful and best IT professors at GGC based on student evaluations and the Ratemyprofessor website which also indicates that Dr. Tran is one of the best. *But—any faculty member, student, or staff who has ever worked with Dr. Tran already knows how phenomenal he is*. Dr. Tran became a mentor to us new faculty and was always super responsive to questions whereas my assigned mentor would not reply to a question I had until several days later.

I hear from students all the time that he becomes a "mentor" to all his students, which means he reviews their resumes and conducts interview preparation workshops for both internships and also full-time jobs. Also, he spoke at a Women in IT (WIT) event to encourage women to join and have an interest in the IT field which is dominated by men. I see him helping many young women with their interview skills and resumes.

Also, I had the opportunity to work with Dr. Tran during the summer Tech Camp where he worked with high school and middle school boys and girls who are interested in Information Technology. He taught them computer hardware, networking and security concepts in a way that they found enjoyable and made them want to learn more. *His ability to teach this group of students as well as freshman and senior courses shows his versatility and ability to adapt to the needs of the students and the college.*

I cannot say enough about Dr. Tran's "above and beyond" services to his students, faculty and even those alumni who have already graduated. I truly feel that he should be a prime candidate for this award and should be recognized for everything he does for the students and our college. Sincerely,

Karen Benson
kbenson@ggc.edu

Georgia Gwinnett
COLLEGE

Lissa Pollacia, Ph.D.
Professor, Information Technology
1000 University Center Lane
Lawrenceville, GA 30043
678.656.2126
lpollaci@ggc.edu

Dear Members of the Selection Committee:

I am delighted to offer my strongest support for Dr. Binh Tran for the Felton Jenkins, Jr. Hall of Fame Faculty Award. I have worked closely with Dr. Tran, and I have observed his classroom teaching as well as read his end-of semester course evaluations and student comments. During that time, I have come to know him as an outstanding teacher and a valued colleague. In the classroom, Dr. Tran is friendly and reassuring, but he also has very high standards and challenges his students to make sure they can apply the concepts to the project requirements. It is evident from the first minute that he walks into the classroom that *he sincerely cares about all of his students* and that he will help to make sure they succeed.

Below are several comments from his course evaluations:

--He is a great instructor. He doesn't just give you the material to memorize it. He actually explains and makes sure you understand. He also compares it to everyday life situations.

--Dr. Tran loves teaching, and he exudes enthusiasm in every class (even at 8 am!). He was always early to class, willing to talk to students before and after class.

--Excellent professor! Very friendly, helpful, caring and compassionate. He always wants all his students to succeed.

The comments above are completely representative of what all of his students say about him.

Dr. Tran also showed great initiative and faculty leadership by establishing the Microsoft Technology Associate (MTA) certification. IT industry certifications are crucial for students to "get advantage" in job interviews in order to obtain their first IT fulltime position. And the MTA certification and Dr. Tran's helping the students has enabled many of our students to go into the field. Some of Dr. Tran's former students now work for such companies in the Atlanta region as *Altair, Griffin Solutions, Arris International, and United Technology Group (UTG).*

For all that Dr. Tran does to help GGC's students as well as his colleagues, I enthusiastically endorse him for the Felton Jenkins Jr. Hall of Fame Faculty Award.

Lissa F. Pollacia, Ph.D., C.C.P.
Professor of Information Technology

November 2, 2018

Dear Members of the Selection Committee:

During the winter break, I sat down to figure out what classes/professors I should take in the spring term. Because I am a software development major, one of the requirements is to take "Introduction to Networks." After looking up different professors that taught the course on "Ratemyprofessor.com", one professor (Dr. Tran) stood out, with a perfect 5.0 rating, the highest rated professor at the school! I immediately added this course with Dr. Tran teaching it to my schedule, excited at what other students said about how great he was as a professor.

My expectations were already high coming into the term, but **little did I know how exceptional Dr. Tran truly was. He was extremely thorough with the material and always made sure everyone understood exactly what he expected from us and wanted us to learn.** Not only that, **but at the end of each class, he would update the d2l homepage for the class summarizing what we did that day! Wow! I have never had a professor do that before**, to take the time to recap what we did every single day, making sure that his students understood what he was teaching.

