

OUTSTANDING TEACHING AWARD

Dr Julian Alexander TANNER

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The most critical aspect of my teaching is in building opportunities for students to be engaged with the highest levels of critical thinking including analysis, evaluation and creativity. I try to create innovative learning experiences for students by building bridges: between disciplines, amongst students and teachers, and between teaching and research.

Building bridges between disciplines: Creative research is most often transdisciplinary, and this also holds true for creative student learning. My career has crossed from physical to biomedical sciences, illuminating how strict disciplinary thinking can be an impediment for students developing scientific understanding, thought and creativity. Various experiences including authoring a transdisciplinary textbook, teaching in the Common Core, and advocating for breaking disciplinary boundaries within the new School of Biomedical Sciences have enabled opportunities to build transdisciplinary learning experiences.

Building bridges amongst students and teachers: Communication is critical for every student's future career. In every class size, I will build in active group learning driven by communication between teachers and students and amongst students. As well as working together in groups on creative assessments, I also provide opportunities for students to evaluate and provide guided feedback on one another's work.

Building bridges between teaching and research: It is critical to engage students with questions for which we do not yet know the answer to inspire the connection between teaching and research and the distinct role of university education. I am a strong advocate for undergraduate involvement in research after mentoring trans-Faculty undergraduate research teams over several years.

It is a privilege to study, learn and research together with students and colleagues at the University of Hong Kong. I look forward to continuously striving to build better learning opportunities for our students in future.



STUDENTS' WORDS OF APPRECIATION

I met Dr Tanner in year one when he was the supervisor of the international Genetically Engineered Machine (iGEM) undergraduate research competition HKU team in 2013. Since then, he has been my major source of support in both practical and spiritual aspects, especially during my struggle through the iGEM 2014 when I decided to take up the captain position. A resourceful and passionate supervisor, Dr Tanner has been an inspirational teacher in both education and research. His medical ethics and humanities workshops were thought-provoking, with one that brought me to tears, they blew my mind and changed my interpretation of medicine. On the research side, his open-mindedness, always-timely help, and encouragement allowed us to maximise our learning and experience, bringing me closer towards my goal of becoming a physician-scientist. Even now, he is still my most important backup in terms of my intellectual and moral development. A role model of mine, I was influenced by him to commit myself to help with his ongoing work in integrating education and research via several pathways, including the iGEM 2015 and 2016.

I know one of Dr Tanner's interests is to show the possible mechanisms of origin of life. Yet before that, he has already demonstrated beautifully the origin of humanity – to pass knowledge, thoughts, and attitudes through generations with the ideal of building a better future.

LAI Hei Ming*MBBS, current student*

Dr Julian Tanner is a patient and innovative professor who also acts as an academic advisor for many students of our BBiomedSc programme. A classroom is a place for learning, but a university classroom is also a test tube for new teaching methods to be tried and refined on. Each of his courses that I have taken involves a learning assignment that incorporates something novel, be it a hands-on molecule building exercise, a market pitch, or acting as peer reviewer for fellow students' assignments. It is apparent that each of these experiences incorporates learning self-appraisal. He also places emphasis in giving timely feedback on our work. Outside of class, Dr Tanner gives attention to being present for student-organised events such as evaluation sessions, inaugurations or luncheons. He has offered me advice for internships and exchange opportunities, and career guidance on multiple occasions.

I believe Dr Tanner is firmly committed to availing himself as a source of advice and aid to students. His up-to-date approach in teaching will no doubt continue to inspire many students in the field of sciences to reach out and explore different ways of learning.

Benedict LAM Yat Hin*BBiomedSc, current student*

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Dr Tanner's classes have always been engaging and interactive. Among the courses that I have taken, 'BIOC1600 Perspectives in Biochemistry' is the only content-based course where I still had plenty of hands-on experience. Despite the large size of the class of over 200 students, Dr Tanner managed to provide every student with opportunities to build models, which enabled me for the first time to visualise the structure of amino acids. Besides, Dr Tanner emphasises the development of creativity, and encourages students to discover their interests. The final assignment for BIOC1600 is a group project on Nobel Prize nomination, where each group needs to nominate its own Nobel Laureates and justify the choice in a short video. Many of my classmates, including me, believe that this is the most interesting assignment we have received in all of our major courses.

Dr Tanner has been my academic advisor since my freshman year, and he is definitely one of the most helpful and patient professors I have met. I really appreciate Dr Tanner for all the help and advice he has provided me.

DING Yifan

BBiomedSc, current student