

# Teaching Sabbatical at the College of Chemistry, UC Berkeley, Fall 2019

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*Photo (by Magdalena Svanström) of the old main entrance to Gilman Hall, where the Department of Chemical & Biomolecular Engineering is housed at UC Berkeley. The house is a National Historic Landmark because plutonium was discovered in one of the labs in 1941.*



**CHALMERS**  
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

# 1 PREPARATION AND PLANNING

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I must admit I was quite surprised to be selected by the Department of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering at UC Berkeley to come for a STINT Teaching Sabbatical for the fall of 2019. But also very happy! This was a very good time for me to take a break in my professional life and get some new inspiration. And to get to go to UC Berkeley, one of the most well-known and highly ranked universities in the world, felt absolutely fantastic – even surreal. I was also thrilled to finally get a chance to go to California – although I had always been concerned about the recurring earthquakes.

My host has been Professor Jeffrey A. Reimer, the Chair of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering and the Warren and Katharine Schlinger Distinguished Professor in Chemical Engineering, and also the C. Judson King Professor of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering. He is of course a very busy man but he has been very helpful and always tried to accommodate for anything I asked for. He had hosted a STINT TS fellow before me, several years back, and I think this helped in the planning; he involved the right people in the planning process.

We first exchanged some information over email and had our first skype meeting on February 12, 2019. That was not even a year ago, and now I can write a report about my experiences. So much has happened in this past year! Prof Reimer early involved Dr Shannon Ciston, continuing lecturer in Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering and Director of Undergraduate Education, in the planning. This proved to be an invaluable connection as she had first-hand information on all educational matters and plenty of experience of administration, preparation and running of courses at the department.

I was also at an early stage put into contact with Jamie Eagan, Academic Personnel Analyst at the department. She made sure that all my details were sent to the Visa coordinator at UC Berkeley. And even if I got a lot of help, the visa application and activities around that were to me very confusing. There are so many different elements and organizations involved in this process and in hindsight, I should have started even sooner with the different steps. I did hear from earlier TS alumni at the meeting in Stockholm in early February 2019 that it would take time, but I could not imagine that it would be so complicated for someone from Sweden to get a visa for the US; you would think that our countries have very good relations and that Swedish citizens are typically highly trusted. It was both time-consuming and costly to go to Stockholm for an interview at the embassy.

When it comes to housing, I contacted colleagues at Chalmers that had earlier been on the same program at UC Berkeley and it turned out that a house in North Berkeley that had earlier been rented to one of my colleagues was available for the fall of 2019. We ended up renting that 2,5 bedroom house for me and my family, at about a half-hour walk from campus. Just perfect! I brought my husband and my 19-year-old daughter who graduated from high school in May 2019. My 22-year old son came to visit us for a month during the fall. The house was perfect in size and location. I guess we were lucky to find this housing so easily. I have heard from other alumni that they have had to spend a lot of time and money on finding suitable accommodation. But the rent we paid was still superhigh for a Swede – 4000 USD per month.

I was aiming to go for a planning trip in April of 2019. But for various reasons, I decided in the end not to go. I was teaching a lot at the time and could not have stayed very long and we eventually decided to have a thorough skype meeting instead. Also, the rental agreement had already been signed, so I did not have to go to find accommodation. So, no planning trip was made. Me and my family decided to go to UC Berkeley already in the end of July instead, to get time to settle down and to prepare before teaching started in the end of August.

Already at the first skype meeting with my host in February, it was clear to me what he wanted me to do at UC Berkeley: to give a course on a topic within my field of expertise that would be an elective for UC Berkeley students, and to spend the rest of the time exploring UC Berkeley for anything I was interested in. This sounded like a great deal and I had to start preparations at once, because a course syllabus was needed in March. The planning continued and some more details were discussed at the skype call in April. However, the detailed planning of the content of each course element was not done until I arrived in California in late July, and continued also after the course had started.

One thing that was very useful in the planning was to talk to the STINT TS alumn that had visited the same department with the same host many years back. He had earlier been a colleague of mine so it was very easy for me to find him and ask for an interview. I did this already in January 2019. This gave me a good understanding of what kind of department and what kind of people I would deal with. I also met with other TS alumni at my home university later on and this was always very useful.

