REFLECTIONS

KRISHNA SHENOY
THE HONG SEH AND VIVIAN W. M. LIM PROFESSOR IN THE SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING
STANFORD UNIVERSITY
REFLECTIONS ON PROFESSOR KRISHNA SHENOY

On the Occasion of His Appointment to the HONG SEH AND VIVIAN W. M. LIM PROFESSORSHIP IN THE SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING

2018

Stanford professors are among the very best educators and scholars in their fields. As such, they make a lasting impact on the students and colleagues whose lives they touch. Enclosed are messages and reflections attesting to the positive difference Professor Shenoy has made in the lives of so many during his time at Stanford.
Krishna is the very epitome of a mentor. It is obvious in every action that he takes how much he cares about his trainees. Words like selfless, giving, and altruistic only begin to describe the depths of his care to others. He molded me into the scientist and engineer that I am today, and I continue to rely on his unwavering and stalwart support. His impact can be seen not only in his scientific output, but in the success of his trainees. I can’t imagine a more wonderful mentor and friend.

PAUL NUYUJUKIAN
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF BIOENGINEERING AND OF NEUROSURGERY
From the eternal mischievous twinkle in his eyes to the exasperated adolescent sighs, Krishna is proof that our parents were wrong; you can have an astonishingly brilliant future and not grow up. Krishna has never lost that childhood curiosity about the wonders of nature. His quiet ambition is not driven by pride but by an unwavering belief that he can make this world better. Krishna truly believes that anyone can contribute to this mission in a meaningful way.

Through gentle nudging and intellectual teasing, Krishna has always brought out the best in everyone around him. Just as young minds inspire, he inspires others with his unlimited capacity for leveraging and emulating this. I’ve been fortunate to come to know this amazing teacher, husband, father, and friend—and to understand his unbounded potential to be forever young. Congratulations, Krishna!

Stephen Ryu Adjunct Professor of Electrical Engineering
Professor Shenoy was my undergraduate advisor and was always encouraging and supportive of my academic interests. After my graduation in 2004, we continued to keep in touch and met up again in 2011. As a student I was fascinated by Professor Shenoy's research on the brain and application of engineering to medical devices. Today, I am a clinical engineer in a large hospital cluster working on engineering solutions to unmet clinical needs. I will always be grateful to Professor Shenoy for his inspiration, guidance, and mentorship, without which, I would not be where I am today. Thank you and many congratulations.

Fiona Loke BS '04, MS '04
Working closely with Krishna over the past decade, I’ve had the opportunity to observe, and be inspired by, one of the finest people I have ever met. I think anyone who knows him well would agree with me. Not only is he a careful and extremely rigorous researcher, he has an ability to set people immediately at ease, and to connect on a deep level both personally and scientifically. His empathy and genuine caring for his trainees is evident in everything he does and says. And although he is passionate about his scientific pursuits, he takes deep satisfaction in seeing the insights from his lab translated into therapies that can help people with disabilities. Working with Krishna is one of the great joys of my career!

JAIME HENDERSON
THE JOHN AND JENE BLUME - ROBERT AND RUTH HALPERIN PROFESSOR OF MEDICINE
My years with Krishna were transformative. I joined a lab of a handful of individuals who weren't yet on their feet and graduated from a twenty-strong group headed by a tenured professor that churned out multiple high-impact papers a year. Krishna calmly yet deliberately steered the ship through those turbulent years, all the while supporting and caring for everyone as his family. He has served as the paragon of great leadership as my own career has progressed. To this day, I always ask myself, "What would Krishna do?" before any decision, large or small. It has truly been an honor to be part of his journey.

AFSHEEN AFSHAR MS '05, MD '06, PHD '08
To me, Professor Shenoy epitomizes the ideal of a professor mentor. I always felt encouraged after every interaction because of his warmth and concern for advisees. My most lasting memories are of the time taken by Professor Shenoy to advise and counsel—he always made me feel welcomed and unrushed. His time was especially meaningful given his personal health challenges. As advisees we certainly valued his intellectual prowess and astuteness, but it is truly the compassionate human touch which Professor Shenoy brings to the pursuit of new technology that I reminisce most fondly. It has become a lasting inspiration to me. Heartiest congratulations Professor Shenoy on yet another accolade, affirming the high esteem we already hold for you in our hearts!

