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Some Notes about Prof. Djamel Bouchaffra

I have known Dr. Bouchaffra since 2001. In my first day at Oakland University, we had a talk in his office. We discussed a little bit about how to dig an idea that is concealed by misleading facts, how to improve our current research, etc. He showed clear understanding of research and how to train a researcher. He impressed me so much that I chose to become his Ph.D. student. It proved later that I made the right choice.

During the five years I worked with Dr. Bouchaffra, he demonstrated an amazing ability of expressing his idea in both a mathematical way which often involves profound thinking, and an intuitional way which makes things easy to understand. He always enlightened me with small talks when I was facing some hard topics. For example, when he built the structural Hidden Markov Model, he used very complex math equations to describe models that are confusing due to their covered nature. Whenever I felt it was difficult to implement some part of the model, he would write down equations to show every single step of the derivation so that I could easily target the problem. His ability is reflected by not only how he trains a researcher, but also the achievement he made in his own research. He published many high-quality papers in top computer science journals such as Pattern Recognition, Data Mining and Knowledge Discovery, etc. His work has been well recognized.

Dr. Bouchaffra is also nice to both his co-workers and students. He's not a person who always shows a solemn face. Instead, he likes to work in an environment that everyone feels relaxed and is willing to share ideas freely. Sometimes he sat with me and other researchers in a small café near the university. While enjoying the coffee, we discussed our research topics, sometimes debating, sometimes agreeing with each other. Everybody liked this atmosphere and we often got inspirations happily.

I also took several courses that Dr. Bouchaffra taught at Oakland University, such as soft computing, statistical pattern recognition, etc. One of his teaching methods was like this. In the class, he showed some interesting result or phenomenon. After arousing the students' interests, he showed how to make it or how it happens, which made students understand the basic idea. Then he would go deeper and reveal the underlying theories. Usually by then all the students understood a model well enough. If there were students who still didn't understand or would like to know more, he was always happy to spend his after-class time in his office explaining every detail. He taught courses of different levels, graduate and undergraduate. He was liked by so many students that he was awarded two teaching excellence awards at Oakland University in 2004. He's definitely one of the most instructive teachers that I've seen. After I graduated and got my degree, we still contact a lot. I continue to learn things from him through our regular talking.