## 2 TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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### 2.1 TEACHING TASK

I chose to give a course on sustainability for engineers and named it: 'Sustainability for Engineers'. I could have selected a topic more focused on environmental systems analysis tools, e.g. life cycle assessment, but I thought that I could have an even more important role if I focused on introducing the whole field of Industrial Ecology in an Anthropocene and a Sustainable Development context, and also included strategic planning for sustainability in an industrial context. I had heard from my host that the students in question, primarily students in chemical engineering or chemistry, did not have much pre-knowledge on this and my set-up could help them develop a broad understanding of sustainability issues and mental models and tools that could help them identify problems and causes and find solutions and paths forward.

My general approach to the teaching task was to pick content and methods from different courses I have been teaching and put it together to fit the context at UC Berkeley. I aimed at putting time on updating the content and introduce some new content and methods that I thought would also be useful for me after my return. In short, I wanted to use time not only to prepare for the new course but also to read up on and develop new things that there would never be time for in my normal situation at my home university. I therefore used my time not only to invest in the specific course but also in my normal duties at home.

The intended learning outcomes I set up and used in a constructive alignment type of design in the course were: "After the course, the student should be able to demonstrate an ability to:

- discuss the role of industry and technology in the Anthropocene and in the context of sustainable development
- describe environmental challenges related to industry and technology, in particular related to toxicity and climate
- describe the field of industrial ecology and apply some of its concepts and tools, and discuss strengths and limitations of these in various contexts
- identify needs for change in consumption and production and envision and evaluate solutions and pathways to more sustainable practices".

We had set a cap for 30 students but in the end, only 18 students took the course; I heard after the course had started that more students would have wanted to take it but did not get the information in time. Had the course been full, I might have been able to argue to get a GSI (graduate student instructor) to help out. I was therefore alone in defining the content and in teaching, assessing and reporting the course. Knowing that STINT TS alumni tend to end up doing tasks over the full range of the scale from working alone on an individual task to being dropped into teaching that is already going on and sometimes not even teaching much at all, I realized that I was in the first extreme with the pros and cons that come with it. I will get back to this later in this report.

## 2.2 OTHER

There were no other things that I was required to do apart from giving the course, but it was generally expected by people at the department, as any faculty member, to participate in the Wednesday afternoon colloquium in which either graduate students had their final presentations or invited speakers presented. It was also expected that I would attend the Wednesday faculty brown-bag lunch meetings at the department. Further, there were other meetings, seminars, training events and get-togethers that I was expected but not required to attend.

Beyond these general activities, I did not have any responsibilities, and no one asked me to take on any other tasks, although I provided some input in planning of some courses a few times. I had full freedom to plan my own time and use it in the way I thought would be good for me. And I also want to stress that when I asked for something or needed help, it was always provided. And when I gave input from my perspective in various discussions, I felt it was well received and appreciated.

## 3 ACTIVITIES DURING THE TEACHING SABBATICAL

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### 3.1 DEVELOPING AND GIVING THE COURSE: SPECIAL TOPIC CHEM ENG 195

The main activity was to give a course on Sustainability for Engineers for 18 students. Students were enrolled in different educational programs but mostly in chemical engineering, and they were all in third year or higher. The course was worth three credits, which means that there were lectures twice a week (Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8.10-9.30 am) and that the students were expected to do an additional 6-9 hours of work each week. I was also asked to set up office hours for the students so that they could come and visit my office and talk about the course or other matters without making an appointment. Most weeks, I used Tuesdays 1-2pm and Thursdays 10-11 am for this. However, most times, no students showed up, but when they did, I found that very useful for both me and for the student.

The course started on August 29<sup>th</sup> and ended with a written exam on December 18<sup>th</sup>. With 13 weeks of classes and some holidays, I ended up meeting the class:

- 17 times for lectures on various topics
- Once for a group exercise related to individual projects on sustainable consumption that students had done
- Five times for exercises related to group projects on sustainable production that students were doing
- Three times for group presentations of student projects
- Once for the final written exam (3 hours)

Teaching this course also included everything from planning the structure and content to setting up and managing a home page on the Canvas platform (called bcourses at UC Berkeley) and grading and reporting in the CalCentral system. This was mostly fairly easy and straight-forward and I could always ask for help when I needed it. The support system most difficult to navigate and understand was the proctoring of exams for students with special needs. What made this part particularly difficult was that there was one office that managed students with disabilities and another office that dealt with the actual proctoring and it was not clear to me as a teacher when I had to talk to these two and/or the student about setting up the proctoring and to what extent they talked to each other. In general, it was very interesting to navigate all of the administrative systems around teaching and education at another university. This gave me practice of using systems of this kind and insights into what needs to be done. Even though I have done all these steps at my own university, to be able to contrast it to another system gives useful understanding.

