

Letter To Self

Dear Future Ravneet,

As you reach the end of the CDP program, I want you to pause and remember who you were when you first entered this space. You came in with years of engineering experience, a strong commitment to teaching, and a deep awareness of what it feels like to move through academic spaces as a Sikh minority and international student. You already believed that classrooms should be welcoming, but you were still asking what critical dialogic pedagogy would actually look like in practice, especially in technical spaces that often pretend to be neutral. You were carrying questions about power, belonging, and whether dialogue could genuinely shift the culture of a classroom. Now you know that it can. Critical dialogic pedagogy is not a soft alternative to rigor. It is a deeper rigor. It asks you to slow down, listen carefully, examine power honestly, and make room for lived experience as a source of knowledge.

One of the biggest shifts for you happened during the strategic questioning work. When you redesigned the question, “Why did you choose computer science engineering and what are your major course concerns this semester?” into “What made you feel belonging in computer science engineering and what is making it challenging to feel belonging?” you learned something important about teaching. You realized that the point of a question is not only to gather information. The point is to open a space where students can reveal the deeper realities shaping their learning. That moment felt important because it reflected your own story. You know what it means to enter environments that were not built with

you in mind. You know the cognitive and emotional labor of wondering whether you truly belong. That activity helped you see that a better classroom question does not just invite a better answer; it invites a more human classroom. Your mini-dialogue facilitation plan on student engagement reinforced that lesson. Building in community agreements, pauses, shared speaking time, and curiosity-based listening showed you that dialogue does not happen by accident. It must be intentionally designed.

So here is the advice I want you to carry forward. Do not let hustle culture convince you that speed is the same thing as excellence. Keep making time to reflect. Keep asking questions that create motion, possibility, and depth. Keep using community agreements, structured dialogue, and opportunities for storytelling, especially in computer science spaces that too often erase the human consequences of technical work. Remember that your strength is not only your technical knowledge or your thirteen years in industry. Your strength is your capacity to notice exclusion, to cultivate belonging, and to imagine a classroom where students can bring their full identities into the learning process. Keep being multi-partial. Keep listening for the voices that are quiet, interrupted, or uncertain. Keep challenging yourself to build classrooms where rigor and compassion are not opposites. And when teaching feels difficult, remember this: you are here because you believe education can become a site of liberation. Do not forget that belief. Protect it, deepen it, and let it guide the kind of educator you continue becoming.

With respect for how far you have come,

Ravneet