

Teaching Statement

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As a teaching assistant for a wide range of economics classes, I have come to appreciate that an effective teacher actively engages students for gaining knowledge of theoretical concepts and practical application of those concepts to real-world situations. Teaching is a continuous learning experience, and if consciously done, effectiveness increases with each active day. At this stage of my academic career, I continue to strive to add value to students' knowledge at both, undergraduate and graduate levels, by trying to create an environment of critical thinking about economic issues and using my own research and industry experience to enrich students' educations. For example, during the classroom sessions and office hours that I held as a teaching assistant, I discussed with students their understanding of specific economic concepts at intuitive and formal levels, why these concepts are important for understanding broader economic phenomena, and how to apply analytic tools to derive these economic concepts or/and use them to develop relationship among related concepts. This approach seems to contribute to students' university experiences by expanding their understanding of the complexity of the world and, thereby, render them better prepared for future academic or professional careers.

Understanding that every school has its own mission, I believe that I will need to adjust my teaching style accordingly to fulfill my role as a teacher within the school's broader vision of a faculty member's responsibilities, and to better serve students' interests. Adjusting teaching style does not mean changing my teaching philosophy that stresses active engagement of students in classroom and research projects, accommodation of students' different backgrounds, and providing high-quality theoretical and empirical knowledge of economics in combination with real world application. My teaching philosophy has evolved since my first teaching assistant assignment, a graduate courses at NES (Moscow, Russia), which provided exposure to a western-style economics education which demanded high degrees of teacher knowledge and excellence. My teaching philosophy continued to shape at the Pennsylvania State University (University Park, PA), where I have observed how instructors address diverse student audiences from a variety of backgrounds. This particular experience introduced me to the challenges of the instructor's handling large (300 students) introductory, undergraduate classes, and smaller (60 students), advanced undergraduate and graduate classes in a public university setting. Finally, at Vanderbilt, as a teaching assistant in a private university, for large and small undergraduate and graduate classes, I was able to further master teaching skills and refine my teaching philosophy.

Even though similarities exist for teaching approaches to undergraduate and graduate students, some differences remain for what these different student populations can gain from my courses. At the undergraduate level, the most important aspects for students to grasp are the broad concepts of economics, the ability to apply appropriate econometric/game theory tools to explain economic phenomena, and actual research experience through involvement in projects according to each student's motivation. At the graduate level, the instructor's task is more challenging, since graduate students develop their own research agendas (mostly at the PhD level), and/or build more advanced set skill-sets (mostly at the Master's level). At the graduate level, the most important aspects for students' attention are knowledge of cutting-edge research, construction and extension of this research by identifying existing gaps or/and puzzles that have not been solved, configuration of a research problem to answer a specific research question, and use of advanced techniques to solve that problem.