Another important thing that stood out in my mind about Dr. Tran's class was the opportunity he gave me to obtain my first ever certification, the MTA (Microsoft Technology Associate). At first, it sounded very daunting, but **Dr. Tran prepared us for weeks** and made sure that all of us understood what would be expected for the certification exam. **With his thorough teaching methods and helpful tips**, I passed easily and completed my first IT certification! Not only was I certified, but **Dr. Tran showed us how to advertise the certification to help us look for internship opportunities.**

After completing the certification, Dr. Tran wanted us to come back for one more extra workshop to help prepare us for our futures. Dr. Tran gave us insightful information into all areas of IT that would prepare us for the road we are headed down. **I was very impressed that he was willing to spend MORE time with us than he had to because we already took our certification! The exam was over!** And Dr. Tran took the time to give us a lecture on how to be successful in our careers moving forward. *I have never had a professor not only teach us a subject so well, but then to give us industry tips and tricks* which meant a lot to me and my classmates.

Bottom line, I have truly never had a professor like Dr. Tran, but he's more than the label of a "professor"; anyone can be that. In my opinion. **Dr. Tran is an educator first**; he made sure that his students were prepared and he did his absolute best to educate us on not only on the material of networking, but in how to excel in the IT field. **Professors like Dr. Tran only come *once in a lifetime***, and **I am truly grateful I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to learn from him.** He is truly in a league of his own. I cannot think of anyone more deserving of the Teaching Award than Dr. Tran.

Sincerely,

Alexander McWhorter

Alex McWhorter
amcwhor1@ggc.edu

⌧ NanoLumens®

Felix Eloi
4900 Avalon Ridge Parkway | Norcross, GA 30071
678.263.3088 Ext. 182 | feloi@nanolumens.com

November 2, 2018

Dear Members of the Selection Committee,

It gives me great pleasure to provide this exceptional support letter for Dr. Binh Tran. Dr. Tran and I have worked together in the education sector for *over 7 years,* specifically in the field of information technology.

Collectively, Dr. Tran and I have been partnering along with the Director of IT at NanoLumens to provide IT internship opportunities to an assortment of students in an effort for them to obtain gainful employment. The types of students vary from graduating seniors, the non-traditional returning students, to dual enrollment high schoolers. As of late, *25 full-time positions have been obtained after an internship at NanoLumens including:* Tier I & II Technical Support, IT Administrator, Security Specialist, and Network Engineer.

Without a doubt, Dr. Tran provides an extremely useful service to his *community by leveraging his network of industry contacts in an effort to strengthen, reinforce, and connect to the modern day student.* As mentioned in one of his many publications regarding today's cohort of students, "…unlike previous generations they (Generation Z) have the innate ability to adapt and embrace changes in technology." As modern day students require change in learning, so must the way we teach them, through a more andragogical approach. Dr. Tran acknowledges this fact daily both inside and outside the classroom.

It is rare to have the opportunity to work alongside such an individual. Dr. Tran's dedication to educational outcomes of his students goes above and beyond and he should rightfully be recognized for his efforts.

Sincerely,

Felix Eloi

Felix Eloi
IT Administrator
NanoLumens, Inc.

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Driven.
Technology.

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November 2, 2018

Dear Members of the Selection Committee:

The purpose of this letter is to share my experiences regarding Dr. Tran. I am the CEO of an IT services company in Duluth, GA. Hiring qualified employees in this industry in this location is very difficult. I endeavored to start an internship program to help us bring along young IT students and develop them into fully qualified systems engineers.

I was not making much progress and was speaking to a professor about my lack of progress getting connected with internship candidates. He suggested that I should go directly to the professors. We had a recent graduate on our team at UTG so I went to him *and asked him who his favorite professor was. He immediately said Dr. Tran.* I asked if he would introduce me to Dr. Tran and he gladly did so.

When I first spoke to Dr. Tran, *he insisted that he come visit me at UTG.* He shared that he always *likes visit the workplace* to make sure it is a *good environment before he is willing to refer any students to a company.* He also asked if *I would come to his classroom and speak to his students.* I was very impressed how much he went out of his way to look out for the wellbeing of his students.

Not only has Dr. Tran sent me candidates for our internship program, but he always follows up to find out how they did and if he can provide any coaching to them based on my feedback. Another fact that I must share is that I interview a lot of young people in this area. Whenever I see that they attended Gwinnett Technical College or Georgia Gwinnett College, I always ask if they know Dr. Tran. They always get very excited and say "Yes! He was great, how do you know him?" *I also have a built in reference check for candidates,* I'm always amazed how many of his past students he remembers and can provide feedback on.

