



Photo: Professor Kaw with the students in Numerical Methods class at UTP, Malaysia

USF professor Autar Kaw serves as Fulbright specialist in Malaysia

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It was in 2013 that the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs admitted [Autar Kaw](#), University of South Florida (USF) professor of mechanical engineering, into the prestigious Fulbright Specialist Program roster. The admission to the roster took place after an application and recommendation of a review panel. The program is highly selective and made Professor Kaw eligible to serve as a specialist to academic institutions in need of expertise on engineering education.

As per the program website, “The [Fulbright Specialist Program](#), part of the larger Fulbright Program, was established in 2001 by the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA). The program pairs highly qualified U.S. academics and professionals with host institutions

abroad to share their expertise, strengthen institutional linkages, hone their skills, gain international experience, and learn about other cultures while building capacity at their overseas host institutions.”

Several opportunities arose for Professor Kaw to become a Fulbright Specialist Program candidate, that is, one takes a trip of two to six weeks to serve as a consultant in any of the 150 countries in need of expertise on engineering education. However, none of these opportunities could be availed of as they were during the regular semesters at USF, and it was only in the summer of 2018 when Professor Kaw was working part-time, that he took the opportunity to go to [Universiti Teknologi Petronis](#) (UTP), Malaysia as a Fulbright Specialist Program candidate.

Established only 21 years ago, UTP is a private university located in the Malaysian state of Perak, about 220 kilometers north of the federal capital city of Kuala Lumpur but only 35 kilometers south of Ipoh, the second largest city of the nation. The university is owned by Petronas, the national oil company of Malaysia. UTP has an enrollment of 6,000 undergraduates and 1,200 postgraduates.

At UTP, Professor Kaw’s activities included facilitating four workshops on topics of flipped learning, pragmatic strategies for improving cognitive and affective gains of students, scholarship of teaching and learning, and the history and development of massive open online courses. He gave guest lectures and conducted tutorials in a course of Numerical Methods, taught a short course on Mechanics of Composite Materials, met with individual faculty and administration, and created a tentative plan for the future exchange of students and faculty between UTP and USF. You can follow an extensive diary of his 18-day trip at his [blog](#).

The most important outcomes of his program were to reinforce and model evidence-based pedagogy through workshops and classroom instruction, conduct individual meetings with faculty, setup future collaboration on educational research methods publications, and plan for a memo of understanding between UTP and USF.

Professor Kaw’s current research interests include engineering education research, open courseware, massive open online courses, adaptive learning, flipped classrooms, and learning strategies. He has been at USF since 1987, the same year in which he received his Ph.D. in Engineering Mechanics from Clemson University. NSF has continuously funded his research in engineering education since 2002. He has written more than 100 refereed technical papers, his opinion editorials have appeared in the St. Petersburg Times, Tampa Tribune, and Chronicle Vitae, and his work has been covered in many media outlets including Chronicle of Higher Education, Inside Higher Education, U.S. Congressional Record, Florida Senate Resolution, ASEE Prism, Times of India, NSF Discovery, and Voice of America.



Photo: Photo: Workshop participants at UTP, Malaysia

Professor Kaw has received several national awards including the 2018 ASEE Ralph Coats Roe Award, the 2012 U.S. Professor of the Year Award, the 2011 ASEE National Teaching Award, the 2004 ASME Curriculum Innovation Award, and the 1991 SAE Ralph-Teetor Award.