

Teaching Statement

My primary goals as a teacher are to transfer the knowledge I have acquired to my students while providing opportunities and resources to help them develop the skills they need to be successful inside the classroom and beyond. Effective teaching requires the ability to provide an inclusive learning environment, connect course material with real-world applications, and evolve according to the students' needs.

I believe it is critical to create an environment where students feel safe and welcome so they are able to reach their full potential. To promote a welcoming environment, I pay particular attention to my use of language and tone so that I do not offend, demean, embarrass, or make students feel left out in any way. Students often experience significant amounts of stress, and a little kindness can go a long way towards helping them manage their mental health so they can achieve academic success. On multiple occasions, I have had students approach me to explain difficult personal problems, which have prevented them from turning in assignments or taking exams on time. I do my best to act with compassion, and after evaluating their claims, I usually make special accommodations so they are not penalized for circumstances outside of their control. I also make sure that my students have the opportunity to get the help they need even if that means I have to schedule appointments outside of my normal office hours or hold special review sessions.

When I teach topics in economics, I make an effort to connect my lessons to the real world by framing my lecture content and homework/exam questions around real-world situations. To provide some context, when I taught students how to derive optimal labor demand in the Agricultural Labor Economics course (ARE 150) at UC Davis, I asked them to play the role of strawberry farmers who have to make a decision about how many workers they should hire to harvest their crop. In this exercise, I had them consult real strawberry production cost studies and use data on prices, wages, and operating costs in their calculations. By connecting the course material to realistic scenarios, I provide students with an opportunity to apply what they are taught in the classroom to realistic problems.

Educators must continue to develop their techniques to meet the evolving needs of their students. The ability to evolve as an educator requires paying close attention to the feedback students provide through both verbal and non-verbal cues and through teaching evaluations. For example, when I first started out as a teaching assistant, I received several comments indicating that I moved too fast through some of the course material in my lectures. In response to this, I made an adjustment to slow down and frequently check in with my class to make sure everyone understands the material before moving on to the next concept. If students need me to revisit a particular concept, I usually spend a few minutes to go over it again rather than push forward leaving students confused. If students continue to struggle, I meet with them after class to explain the concepts in a one-on-one setting. By using these techniques, I continuously engage with my students to make sure they are involved in the learning process and offer each one the opportunity to have any remaining questions answered before the day's end.

I am confident in my ability to teach courses in microeconomics, applied econometrics, labor economics, and other coursework as necessary. My favorite course to teach is applied econometrics because it equips students with a toolkit they can use to answer real world questions with actual data. The feedback I have received from my students has taught me that they value the acquisition of data analysis skills, and I am passionate about transferring that knowledge to my students. I have included a small selection of comments from my student evaluations below.

“TA did a great job and will make a great professor in the future.”

“One of the best TAs I have had. I enjoy going to discussion because he makes me understand the homework/material.”

“Overall, Zach did a wonderful job and I could follow him every discussion. Did much better than TAs I usually get for ARE courses.”

“Zach was a great TA. He covered professor Taylor’s lectures very well & made sure we understood all the information. He easily recognized confusion & addressed it promptly and efficiently.”

“He does a phenomenal job! Also his lecture was great.”