Thanks in large part to Dr. Tran, UTG has a thriving internship program. We have *3 full time engineers' on-staff who came from the program and three interns currently in the program.* We have seen many of these students get their degree while in the program and transition from part time interns into full time employees launching their careers. *It's a win-win* and I'm very thankful to Dr. Tran for his support of his students and local companies.

Sincerely,

Eric Dykes
CEO
United Technology Group, LLC

REFLECTIVE STATEMENT
"Making A Life:" My Journey from Vietnam to England to Georgia Gwinnett College

My parents, my younger brother, and I escaped Vietnam when I was only 3 years old. At that time, I did not know that our chances of survival were less than 25%. Like so many other Vietnamese of that era, my father knew that the 1975 fall of Saigon meant that we had no future in our homeland. So, for a very large fee, he booked passage for us on a boat that had been designed to carry 300 people, but left the harbor with 425 on it.

Boats such as the one above were used by refugees after Saigon's invasion by North Vietnam. About 800,000 Vietnamese fled the country by boat between 1975-1995, and my family was one of them.

After we had gotten out in the middle of the ocean, the engines broke down, and we began to drift. We were far from any shore, and we drifted for days. Just as the food and water were beginning to run out, divine intervention came to us in the form of a British cargo ship whose Captain ordered his crew to help us, or else I would not be here today.

Then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher allowed all of us from the boat to stay first in Hong Kong, and then in Bristol, England. Shortly after, my father relocated us to Watford, just outside London, where we lived until we were given the opportunity to immigrate to Georgia, U.S.A.

My parents, brother, and I were offered the chance to stay in England in 1979.

My parents at their Electronics and Small Appliance Repair Store in Lilburn, GA.

After arriving in the Atlanta area, I entered the ninth grade where my academic journey began. My father had opened a small electronics and appliance store in Lilburn, and that is how I came to stumble upon my first computer when my father and I went to a yard sale. At the yard sale, I happened to see an old, broken 386 computer that the homeowner wanted to just give away. *My father hesitated, saying, "We do not have enough space for anything that big."*

But — for some reason, I could not take my eyes off it. I had to have it. After much pleading and begging, my father relented, and we got it home. Then it took weeks to find parts and do research to learn how to fix it, but I finally got it running! ***My first PC, and I instantly fell in love with computers.***

An old IBM 386 computer; my fascination with technology began when I restored a broken one.

During my senior year at Georgia Tech, my love of computers led me to take courses that were more geared toward computers, including EE 4834, Network Design taught by **Dr. Singh who changed my life when he asked me to become his "informal TA."** Since I made A's on his tests, Dr. Singh wanted me

to help the others who were struggling. I discovered that I enjoyed being able to help other students by explaining the "how's" and "why's" in ways that my classmates could understand. For that reason, I found I looked forward to coming to his course more than any of my others. ***And so the seed for my passion for teaching was planted.***

While finishing up my last semester, I began applying and interviewing for my first real job after graduating with my B.S. in Electrical Engineering with high honors. I was offered jobs at Dell Computers in Austin, Texas, IBM in Raleigh, North Carolina, and Lockheed Martin in Orlando, Florida but – I decided to stay close to home and took a job as a support engineer for Trenton Processors, Inc. in the Atlanta region.

Although I never told anyone, I still thought about teaching, and so I went back to college and earned two Master's, an M.S. in IT and an MBA. Finally, I took the plunge, and applied for a part-time faculty position at Gainesville State College in fall 2003. I was given one night class, ITEC 1511, Network+ Certification, and I had only 6 students. Initially, I was nervous, but – after the very first class I knew that somehow teaching would be what I ended up doing with my life.

In 2008, since I loved my part-time teaching job so much, I decided to try for a full-time instructor position at private college, which I received, and it was then I knew this was where I belonged. While teaching, full-time, I also finished my Doctorate of Business Administration in Information Systems, and in fall 2014, I came to Georgia Gwinnett College.

Georgia Gwinnett College is truly a great teaching institution focused on the students where I can use my engineering industry background to help mostly first generation students.

I use a holistic teaching philosophy where my goal is to transform students into IT professionals ready for work in the industry. I teach them *both the technical skills and soft skills* they need, as well as assist with resume preparation and enhancing their interviewing skills to help them **land that all important first job in the field** which will propel them into their professional lives.