### **3.2 SITTING IN**

As I was giving the course alone, there was not much interaction occurring naturally with other teachers. In one of my lectures, a colleague came to sit in, and I also attended one of her journal club sessions in another course. This type of exchange and learning from each other is something that I found very useful and that I would have done more if I had felt I had more time, or rather if I had planned my time more strategically (I will come back to this later). With this particular colleague, I also had a meeting in which we sat down and showed each other the contents and methods used in our different courses and gave each other comments and advice. This was very useful!

### **3.3 MAKING UP FOR PLANNED POWER OUTAGES**

During the fall of 2019, all teaching at UC Berkeley was cancelled for several days, multiple times, for planned power outages by PG&E because to avoid wildfires close to Berkeley. During the power outages, only the most essential activities were allowed to use power on campus and all classes were therefore cancelled. For my class, this led to one lecture being cancelled and I managed this by doing an audio recording connected to a powerpoint slide show that gave students a chance to listen to my lecture any time from home (if and when they had power). This situation was new to the university. Although wildfires, allegedly started by PG&E equipment during drought combined with strong wind gusts, had been more common in the recent years, PG&E had not been forced to take responsibility for costs earlier. Now they were, and they were close to bankruptcy and therefore had no other choice than to take this precautionary measure: planned power outages. The university realized during the fall of 2019 that things would not improve any time soon and therefore initiated during the fall various support activities aimed at helping teachers to plan for such events and make teaching more flexible in general.

### **3.4 SEMINARS AND DISCUSSIONS**

I also attended various seminars and discussions on different teaching and research-related topics. Early on, I was invited to several introductory activities for visiting scholars and postdocs that helped with navigating administrative matters but that also gave people the opportunity to meet others from different parts of the university. As you feel quite lost and alone in the beginning, this was very useful.

I also attended many different meetings organized at the department, including a training session on work climate and equality, which was a hot topic in this period, partly because of issues raised by a survey among graduate students at the department. In some faculty meetings, I felt I could



contribute by describing the situation in or giving examples from my home university or other places I had visited, but often, I just listened and learned from good examples I heard of or by just contrasting my earlier experiences to the new context. It takes a while to understand a different system and the five months I was at UC Berkeley was on the short side.

In terms of this being a teaching sabbatical, the most useful experiences were when the faculty discussed teaching, and when I attended different teaching-related seminars, e.g. when Professor Milo Koretsky from Oregon State was invited to give a seminar on “Productively Engaging Student Teams in Engineering: The Interplay between Doing and Thinking” in a Pedagogy course.



*Photo (by Magdalena Svanström) of the view from a popular faculty meeting room in Latimer Hall at UC Berkeley.*

Towards the end of my stay, I got the opportunity to visit group meetings of Prof Michelle Douskey within chemistry education. I attended the group meetings twice and got to listen to various PhD students presenting and discussing their work. This was very useful for me. If I go on another visit in the future, I will prioritize even more visiting more different groups that work within my field of research or education.

### 3.5 SOCIAL ACADEMIC LIFE

There were regularly different get-togethers that anyone in the department could attend. Most of these were mainly arranged for the graduate students and faculty came only in the beginning to show their support. The divide between students and faculty was in general much stronger than what I experience at my home university. Also, coming from Sweden, one expects to find a coffee/lunch room that also offers opportunities for more casual discussions and for getting to know colleagues. This did not exist, but sometimes, a seminar room was kept open for informal lunches if it was not used for other purposes. I found that the best way to get to know faculty was to go out for lunch or coffee together. This was not really a surprise as it has been the same in other places I have visited but it made me note and appreciate this as something very good in Sweden.

### 3.6 OTHER ACTIVITIES

I of course tried to explore also other aspects of university life and of Berkeley and California and beyond. The nature is in some places absolutely stunning and we enjoyed very much the different trips we did during the fall.

Student life is very active and multifaceted at different universities and at UC Berkeley. One way that this could be seen was in the various sports activities with the different university teams. We were particularly impressed by the women's volleyball team and attended a couple of their games.

