Peer Observation Report for Chemistry 17

Observer: Jin Park
Section Teaching Fellow: James Callahan
Date: Friday, October 21, 2016
Course: Organic Chemistry I, Discussion

1. Give 3 specific examples of things that the section leader did well.

1) The section was very well-organized. The sequence of topics was very logical, and having the organizational chart in the beginning of section really helped ground the conversation in section throughout.
2) James answers questions very well. A student asked a question about deciding between S_N1 and S_N2 on a $2°$ carbon, to which James immediately responded with an example scenario. This illustrated James' grasp of where the "pressure points" in understanding are.
3) Delivery of content was also great. He speaks very clearly; not too quickly and not too slowly, enunciates properly and uses the board to just the right extent.

2. Do you have any helpful suggestion for ways the section leader could improve?

This is something I hope sections in general could do, but I wish that we could go over more crucial/fundamental concepts in section <u>through</u> problem solving. James did a phenomenal job going through the 8 problems he did, but I couldn't help but feel that there was some level of redundancy in *some* of them. Obviously, section shouldn't be a time where students are hammered with difficult questions, but I personally feel (from my own experience) that both parties (student & teacher) learn more by going beyond the typical mechanisms that students can practice on their own but rather about core concepts that are difficult to get without guidance. Having problems with those elusive concepts baked into them would make sections even more perfect.

3. Did you gain any ideas that you can use in your own section teaching by observing another section leader?

Yes. Two things especially that I will definitely try during PSL section after observing James:

1) Periodically, he asks students to work together in groups of 3 or 4. I think that asking students to get together in groups facilitates dialogue among students and encourages productive collaboration.
2) James put up an organizational chart of the topics to be covered during the section (factors favoring subs. vs. elims; bimolecular vs. unimolecular, etc.). Having this up on another board made it easy to ground the conversation based on those first principles.
3) Walking around during the time students are working really helped James understand where in the problem students are struggling. This allowed James to address those difficulties as a group.