===

I.   **"Making a Life" for Students Inside the Classroom.**

> "*We make a living by what we get;*
> *We make a life by what we give."*
> *--Winston Churchill*

Having begun school in England, I grew up hearing many references to Winston Churchill. One of my favorite quotes by him is the one above. In my case, ***it also explains why I was driven to go back and earn my doctorate and leave the industry.*** For me, I did not want to just see my students earn a good grade in my classes; I want them to see how the work that they do in my IT classes can enable them to *open doors to a new life in the profession* that they have chosen. For this reason, I strive to give my students as many "real world" assignments and projects as possible, including the two described below.

A. Summary of Two Innovative Teaching Strategies.

1. <u>**Microsoft Technology Associate (MTA) Certification**</u>. Because I worked in the Industry for over 8 years, I know the importance of IT certifications. In fact, *the reason that I received my first job offers from Dell, IBM, Lockheed Martin – was that I had earned certifications during my last semester at Georgia Tech*. Since I knew that IT certification is critical in helping students secure their first full-time "industry jobs," when I arrived at GGC, I began working with Microsoft and GGC administrators to bring the Microsoft Technology Associate (MTA) certification to GGC.

MTA Certification Exam		
	Students Passed	**Students Attempted**
Fall 2015 (December 2015)	54	55
Spring 2016 (May, 2016)	41	41
Fall 2016 (December 2016)	65	77
Spring 2017 (May, 2017)	73	82
Summer 2017 (July, 2017)	12	13
Fall 2017 (December 2017)	43	48
Spring 2018 (May, 2018)	26	33
Total: 314/349 = 90% successful pass rate		

Since fall 2015, 90% of students who attempted the exam have passed it.

Extra study session for Microsoft Technology Associate Certification preparation; because I let the other IT faculty know about my extra sessions and they tell their students, usually about 80 students come (May 2017).

I introduce students to this certification opportunity at the beginning of the semester in each of my ITEC 3100 course sections, and the excitement is contagious. Students attend every class, complete all lab assignments and do well on quizzes since the certification exam tests their cumulative knowledge and understanding of all networking concepts.

Presenting Microsoft Certifications to students during the Honors and Awards ceremony April 2018. A total of 43 students had earned their MTA certifications that semester.

Towards the end of the semester, I offer extra study workshops where important, more complex concepts are addressed to help students prepare to take the exam. **I also worked with Microsoft to allow students at Georgia Gwinnett College to receive a discounted fee from the national rate to take the MTA exam.**

Now, I am working on tying two of my other courses to industry certifications:
ITEC 4100, Advanced Networking → CompTIA Network+ Certification
ITEC 4400, Cloud Computing → Amazon Cloud Certification

Numerous students have said that the certifications have assisted them in obtaining both internships and employment after graduation.

2.   Build and Test Network Cables. In all of my upper level IT courses, I implement hands-on lab projects. One such project is the "build your own networking cables." Creating, testing, and troubleshooting network cables is a required skill for all IT networking professionals in the industry. Students go into a networking lab, and observe computer servers, routers, switches, and security firewalls, and then are tasked to create their own networking Ethernet cable and test it for functionality.

Students who are able to actually perform tasks and have lab experiences are much more inclined to pass pre-screening interviews that lead to internship and job opportunities. In fact, several students have sent me emails about how much this assignment has helped them.

Students have stated that these hands-on labs give them great confidence during interviews and allow potential employers to know they can easily be trained for tasks.

- "One of the tasks I had to perform at my internship was to connect and test networking cables *which Dr. Tran already prepared us to do*, so I was able to impress my supervisor."
- "This lab and class alone sealed the deal of me switching majors from Applied Mathematics to IT - Information Systems and Security. *This is where I belong. THANK YOU!*"
- "Completing the network cable lab allowed me to understand the purpose behind the concepts we learn in the lectures."
- "The network cable lab is the first true hands-on activity I have done in my IT academic career."
- "At first I was nervous, but after completing the lab, I realized how important being able to *actually <u>do</u>* IT work is compared to just knowing [what is in the textbook]."

B.   Helping Students Find Internships and Job Opportunities. Since coming to GGC 4 years ago, I have been fortunate to teach usually at least one upper-level course per semester, and when students reach this point in their academic careers, it is time for them to begin thinking about applying for internships in order to prepare for their first industry job.