*Photo (by Magdalena Svanström) of the home team supporters at a women's volleyball game in Haas Pavilion (Go Bears!)*



Berkeley is also known for rally's at Sproul Plaza. In the 1960s, for example, the Berkeley Free Speech Movement used this Plaza for meetings. On any day, you would find many different student groups informing about their activities or trying to find support for various opinions at Sproul Plaza. I



attended a large rally that was organized by students in relation to the movement Fridays for Climate. This Climate Walkout was arranged on September 20, 2019.

*Photo (by Magdalena Svanström) of the Climate Walkout on Sproul Plaza at UC Berkeley on Sept 20, 2019, organized by students.*

## 4 COMPARISON BETWEEN THE HOST AND THE HOME INSTITUTIONS

Based on my experiences from this teaching sabbatical, I will now reflect on some differences and similarities between what I have seen at UC Berkeley and what I know from many years of work at Chalmers University of Technology. I have only seen a fraction of activities performed at UC Berkeley and my conclusions may therefore not be relevant as an analysis of real differences between the institutions. Rather, I do this comparison as a reflection exercise that will help in my own development, and the general insights may be useful also for others.

## 4.1 PEDAGOGY AND ROLE OF THE TEACHER

When it comes to pedagogy and its importance, I cannot see clear differences in pedagogical methods used and in how important it is to be a good teacher but I see differences in the systems that are set up to safeguard and promote pedagogical quality. One example is how GSIs – graduate students that want to teach and are selected to do so - that participate in teaching at UC Berkeley are being assessed and acknowledged with a prize when they perform particularly well. At Chalmers, all PhD students, including industrial PhD students, more or less have to do some teaching; up to 20% of their time over five years. The approach is rather to make sure that everyone gets some teaching practice, but performance is generally not assessed and excellence is typically not rewarded. So, while UC Berkeley relies on the approach that students that want to teach and are able can get the opportunity and some money for doing it and are also rewarded if they do a good job, all students have to teach at Chalmers and some of their salary is related to this teaching duty. Prizes or any kind of reward are very rare.

I also saw clear differences between the perceived “ownership” of courses. I believe that there was a much stronger notion of the department owning the courses and the department chair handing out teaching tasks to faculty than what I have seen at Chalmers. In general, I think the examiner (who is traditionally often the course leader at Chalmers but that also has to be the course leader in practice according to recent rules) often has a very strong grip on the courses at Chalmers. It rarely happens that courses move around between faculty.

## 4.2 CURRICULUM

In terms of curriculum and courses offered, there are clear differences between the field of chemical engineering at Chalmers and at UC Berkeley. Chalmers is a technical university and the Department of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering provides most of the courses, while the chemical engineering program at UC Berkeley is mostly provided by the College of Chemistry and not the College of Engineering. This leads to, in my current opinion, a lower focus on industrial implementation (and engineering as such) and a larger focus on chemistry (and science) in the program in general. I would also expect that chemical engineers from Chalmers are better equipped to start working as engineers in industry while chemical engineers from UC Berkeley are better equipped to perform research in the field.

Another major difference that relates directly to my own teaching is that Chalmers has a compulsory course load for “Environment and Sustainable Development” for all programs, which corresponds to five weeks of fulltime studies, that has to be carried out at the bachelor level. The chemical engineering program has more credits related to this field than any other program at Chalmers. At UC Berkeley, this content seems almost non-existent in the chemical engineering program, at least as visible and clearly pointed out courses or parts of courses. This gave me in a way both a challenge and an easy job at UC Berkeley. The students at UC Berkeley did not have any formal training in the field I was teaching and some concepts that Swedish students pick up already in high school were new to them. Therefore, it was not difficult to provide something that was quite unique and new to them, and in my opinion, much needed. However, I could not assume that the basics were known so I felt I had to put a lot of basic content into the course to be able to cover the full range of introduce/teach/apply (from the CDIO concept). Students in the end generally seems to have considered the reading list to have been too long but that the course had been very useful in developing the learning outcomes that I had targeted. But I have not yet seen the official survey performed by UC Berkeley of my course.



