

Teaching Statement:

My teaching strategy stems from my experiences as a teacher as well as a student. In addition to the command over the subject material, I have learned that a successful teacher needs to appreciate two fundamental aspects: the diverse ability and understanding level across students and the effectiveness of an interpersonal connection. My teaching experience includes offering several upper-level Economics courses both at Kansas State University and Lewis and Clark College, English classes to students with a wide range of ages and economic backgrounds, as part of a USAID project in Pakistan, and serving as a tutor at Western Illinois University.

Through these experiences, I have learned that students benefit from having access to various teaching techniques. What works for one student does not necessarily work for another. However, the one thing common to most students is that building an interpersonal relationship is very important. Students want to feel understood by a professor, and for that, it is essential to know each student's name. To incorporate these principles into my teaching, I learn each of my students' names within the first two weeks of the semester and make sure they know that. This strategy helps create a sense of familiarity with them and makes me more approachable as an instructor. I also get to my class 10-15 minutes before it starts to interact with my students and learn about any problems they face, whether related to class or not. This approach provides a sense of belonging and encourages them to participate more during the lectures.

Moreover, I strongly encourage my students to set up appointments with me, even outside office hours, so they don't miss any learning opportunities. In my experience, I become more inclined to participate in class discussions when the professor is perceived as approachable. I also invite my students to departmental seminars to encourage them to learn new concepts/applications and promote interactions with me outside of a classroom setting.

For me, the greatest reward in teaching is when my students realize and acknowledge having understood a key concept as if a 'light bulb' had just turned on. To get that 'light-bulb' moment, I employ pedagogical techniques such that the emphasis is on progress instead of perfection. Therefore, I encourage my students to focus on getting the right steps rather than directly obtaining a result.

In terms of the effectiveness of teaching and generating interests of the students, I have noticed that using current economic examples (such as demand and supply of various commodities and subsequent pricing) while teaching not only helps keep students engaged in the discussion but also promote their interest in the subject matter. Focusing only on the theory of any material tends to decrease student engagement while showing real-world applications encourages them to think critically and behave more interactively. I have also noticed that some engaged students' presence improves the overall performance of the class since these interactions help other students understand the specific topic better.

Moreover, at the beginning of the semester, I give out a student survey to understand their backgrounds. This approach reveals the number of math and economics classes they have taken and how strong their algebra skills are. I then proceed to review algebra or other concepts that would be needed later in the course.

Usually, after 3-4 weeks of the start of a semester, I ask students to write any problems or concerns they have anonymously. This feedback helps students communicate with me whatever their expectations or concerns are and provides an opportunity to adjust my teaching style according to their needs. For example, some students prefer the usage of a white/blackboard, whereas other students prefer a more lecture-based/oral approach. Also, some students prefer taking more homework assignments, whereas some students prefer in-class quizzes and problem-solving. The survey helps me understand the approach my students expect from me and whether the course's pace is appropriate. My goal is to cater to all students to make sure they know the subject matter.

I also make sure to inform students about their progress in class. I usually do this after every exam by identifying students who performed below the class average. Then, I email these students with below-average performance to keep an open channel about their performance and ways to improve it.

Luckily enough, I taught an online course way before the pandemic hit. That gave me the required experience to tackle the conversion to online teaching mid-semester and then going hybrid this fall 2020. I have organized my teaching to help make learning easy. I make lectures, homework, practice problems, and quizzes available a week in advance to help give students an idea of what to expect in the coming week while posting announcements to make sure they know what is expected of them. This makes both traditional and online teaching a breeze. All my in-class lectures are also available through zoom in case my students can't be present on campus. Most of the classrooms have all the equipment that makes it easy to work during these challenging times. Earlier in March 2020, when that wasn't the case, and we were teaching from home, I used my iPad and Apple pencil to replicate the whiteboard experience- something students seem to like very much.

Students have provided positive feedback about me, as shown in my teaching evaluations in my teaching portfolio. I continue to strive to perform better as both an instructor and a researcher. I believe one cannot just excel at one thing while ignoring the other completely. If I cannot be a good instructor, my research will be of little to no use to positively affect those I would like to affect with my knowledge. If I cannot be a good researcher, then my methods will become outdated, and it would be hard to help students understand why they need to learn Economics. Therefore, my goal is to be an effective instructor while also learning and continuing my research to bring new theories and practices in my area of interest.