In order to help them with this step, I have stayed in touch with companies in the Atlanta area that I used to work with during my 8+ years as an engineer. ***I also actively look for IT job openings and internships on LinkedIn and Indeed.com.*** When I see a position that fits one of my students' skillsets, I inform the student and usually also help him/her with the cover letter, resume and interview preparation.
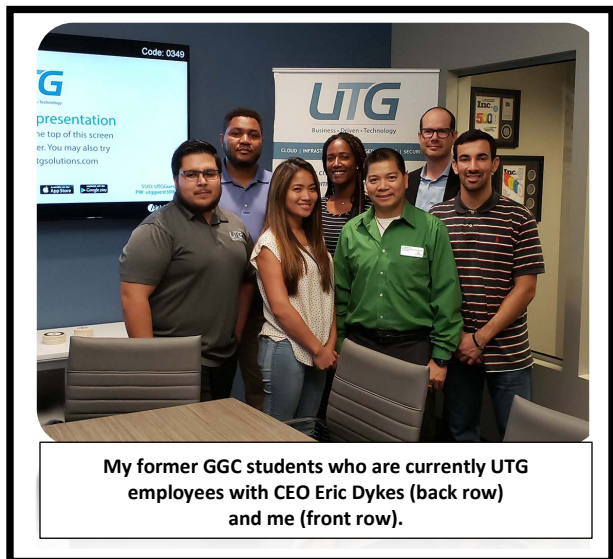
My former GGC students who are currently UTG employees with CEO Eric Dykes (back row) and me (front row).
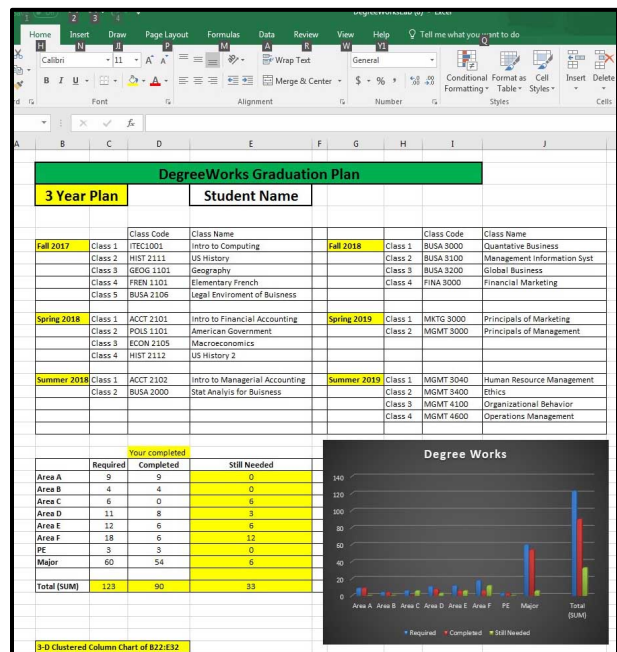
Over the last 4 years, a number of my students have been fortunate to obtain internships or job offers, or, in some cases, an internship that led to the student's first industry job upon graduation. ***GGC's IT graduates are competitive and capable of securing jobs at such large corporations as NCR, ARRIS International, and Cox Media.***

C. Resume Template and Interviewing Workshops. The IT industry is extremely competitive, and in order to do well, students really need to start looking for internship opportunities early.

In order to help my upper-level students, I created an industry resume template which I distribute to all my students in my 3000- and 4000-level classes. Also, I offer workshops to my students and anyone else who wants to attend by advertising the time and date to other IT students who are not in my classes.

D. Three-Year Graduation Plans, and the Importance of Setting a "Graduation Date Goal." In my freshman and sophomore classes, I created an assignment that links Excel and Degree Works so that students can see what would be required of them if they were to focus on graduating in three years, including summers.

Most of the time, my students have never even thought about trying to finish in 3 years, but I have learned that, just by doing this exercise, even if they do not want to finish in 3 years, just "putting it down on paper" makes them more committed, and more motivated to finish by the semester they have indicated that they will in the exercise.

Below, are several of my students who wanted to take pictures of their ***"Graduation Date Goal."***

Jonathan Burcheci - expects to graduate December, 2019.

Raghu Khanal - expects to graduate May, 2020.

Glenn Gable - expects to graduate May, 2020.

**Kenneth Henry - expects to graduate December, 2019.**

E.   **Variety of Active Learning Strategies**. In each and every one of my class sections, I implement active learning strategies, such as the following:

Kinesthetic Learning*: Students like to learn by doing, and this is especially important in the IT industry because employers look to hire graduates who are ready to perform as well as know IT concepts*. My classes have built-in assignments and projects that they will be expected to do in the first few months of their future employment. This gives them simulated industry experience and will help them during the interview process to acquire an internship or first job in the field.