ERIC HOMS '07, PHD '13
Krishna is an incredible scientific mentor and, beyond that, an amazing and inspiring human being. He is brilliant and kind, and in all of his actions and interactions it is evident that he views the well-being of his "scientific family" as his principal professional goal. I am particularly struck by his unwavering commitment to help his mentees achieve their dreams. He listens first, and then throws himself at supporting whatever goal his students have, whether by making introductions, promoting their work in talks and meetings, or writing exquisite letters of support. No matter how busy he may be, if there's an urgent situation, he's always ready to chat and give sagely advice. I am also particularly grateful for the amount of scientific independence he affords his mentees. Working in his lab, I never once felt like I was implementing someone else's scientific vision; rather, I felt that I was given the freedom, advice,
and resources to come up with my own ideas and see them through. This commitment to nurturing scientific leaders also shines through Krishna freely and unhesitatingly encouraging his students to take their research topic with them when starting their own labs, and listing themselves as corresponding author on their publications. He is an exemplary mentor, and will always be a role model for myself as I move forward in my scientific career.

SERGEY STAVISKY PHD '16
Krishna is the best mentor I've ever encountered. He is kind, generous, and deeply committed to scientific integrity and finding innovative ways to advance our understanding of the brain. He truly has the best interests of all of his advisees at heart. Training with him is an immense privilege.

Jessica Verhein MD '18, PhD '21
Professor Shenoy is inspirational in so many ways. One might suspect that with a professor so well known for his amazingly successful research program, mentoring could take a back seat. However, this is not the case for Krishna. He is incredibly invested in the work and success of all of his students. Krishna takes the time to discover the areas where students need more guidance, but he delicately balances his guidance with allowing his students to make decisions, consequently giving them the opportunity to learn valuable lessons. Krishna is also an amazing mentor about all aspects of life, and he genuinely cares about his students' happiness and well-being. I have loved and will continue to love working with Krishna.

Iliana Bray BS '17, PhD '23
Krishna naturally and effortlessly embodies the spirit of the dream mentor: an advisor, teacher, role model, and friend. He’s patient to let each of us explore scientific paths off the beaten track, holds bottomless trust in every member of his lab, and has built a group that is bizarrely productive while also feeling like a second family. There’s nothing quite like working on important problems with brilliant people with the right tools and few limitations; Krishna has created a unique environment where that feels completely normal. It’s easy to take that for granted over the course of one’s PhD, but we’re frequently reminded of just how fortunate those of us in Krishna’s group are.

ERIC TRAUTMANN PHD '18
K-man! Congrats on your appointment as the Hong Seh and Vivian W. M. Lim Professor in the Stanford School of Engineering! This seems like the perfect final step of our master plan to advocate for the establishment of endowed chairs for our simian brethren. We'll "pull the old switcheroo" on the system. Jokes aside, this honor couldn't be more deserved. Not only have you conducted and overseen world-class research, you have always been so thoughtful, dedicated, and invested in your students' success whatever form that took. I've learned so much from you about science, careful thinking, patience, and perhaps most importantly, how to be gracious under pressure and adversity. I am always proud to say that I was your first doctoral advisee, and I hope you will continue to impart all of these lessons to the wide-eyed undergraduates and graduate students who pass through your orbit for years to come. With much esteem, your dear friend, Dr. Gopalapagos.

Gopal Santhanam MS '02, Phd '07
Congratulations, Krishna! I don’t know anyone else who deserves
the honor of an endowed professorship more than you do. You
have dedicated your life and contributed so much to the field of
neuroscience. Many recent advancements in the world of neural
prostheses would not have been possible without many of the
findings from the Shenoy lab.

You are always my role model, a person who works hard and never
compromises his integrity. To every one of us, you are more than
just an academic advisor. You are a friend, a colleague, a mentor
that one always wishes for. Whenever we encounter any obstacles,
professionally and personally, you can always provide us with
guidance in your always cool composure. I have never been this
happy about somebody else’s accomplishment in my life. I am very
fortunate to have had the opportunity to be your mentee.

