

Statement of Student Success

Since 2006, I have been teaching animation, first at the RTG Academy in India then at Cal State LA, Cal State Long Beach and Otis College of Art and Design. In addition to being adjunct faculty at these institutions, I have guest lectured across the United States, in South Africa and have taught classes visiting from Pakistan and Korea. I have even taught animation in a prison. And, regardless of the setting, every class has been populated by amazing students, full of energy and talent, most of whom I was able to help as they developed their skills and vision on their way to creating innovative and impressive (and sometimes award winning) work. And in many cases I have also been able to get them industry jobs (often before they even graduate).

Some of the places I've helped students get employment include the television series Angry Little Asian Girl (starring Margaret Cho for the Mnet network), FOX (the series High School USA and Axe Cop), Bix Pix (Tumble Leaf), Screen Novelties (Sponge Bob stop motion Halloween Special), Stoopid Buddies (Robot Chicken) Titmouse (Venture Bros.) and the CW Network (Attention Deficit Theater). Currently I am working on the visual development of a primetime game show for CBS and have been able to get two CSULB students part time work on it.

However you choose to define “diverse”, the word fits the breadth of the students I've encountered during my career and specifically in my current situation at CSULB. I love being part of a university that is providing the animation world with artists from a wide range of backgrounds and ensuring inclusion and representation for the future.

I do not find that a diverse student population presents a challenge. The main challenge I have found in teaching is the lack of belief students often have in themselves. This concept is rooted in a student's earliest years when, while learning about the world, they begin to get a sense (not necessarily true or false) of whether or not they will succeed in life. Once students reach the university level, they usually have well formed beliefs regarding their own self-worth. When these feelings are negative, they present what I believe is the biggest challenge in teaching: getting students to BELIEVE they can succeed.

Despite the fact they are in school to learn animation, many students feel that success in the medium is not something they can ever truly achieve. They feel success is for “other people” and so they slowly begin to give up on their work. Self-sabotage is common and one way I found to meet this challenge is having recent graduates who are now employed as animation artists visit the school and speak to the students. These successful former students present clear and concrete routes to success, showing my current classes that it is possible for someone “just like them” to make it.

More so than in other fields, entry into the animation world is actually often based on quality of work rather than gender or background or sexual identity, so students who have strong portfolios truly have a good chance at getting work. The challenge is to make sure they believe this. I love the diversity of our campus and that we are contributing to empowerment and I love that we have the potential to train animators who will change the demographic of the industry. And I try to make sure they realize the future is theirs if they want it.