Flipped Classroom: Students watch my instructor- created videos before class so that they can spend class time helping each other understand and solve problems such as more complete network configurations and troubleshooting.

Learning by Teaching: Students work in groups to prepare a short teaching demonstration on
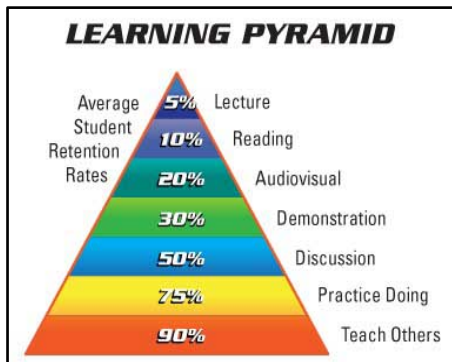
certain topics and then present them to the rest of the class. The rest of the class is required to pose questions for the presenters to answer. *I even "pretend" to be a student and join in to ask questions of the "teachers."*
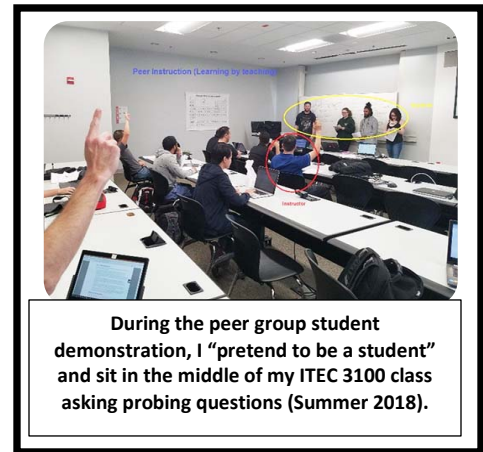
During the peer group student demonstration, I "pretend to be a student" and sit in the middle of my ITEC 3100 class asking probing questions (Summer 2018).

Also, I always go over the learning pyramid with my students before I begin this assignment. As I tell my students, "If you are going to teach someone a concept - *you really have to know it first yourself*."

F.   **Student Evaluations and Comments**. Whenever I receive the results of my student evaluations and their comments, **I am humbled by their statements**. When I read their end-of-semester evaluations, I am struck by how kind they are to me to say such nice things about what they have learned. This drives me to want to keep working hard to help them be successful in their academic and professional careers.

Student Evaluations for All Classes at GGC (Spring 2016 - Current)						
Term	Courses	# of students	Instructional Design	Instructional Delivery	Student Engagement	Overall Instructor
Spring 2016	ITEC 1001-20	22	3.9	3.9	3.9	4.0
	ITEC 1001-64	24	3.8	3.8	3.8	4.0
	ITEC 3100-02	26	3.9	3.9	3.9	4.0
	ITEC 3100-04	26	3.8	3.8	3.8	4.0
Fall 2016	ITEC 3100-02	28	4.0	3.9	3.9	3.9
	ITEC 3100-03	24	3.9	4.0	3.9	3.9

	ITEC 3100-05	28	3.9	3.9	3.8	3.9
	ITEC 4100-01	24	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
	ITEC 4330-02	14	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.9
Spring 2017	ITEC 1001-53	26	3.9	3.9	3.8	3.9
	ITEC 3100-02	28	3.9	3.9	3.9	3.9
	ITEC 3100-03	27	3.6	3.5	3.6	4.0
	ITEC 3100-04	28	3.9	3.9	3.9	3.9
Summer 2017	ITEC 1001-13	23	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
	ITEC 3100-01	13	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
Fall 2017	ITEC 1001-07	28	3.9	3.9	3.9	3.9
	ITEC 1001-29	27	3.8	3.8	3.7	3.8
	ITEC 3100-05	28	3.8	3.7	3.7	3.9
	ITEC 3100-06	27	3.7	3.8	3.7	4.0
Spring 2018	ITEC 1001-05	24	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
	ITEC 1001-20	24	3.9	3.9	3.9	3.9
	ITEC 3100-01	28	3.8	3.8	3.7	4.0
	Average		**3.88**	**3.88**	**3.85**	**3.95**

Student Comments from the End-of-the Semester Evaluations and the GGC "Thank-A-Teacher" Program.

At the end of every semester, I look forward to receiving my student class evaluations. I always read the summary (as seen in the chart above) and the "open-ended comments-about-the section" very carefully so that I can see what helped my students learn; these are the techniques that I want to keep using. For the suggestions that they have for me to improve—I read these even more carefully in order to see how I could give my students more help.

