

# **Statement of Teaching Philosophy**

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This statement is intended to convey my approach to teaching. Please see my other teaching statements for further details on teaching effectiveness, instructional innovation, and mentoring.

Real-world application is at the core of my commitment to excellence in education. My goal is for students to not only retain but to apply economic knowledge to everyday decisions. For that reason, my broad experience as an educator combines both the practical and theoretical aspects of economics. Having taught or tutored students of all ages and university levels, in both business school and economics department environments, I have found that adaptability, along with enthusiasm, patience, and an emphasis on metacognitive skills, are vital in helping students convert abstract economic concepts into useful, practical tools. In what follows, I describe how each of these four elements supports that goal.

## **Adaptability**

Studies indicate that students put forth more effort and perform better academically when they perceive value in the subject matter and feel confident in their ability to learn.<sup>1</sup> In my experience as a student and educator, the same conditions encourage application of knowledge outside the classroom, and they can be actively influenced by an instructor who is willing to adapt to students' needs. In practice, I try to adapt content to enhance the value of my courses, while adapting the style and pace of instruction to build student confidence.

When modifying content to add value, it helps to know what students want to learn, so I often survey students for feedback on the content and pace of the course, along with suggestions for topics they'd like to have covered. With regard to teaching style, adaptability means finding an approach that works. For example, as a teaching assistant for *Global Managerial Economics*, I had the pleasure of guiding seasoned executives in acquiring fundamental analytical tools of production, pricing, and game theory. Many students were already successfully managing global, multi-million-dollar organizations, so the applicability of these concepts was paramount. I found that talking through examples in the context of a student's field of expertise had an immediate impact on his or her understanding. Since students learn in a variety of ways, versatility in teaching style necessitates preparing lessons that cater to multiple learning styles. Therefore, in preparing content, I try, where possible, to address visual learners with diagrams and graphs; auditory learners with lecture and class discussion; reading learners with relevant online business articles; and tactile learners with interactive, in-class games.

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<sup>1</sup> For an overview, see Pintrich, Paul R. (1999). "The Role of Motivation in Promoting and Sustaining Self-Regulated Learning," *International Journal of Educational Research* 31: 459-470.

I also believe the pace of a course should be adaptable, and I strive to teach at a speed that is challenging, but not overwhelming. To find the optimal pace, I ask questions at the end of each section of my lectures, and I pause to confirm understanding after each major step when working through in-class examples. However, struggling students are often hesitant to speak up during class. Accessibility has proven to be my best weapon in combatting this problem. In addition to in-person meetings before and after class or during office hours, I am available over the phone and via Zoom. Just as important, I try to be as approachable as possible by connecting personally with each student, offering them a safe and welcoming environment, and encouraging them to share when they are struggling.

### **Enthusiasm**

Studies of effectiveness in higher education commonly find that an instructor's enthusiasm predicts positive learning outcomes.<sup>2</sup> As both a student and an educator, I have seen the impact that enthusiastic instruction can make. Passion for the subject can enliven a mundane lecture, encourage student interaction, and attract attention that might otherwise have been diverted to newspapers and smart phones. I strive to bring the excitement I feel about economics into every teaching situation.

### **Patience**

Learning is a process, and some students can take much longer than others to assimilate economic concepts. To prevent students from getting discouraged requires respectful patience, especially in the face of frustration. Moreover, patience goes hand-in-hand with adaptability. For every effective example or approach, several others will inevitably fail. Eventual success often requires a patient, modest attitude. In educating others, I try to validate every level of comprehension, treating every question and struggle as a legitimate effort at understanding. I find that this approach engenders student respect and encourages class participation, especially among business-oriented students.

### **Emphasis on Metacognitive Skills**

As an undergraduate, I learned that the most crucial element in transforming passive learners into active problem solvers is a focus on metacognitive skills. In my teaching, therefore, I stress the *process* of thinking as well as the outcome. This approach plants ideas more firmly than recitation alone and aids students in applying what they have learned, but assessing how students think about a concept is necessarily difficult. One of my techniques is to ask students how they arrive at their answers to in-class questions. Another method I have used is direct observation, whereby I ask students to, "Think out loud for me," as they solve problems on the board or in the office. I find that students respond favorably when I challenge them to take responsibility for both their thinking and their learning.

In summary, my goal as an economics educator is to equip students to absorb and apply economic concepts in their everyday lives. In pursuit of that goal, I aim to adapt the content, style, and pace of my instruction to suit students' needs, always maintaining an enthusiastic and patient attitude, with a focus on both the process and outcome of learning. I am committed to providing the most excellent and effective instruction possible, and I look forward to many more years of learning and improvement in an educational capacity.

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<sup>2</sup> For an overview, see Chism, Nancy (2004). "Characteristics of Effective Teaching in Higher Education: Between Definitional Despair and Certainty," *Journal of Excellence in College Teaching* 15(3): 5-36.