### 4.3 STUDENTS

I also felt that the students have a different approach at UC Berkeley than what I generally see at Chalmers. I am not completely convinced that the comparison is fair since I mostly teach in compulsory courses at Chalmers while the students I met at UC Berkeley had chosen this course because of a specific interest. But in general, I sense that there is a more respectful approach towards teachers and a larger commitment to the studies in general. I was for example surprised that even though I had told the students that lectures were not compulsory, it happened many times that they contacted me and made excuses for that they could not come to a lecture and asked what they could do to make up for it. And even though I told them that I am used to being called by my first name, no students ever did that – it was always Professor Svanstrom. And in a way, I like this very clear articulation of roles and responsibilities. Attendance in my class was, it seems, higher than what is normal for UC Berkeley classes, but I think this is related to the class being selected by highly committed students.

The free education that is provided in Sweden creates of course wonderful opportunities to explore the academic world. However, when you pay a large amount of money to attend university, you will naturally be more motivated to use that time in the best possible way. You will not start an educational program or an elective course unless you are fairly certain that it is what you want to do and in your opinion is worth spending time and money on. I think we might need to do something in Sweden to raise the motivation of our students.

Unfortunately, I got to hear about the same type of situation as we experience at my home university, that graduate students these days are often stressed and experience different types of psychological issues. My personal theory on the reasons is neither that they feel too safe or too insecure about the future, which would be some contrasting theories that you could hear in Sweden or in the US, respectively, but rather that this is related to the virtual society that we are creating and the instant gratification, obsessive behaviours, and feelings of inferiority that this leads to.

### 4.4 LEARNING PLATFORM

Interestingly, UC Berkeley uses the same learning platform, Canvas, as has recently been introduced at Chalmers, so I also set up as a task for myself to learn how to use Canvas. This was very useful for me and as far as I could see, the learning platform is actually used in the exact same way. I have also used the same platform at Gothenburg University and it is also used in the same way.

### 4.5 GRADING SYSTEM

The grading system that we have used at Chalmers for a very long time (Fail or 3-5, 5 being the highest), was not used at UC Berkeley. Instead, UC Berkeley has a system from A+ and A- and down to F. This is the most detailed scale I have ever used. In some teaching I have been involved in at Gothenburg University, the six-grade scale of A-F has been used so I was slightly familiar with that, but at UC Berkeley, each of the levels in the scale had a high and a low level.

I felt the need to calibrate my grading to other activities at UC Berkeley to make sure that my grading was not done with completely different standards. One way I did that was by asking already when I decided the system for assessment of learning in the course what a typical average and spread of results would be in classes at UC Berkeley and then making sure that the grading system was set up to generate a result in that range. Most importantly, of course, I also looked at my expected level of learning for the students with regard to the different learning outcomes. After

finishing the grading in the course, I also asked some other teachers if the results in general looked reasonable based on what they were used to at UC Berkeley and they responded that it did.

#### 4.6 UNIVERSITY TYPE

UC Berkeley and Chalmers are very different types of universities and this reflects on many different aspects of the academic life. UC Berkeley is a ‘complete’ university with a large focus on research excellence and success has been proven in terms of e.g. a great number of Nobel laureates over the years. In fact, there are even parking spaces reserved for Nobel laureates (see photo).

Chalmers is rather a university that has a strong focus on industrial application and societal utilization in general. Therefore, engineering skills are strongly promoted while Nobel laureates are very few. Quality is pursued in terms of publications and citations but also in terms of societal impact. I did not see as much of this at UC Berkeley, but it could be stronger in other parts of the university than the part I visited.



*Photo (by Magdalena Svanström) of parking spaces at UC Berkeley that are reserved for Nobel Laureates.*

#### 4.7 TERMINOLOGY

I also learnt that even English terms have different meaning in different universities or parts of the world. One example is when I was told during a faculty meeting that we would talk about the results of a “climate survey” that had been done among the students. I soon discovered that this was what we would call a “medarbetarenkät”, related to the work environment and not about their attitudes and behaviour in relation to the climate crisis as I had expected.

Further, the term “student” is at my home university only used for bachelor or master students but almost never for PhD students (as we see them also as employees and colleagues and not only as students) but a graduate student at UC Berkeley can be a master or a PhD student. And the term student can mean all of them. You would need to know the context to understand.

