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STATEMENT OF TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

I believe that an understanding of the economic way of thinking is a particularly important part of any higher education. The unique approach that economics takes in explaining the decisions and interactions of actors in the world around us allows for instructors of economics to have an impactful influence on the ways in which students organize their views of the world. My teaching philosophy is foremost to pass on to students not only an understanding of the economic way of thinking, but to develop their skills in applying this understanding critically. Students of economics should be able to pose questions about, and provide rational answers for, the events and situations that occur in both their personal lives, and the wider economic world. Beyond the instruction of this specific skill set it is also important to lay a foundation for further learning, to instill in the students an ability and desire to apply the economic way of thinking not only in further economics courses, but in all other future educational and professional endeavors.

At the initial stage of any student's education in economics it is important to introduce the fundamental tools that economists use in economic analysis, namely the concepts of marginal benefit – marginal cost analysis. Starting from very simple assumptions about human behavior, I have found that it is possible to add an incredible amount of subtlety to a student's views on human interaction. Opening a student's eyes to the hidden opportunity costs and benefits of actions can have a profound effect, and leveraging these eureka moments can help drive curiosity for the subject. I remain aware of times in which interest in a subject or concept is high, and will linger on the subject, developing an understanding beyond the text or pre-prepped notes in order to not pass up an opportunity for engagement.

At this early stage I set out to build confidence in the applicability of the economist's tool set, and thus persuasion is a key component to my instruction. The passion and animation that I bring to teaching goes a long way in this persuasion. Energy captures attention, and engaging with students in an energetic manner keeps interest in the material high while creating a positive space for student-instructor interaction. Like people in general, students are most interested in their immediate surroundings, making it important to consistently use examples that they are able to relate to, as well as examples from the wider economic world. Whether talking about the opportunity costs of attending football games, introducing news articles debating the effects of price controls on the Venezuelan economy, or showing a video explaining externalities through a Sriracha factory in California, I keep abstract theoretical concepts grounded in the real world.

In my experience, a necessary condition for confidence in the applicability of an economist's tool set is confidence in one's working knowledge of the material. I have found that frequent in-class assignments help develop this confidence over the course of a semester. Interaction amongst the students during these in-class assignments allows for students with questions to get help, and for the helping students to learn through teaching. Where frustration may otherwise set in for students that naturally struggle with the material on their own, the ability to work out problems as groups, and then discuss the answers with myself has proven invaluable. These assignments also allow for me to gain knowledge about where there is understanding and where there is confusion among students.

As a student progresses through their education in economics the models that are taught become more complex and better approximations of reality. During this time a student also learns how to employ empirical techniques to test the implications of these models. Finally, a student will be ready to develop their own models and answer their own questions in a rigorous fashion. Some of my most enjoyable times while teaching have been helping students, both undergraduate and graduate, take ideas that they have fashioned over the course of their education and turn these ideas into concrete research. One-on-one interaction at this level is key, and during these interactions I attempt to instill confidence in empirical economics while also clearly identifying the limitations. I take pride in the production of competent, and responsible, professional economists that will add value to the economy.

I thoroughly enjoy teaching. Whether educating non-economics majors in a new and unique way of viewing the world or bringing more advanced students towards the frontier of economic knowledge and research, there is an immediate gratification I receive in aiding a student in their development towards success later in life. I wish to continue as an educator in my own future success.