Also, at the end of each semester, GGC's Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) solicits and collects from all of the classes across campus, student comments/letters about the "good teachers" that students have. The CTE then sends the "Thank-A-Teacher" notes to the faculty members who have some. *Since I came to GGC in fall 2014, the CTE has sent me a total of 282 "thank-a-teacher" notes.* When I read these, *I realize how fortunate I am to have such great students*.

Below are a few of the student comments:

- ***Through his excellent leadership I have amassed much knowledge that I will never take for granted****. Thanks to the efforts of Dr. Tran, this Advanced Networks class has been one of my favorite if not my favorite classes I have taken at GGC (and I have been attending over 5 years). I feel like I have really learned a lot from him that I can put to use in the industry. **He***

works hard and actually cares about his students' success. Excellent professor and should be recognized for his efforts!
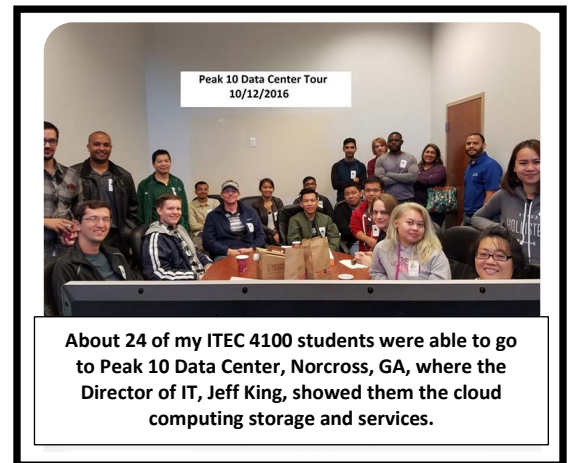
- *Dr. Tran does a phenomenal job at helping students understand advanced networking concepts. **He really cares for his students and wants everyone to succeed**. I loved the hands on experience that we had in class. **Words cannot begin to express how grateful I am for the amazing opportunity I had to learn from Dr. Tran. The world would be a much greater place with more teachers like Dr. Tran**.*

- *One of the best instructors this school has to offer. Dr. Tran implements practicality and real life skills into memorable in-class lectures. **Dr. Tran goes above and beyond to make sure each student is successful by providing a supportive and personable relationship with every student**. I will always recommend him to other students seeking success, and I will definitely attempt to book him for any other future IT courses.*

II. Helping Students "Make a Life" Outside the Classroom. At GGC, I have been fortunate to be able to help my IT students learn more about their chosen profession in various ways, including by taking them directly out to meet their potential future employers. Also here at GGC, I have had the opportunity to help with an IT student organization/club, Women in Technology (WIT), and teach at 2 summer camps.
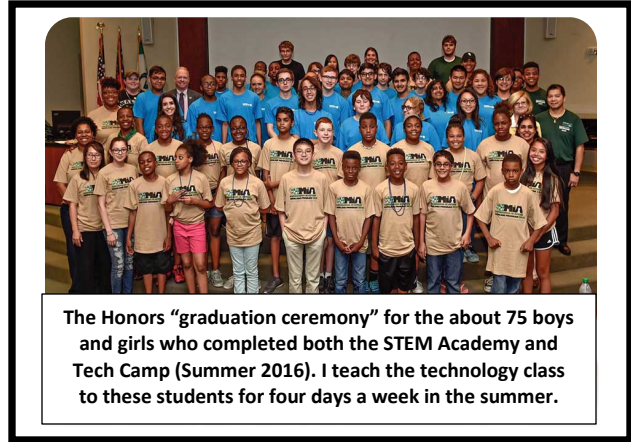
A. Taking My Students to Visit IT Employers. Field trips are important in every field, *__but none more so than in Information Technology__*. Students are able to see how new technology works and how they would be able to fit in, and learn of the industry skills required of them upon graduation for the workforce.

One company I like to take students to visit is NanoLumens in Peachtree Corners, GA. **NanoLumens has placed many GGC students into full-time positions over the last few years**.

Of course, I also take my students to visit as many other employers as possible in the Atlanta area. Over the years, I have taken students to such companies as QTS (Suwanee), GIM Computers (Norcross), and Peak 10 (Norcross), among others.

About 24 of my ITEC 4100 students were able to go to Peak 10 Data Center, Norcross, GA, where the Director of IT, Jeff King, showed them the cloud computing storage and services.

