

2018 centennial Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching

Dr. Amandeep K. Sra

Department of chemistry and biochemistry

University of Texas at Dallas

Dr. Amandeep K. Sra obtained her B.S. and M.S. in Chemistry from University of Mumbai, India, and Ph.D. in Chemistry from Bhabha Atomic Research Center, India. She is currently Senior Lecturer-II, Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry, The University of Texas at Dallas.

Dr. Amandeep Sra started as a part-time lecturer in 2011 but was soon promoted to full-time lecturer, Senior Lecturer I in 2012. Then in the fall of 2016, she was further promoted to a Senior Lecturer II. Dr. Sra has been responsible for teaching freshman level General Chemistry I and General Chemistry II, and their associated laboratories since 2012. In addition, she has also served as Lab Coordinator for the General Chemistry labs since 2013. These are large enrollment courses serving upwards of 250 students per lecture sections and 1200 students for labs per semester. More recently, her teaching duties have expanded to include a sophomore level course, Quantitative Analysis. One of her nominator noted that she has taught over 3000 students in lectures and thousands of students in laboratory courses, and still many consider her as a mentor and return to consult with her.

Her one page "Teaching Philosophy" emphasizes three aspects of her teaching. In the first paragraph, Dr. Sra repeatedly asks, "How do I guide students, make them believe in themselves, and help them realize their potential?" Secondly, she quotes a Chinese proverb: "Teachers open the door. You enter by yourself." She continues on with a statement that "As a teacher she realized that different people have different doors." and it may be necessary to "open a small cabinet door for one, a large double door for another and occasionally even knock down a wall." Finally, she states that she wants to connect with her students "in a way that is a lot more than being just a good teacher," and that she values "serving as an advocate who students feel comfortable approaching both after class and for many years after graduation."

Holding closely to her Teaching Philosophy, Dr. Sra evidently spends many extra hours with many of her non-traditional students, veterans, and other in-coming students who may need and appreciate a jump start in their chemistry background knowledge. According to one nominator, to meet the needs of amazing growing student numbers at University of Texas at Dallas, and to improve the General Chemistry Lab in general, Dr. Sra has personally made the following changes: 1) implementation of mandatory prelab online safety quizzes, 2) revision of lab workshops where student teams work through procedures and calculations, and 3) modification of lab procedures to reduce the amount of waste.

Her service contributions to teaching are many and they include: development of in-class activities on websites(available as published and licensed chem. Ed. Material), customizing the content in the lab manual, designing of new lab experiments, and working closely with Students Success Center (SSC) via “Chemistry Success Camps” to serve as a creator of novel curriculum.

The listing of conferences attended for professional development includes, among many others, NSF sponsored workshop and “Committee on the Advancement of Women Chemists (COACh)” workshop.

Letters of Nominations from her co-workers point out the myriads of her strengths as an educator giving evidence to her strong supportive relationships with her students, teaching assistants and her colleagues and the past department chair.

In fact, with 5 letters of nominations from her co-workers and 16 student letters, it is difficult to even summarize ALL her positive qualifications. They describe an individual who is warm, personable, non-traditional, compassionate and approachable.