

SIO 15 (Natural Disasters) FA 2012
TA Evaluation
Professor Gabi Laske

Thi Truong was one of six teaching assistants that I had for SIO15 for the 2012 Fall quarter. The other five were [names redacted]. [Name redacted] was a PhD graduate student, [name redacted] was an undergraduate student and the rest were Masters students.

All TAs were great team players and, without doubt, this year's team was the best TA group I ever had. Unlikely in previous years, no one sought unreasonable special exception from their duties to fit their individual schedules and the group was always able to resolve scheduling conflicts among the group without my intervention. TA duties included to come to the lectures and help with distributing and collecting material. In rotation, TAs wrote homework assignments and graded them, led two weekly discussion sessions and several field trips to the local beach. It is a formidable task to do all this in a class of nearly 400 students without major hiccups and I am extremely pleased with the performance of this year's team.

Most valuable contribution:

Of all TAs, I was possibly most surprised by Thi. Although she appears somewhat shy, she excelled in the classroom and in the field.

ASE student evaluations indicate that she seemed in command of the material and was an extremely approachable and helpful teacher. My own survey after the final exam reflects this assessment. Students commented most enthusiastically about the beachwalk field trip with her. I am particularly happy that student acknowledged her knowledge of the material over other "qualities" as female instructors often are often recommended for their passion about the material rather than the command over the material. Of my female TAs, Thi received the highest marks from the students and recommend her highly to fellow students. Thi also brought ethnic diversity to my team, and I am convinced that this helped engage some of the shier Asian female students.

Two suggestions for improvement:

I cannot really find any weaknesses in Thi's teaching abilities. She appears as an easily approachable TA. In general, when students have difficult questions, I find that it is best to be honest and square if one cannot readily answer, but promise to get back to the students. This is really a general comment and is not something specific to criticize Thi. Going with student reviews, Thi is on the right track and she should continue what she is doing. A little more interaction with me, perhaps, would have helped her giving more feedback and help on her teaching but there was no real need for that.