My ITEC 4400 went to NanoLumens to see the LED curved lighting advertising displays that this firm makes for such companies as the JFK Airport (NY), New England Patriots Hall of Fame, and the Miami International Airport.

B. Teaching at Summer STEM Academy and Tech Camp. For the last 3 years I have been part of the STEM Academy and the Tech Camp which are 3-week summer camps for high school and middle school children who are interested in technology. The campers experience building a computer, installing a full operating system, networking, learning cyber-security basics, and learning about virtual reality as well as learning Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator.

The Honors "graduation ceremony" for the about 75 boys and girls who completed both the STEM Academy and Tech Camp (Summer 2016). I teach the technology class to these students for four days a week in the summer.

C. Working with the GGC Women in Technology (WIT) Student Organization. I am an active faculty member in the Women in Technology (WIT) student organization at GGC whose mission is to empower and educate college women about opportunities in science, technology, engineering, arts and math (STEAM). I volunteer to be a mentor to any and all members as well as give presentations on IT Career Pathways to help female students decide which path in IT they would like to major in.

D. My Mentees: Official and "Unofficial." Officially, I mentor 28 students every semester, but in reality I seem to end up mentoring just about everyone who ever took a course with me with both academic and professional advice. This leads to my having usually hundreds of "unofficial" and official mentees every semester. I enjoy helping them learn more and get their foot into the IT industry.

Mentees and Students								
Fall 2018	**Spring 2018**	**Fall 2017**	**Spring 2017**	**Fall 2016**	**Spring 2016**	**Fall 2015**	**Spring 2015**	**Fall 2014**
Mentees: **28**	Mentees: **28**	Mentees: **28**	Mentees: **28**	Mentees: **28**	Mentees: **28**	Mentees: **28**	Mentees: **28**	Mentees: **28**
ITEC 1001-12: **26**	ITEC 1001-05: **25**	ITEC 1001-07: **28**	ITEC 1001-53: **26**	ITEC 3100-02: **28**	ITEC 1001-20: **22**	ITEC 1001-03: **24**	ITEC 1001-07: **26**	ITEC 1001-34: **22**
ITEC 1001-14: **26**	ITEC 1001-20: **26**	ITEC 1001-29: **27**	ITEC 3100-02: **28**	ITEC 3100-03: **24**	ITEC 1001-64: **24**	ITEC 1001-72: **26**	ITEC 1001-45: **24**	ITEC 1001-53: **26**
ITEC 3100-01: **28**	ITEC 3100-02: **28**	ITEC 3100-05: **28**	ITEC 3100-03: **27**	ITEC 3100-05: **28**	ITEC 3100-02: **28**	ITEC 3100-02: **28**	ITEC 1001-46: **26**	ITEC 1001-54: **26**
ITEC 3100-05: **28**		ITEC 3100-06: **27**	ITEC 3100-04: **28**	ITEC 4100-01: **24**	ITEC 3100-04: **28**	ITEC 3100-05: **28**	ITEC 2201-04: **26**	ITEC 2201-03: **25**
ITEC 4400-01: **28**				ITEC 4330-02: **14**				
Total: **164**	Total: **107**	Total: **138**	Total: **137**	Total: **146**	Total: **130**	Total: **134**	Total: **130**	Total: **127**

III. Conclusion: "Making My Own Life" – by Deciding to Teach. In the fall of 2014, I was surprised to receive the GGC's "Top Claw" award. In order to receive the award, a faculty member has to be nominated by a faculty or staff member, and the recipient must have demonstrated that he/she consistently goes *"Above and beyond…… by giving all they have with a positive attitude."*

In May 2018, Tram Nguyen, whom I had helped get an internship at NanoLumens, shared with me that she had received a fulltime job at Griffin Solutions in Alpharetta.

At the time that I received the GGC Top Claw Award, I had not been at GGC very long; so I was very grateful that my work had been noticed and judged to be good.

Then, in 2016, after teaching 5th graders--12th graders at the GGC Summer Tech Camp, I found out that I had been chosen to receive the "Outstanding Faculty Award 2016." The next summer, I taught middle school and high school students at GGC's STEM Academy, and, again, I was surprised to learn that, as a result of the end-of-summer student evaluations, I received the "Outstanding Faculty Award 2017."

When I think about how all of my students have honored me with these awards, *it is then that I realize that my decision to leave the engineering industry behind, and become a faculty member at GGC has brought me deep happiness and has enabled me to **"make a life" for myself**.*