#### 4.8 APPRENTICE CULTURE

One thing I really liked about the educational system at UC Berkeley was “office hours”, and the opportunity that this creates for interested students to learn about the research environments and talk to teachers about future work opportunities. Also, student projects seem more often to be performed in the research groups than I am used to from my home university. Both of these are examples of how committed students can get good insight into how a research group functions and

get support in the career development. I saw similar things during my PostDoc at MIT many years ago and I would like to think more about how this can be used at my home university. I see this as a sign of an apprentice culture that at UC Berkeley starts already when you begin your university studies while at my home university, at best, starts during the master thesis but often not until you start your PhD studies.

## 5 PERSONAL LESSONS

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### 5.1 LESS IS MORE

When reflecting on what I engaged in during the fall and its results, I see that I was very eager that my class would live up to the standards at UC Berkeley, which I perceived to be very high. I had heard about the students being very intelligent and quick at grasping new concepts and I did not want to make teaching too easy and slow. I think I perhaps overdid it a bit and some students complained there was too much reading, but I also got a comment that lecturing was sometimes too slow.

The downside of being very ambitious with the course is that I did not get much time over to spend on exploring UC Berkeley in different ways. In fact, I did not really listen to my host when he told me early on that I should give the course within my expertise and with minimum effort, and then get plenty of time to explore. If I had done this again, I would have been slightly less ambitious with the content of my course and I would have spent more time doing other things. On the positive side, I am now quite updated on a lot of the content in my courses and I have some new material to use. My lesson was to be more holistic in my strategies and also not worry so much about my own performance.

### 5.2 INTERACTION IS IMPORTANT

Another important lesson for me was the realization that giving a course on your own does not give you much interaction with other teachers. This makes it more difficult to learn from the host university but also, in terms of social and networking aspects, it gets more difficult to get to know people and have a nice time in general; I enjoy working in teams – this became clearer to me than ever.

Further, because my course was given by me alone and no other teachers were involved, I do not think that my teaching will have any lasting impact on UC Berkeley other than on the students that attended the class. It would have been nice if I had started to build something that others could use and build on later on, but for this to happen, both me and my host would have had to discuss this already in the planning stage and, if possible, set up a structure for this. The lesson for me was that I will need to more actively pursue interaction both because it is enjoyable and because it will create learning opportunities for both me and others.

The relationship between teachers and students at UC Berkeley as I experienced it is quite respectful, and there is a natural distance between these two roles. I have always considered the very casual and open atmosphere that exists in Sweden to be quite positive but I can see that there are clear benefits to a more respectful role towards teachers. I actually in a way found it easier to relate to students when there was this natural hierarchy. This is just a reflection that I will not really use in any way at this point but I just realise that it is not all bad to be clear about the hierarchies.

## 6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE FELLOWS AND HOSTS

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For future participants in the TS programme, I recommend that the pros and cons of the specific situation are carefully analyzed before the trip. In specific, I believe it is important that it is clear early on whether teaching will be done alone or together with others. It is important that the person going on sabbatical carefully identifies what goals he or she has with the trip and plans accordingly, and that the host is open to discuss modifications to accommodate for this to a reasonable extent. Some things can likely be taken care of just by being clear on what the goals are in discussions with the host. If the main task of the fellow is to teach alone, look for other ways to collaborate! Whenever a person is hosted in a new environment, I think it is important to find opportunities both for that person to learn from that environment and for the environment to learn from that person. This would be the optimal situation. In general, I think it is more useful for most people to not only have tasks that they do alone. I did realise early on that this was the case for me and I could have worked much more actively to interact with more people.

During the first month or two, I was sitting in an office that was not close to other teachers in the department. I then got the opportunity to move to an office that was part of a suite of offices and that was also placed close to where important administrative staff was working. This drastically changed my opportunities for interaction in a very positive way. I recommend that hosts are carefully considering to place visiting teachers physically in the heart of activities. And I recommend that TS fellows analyse their situation for opportunities for interaction and try to find the balance between getting time to focus on the task(s) and collaboration and networking.

Having been a visitor at UC Berkeley in the fall of 2019 but also at some other places during my working life, it is increasingly clear to me how important it is that both the host and the visitor make efforts to ensure that the visit becomes a good and useful experience for both the visitor and the visited group. Regardless of the task, there are things that can be done to enhance the interaction and learning opportunities. For anyone that has been visiting another organization, think about what would have helped you when you act as a host in the future, or discuss with colleagues how to improve the situation for visiting scholars around you.