WERAPON GOO MS ’14, PHD ’14
Krishna is a consummate advisor, role model, and most importantly, friend. When confronted with decisions in my own research group, I routinely think and reflect on how Krishna led and ran the lab as my advisor. There, I often find the most thoughtful and best course. The six years I spent in his group were truly special.

One day, post Shenoy lab, a colleague and I were discussing our graduate school years and philosophy going forward in running a research group. After I had gone on and on about my time in the Shenoy lab in a (likely) halcyonic way, he interjected and said something to the effect of: "Can you tell me something—anything—negative about Krishna as an advisor? He doesn’t sound real." I was caught off guard, thought about it, and after a long pause replied, "I know no one’s perfect, but honestly, no, I can’t think of anything right now." Now given some time, I do recall meetings sometimes started late on “Krishna time.”

Jonathan Kao BS '10, MS '10, PhD '16
Professor Shenoy has been a phenomenal leader and mentor for me, from my years in his lab to today. He always had a clear, overarchingly vision of the science to be done in the lab, yet somehow left us abundant room to develop our own ideas and visions. As a mentor, he began with frequent coaching and gradually transitioned me to independence, while always seeming to keep my best interests at heart, and supporting whichever way I wanted to go. Besides his intelligence, I believe this stems from Krishna’s warmth and exceptional intuition for what people need. This care is obvious in how he treats his lab and his collaborators, but is most fun in a social context: a late night with the lab swapping stories, or a chance conversation that will last “just two more minutes” that turns into two hours of life planning. I feel extremely lucky to have had the opportunity to work with Krishna, and to have become his friend.

MATTHEW KAUFMAN BS ’05, PHD ’11
It is fabulous that Krishna Shenoy is being appointed to the Hong Seh and Vivian W. M. Lim Professorship in the School of Engineering. I congratulate Krishna on the appointment, and I congratulate the School of Engineering on their good taste! It seems like a mere blink of the eye since Krishna was hired by the Electrical Engineering department. This appointment was a stretch for EE on several axes, but I venture to guess that very few EE stretches have turned out so well. The result has been no less than spectacular. In 15 years Krishna has breathed vibrant new life into the field of brain-machine interfaces, turning motor prosthetics from a semi-fictional dream into a reality that has gripped the imaginations of some of the most creative leaders in Silicon Valley. Krishna accomplished this the old-fashioned way—one meticulous paper at a time. From the outset Krishna has recruited fabulous junior colleagues to his cause, artfully
assembling a high-powered blend of engineering and neuroscience
talent under his close supervision. He has taught by example, and his
growing tribe of outstanding trainees is extending Krishna’s impact
far beyond Stanford. In fact, I count myself as one of Krishna’s
trainees. Over the past decade, the most creative work in my own lab
has occurred via close collaboration with Krishna and his research
group; none of it would have happened without him. Krishna is a
jewel in all respects: scientist, colleague, mentor and friend. We are
most fortunate to have him on the Stanford faculty; it is wonderful
to celebrate the awarding of this well-deserved chair to Krishna
Shenoy.

WILLIAM T. NEWSOME
THE VINCENT V. C. WOO DIRECTOR OF THE STANFORD NEUROSCIENCES INSTITUTE
THE HARMAN FAMILY PROVOSTIAL PROFESSOR
Dear Krishna, in addition to learning so much from you about how to be a good scientist, I have learned even more from you about how to be a good person and how to lead a group. I had the time of my life in your lab. The care, patience, and empathy you share with others in every conversation and every meeting is truly remarkable. I will continue to live by the motto, “What would Krishna do?” My warmest congratulations for your professorship appointment. I cannot think of anyone more deserving!

BYRON YU MS ’03, PHD ’07
ENDEOER PROFESSORSHIPS are the highest honor the university can bestow upon its faculty. Holders of endowed chairs represent the most distinguished scholars of their generation, combining brilliant scholarship, inspirational teaching, and service to the school and university.

Ensuring Stanford Engineering's continued excellence and leadership, endowed chairs provide financial stability to the university and the school. The donors who make these possible are an elite group of Stanford’s most visionary and generous friends.