## 7 ACTION PLAN

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### 7.1 SHARING EXPERIENCES

The first part of my action plan has already been performed. Already during the fall, I sent in an abstract for the annual conference on teaching and learning at Chalmers, that took place in January 2020. My first idea was to merely present my experiences, but I later got the chance to amend the abstract and the set-up to include other STINT TS alumni from my home university in a round-table discussion on the topic of “What you need to go on a teaching sabbatical to learn - and how to plan for it”.

On January 10, 2020, me and three other TS alumni (Julie Gold, Simon Harvey and Nina Kann; and Samuel Bengmark had also participated in the preparatory discussions) met a group of about 10 interested colleagues. They joined the discussion either because they were themselves interested in learning more about if this would be useful to them and how to plan for a sabbatical but some joined because they are managers or in other ways responsible for making arrangements when sending people away on sabbaticals.



After brief presentations of the STINT program and the situations of all present TS alumni, questions primarily focused on the kind of task that the alumni had been working on, differences in culture between different universities, how to find housing, and at what stage in the career or life that a sabbatical can be pulled off.

TS alumni talked about trying to put together a list of benefits of a teaching sabbatical that colleagues could use when they were discussing this with their heads of department in the future. This has not yet been done.

Another idea I have on the same line of thinking but that I have not yet talked to anyone else about is that TS alumni could provide feedback or act as a support group when colleagues are writing an application or are making plans for their visits. I was fortunate to know several people that had been away on teaching sabbaticals and could contact them myself, but some people might not have any such connections.

## 7.2 ON SENDING OUT AND HOSTING PEOPLE

From my experiences of being away, I believe I have now a much better possibility to help people that are being sent on a sabbatical or that visits my division or department. I have some management tasks at my university and it might very well be the case that I will either be responsible for sending people out for sabbaticals or hosting them. For people planning their trip, I will talk to them about their goals and help them pursue them. For people visiting, I will make sure to integrate them in our academic activities and social life. I will also try to find out what are the most important things we can learn from visitors and try to give them opportunities to share in seminars or in various collaborations.

## 7.3 THE CULTURE AROUND TEACHING

I really liked the idea with office hours - when faculty have their offices open to students. In fact, during my visit, it was discussed in faculty meetings at UC Berkeley that this could be introduced also for PhD students so that they would feel welcome to come and talk to other faculty than their supervisors. At Chalmers, we are generally not receiving many visits from students in our offices and this is something that I plan to talk to my colleagues about to explore whether office hours is a concept we could try out.

I was also impressed by the large focus on assessing and rewarding PhD students that make really good contributions in teaching. This is also something that I want to discuss with my colleagues to find out how we could do more, to enhance the status and enjoyment of teaching tasks but without increasing the pressure.

# 8 THANKS!

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I am so grateful for receiving the chance to spend time at UC Berkeley. Many people have been involved in making this possible and in making this such a great experience for me. Going on a teaching sabbatical is clearly not a one-person task. I will not mention all that have contributed but I want to mention a few examples.

First of all, this would not have happened without the STINT TS programme. The ideas of the programme are really great and the set-up makes it possible to give fellows a very good experience. There is more that can be done in terms of the interaction with different host universities, but in

general, this is very well prepared by the STINT staff and they are eager to help and quick to respond. They also seem to have a genuine wish that this will be good for Sweden and for the fellows and their home institutions. So, thank you STINT!

I am also very grateful to my host at UC Berkeley, Prof Jeff Reimer, and everyone else that has helped me or just made my visit enjoyable, for example, Dr Shannon Ciston, Prof David Graves, Prof Susan Muller, Carlet Altamirano (and of course Happy as well), Kim Eastman, Esayas Kelkile, Jamie Eagan, Dr Marjorie Went, Dr Negar Beheshti Pour, Dr Greg Schoofs, Prof Nitash Balsara, Prof Alex Bell and many others. You have all contributed in various ways to making me feel welcome, sharing experiences or helping me out in various ways when I needed it. Thank you!

I am also very grateful to my home university for supporting me in this and helping me out in various ways. It has to be remembered that it is both costly and comes at a great effort to allow a coworker to take a leave for a full semester. I hope that they will feel it was worth it – I will make my best to ensure that they do!

Finally, I am grateful to my family that changed their life plans to come along and spend time with me in Berkeley. And there are many people that are family or friends that had to help us out in different ways to make it possible, for example watering plants, taking care of the dog and the cat and so forth.