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Teaching Statement

I love teaching and I care deeply about teaching. Regardless of whether I am the instructor or a teaching assistant (TA), I want my students to think critically and apply their knowledge to real life situations, rather than regurgitate material. The reasons I want to spend the extra time on teaching are because I care about my students and also because I simply enjoy it.

My love of teaching started in college. I graduated from a small liberal arts college (Hamilton) where professors spent a lot of time being available to students and engaging with students in a personal way. I have tried to bring a similar culture to my students at Binghamton. For example, I hold far more office hours than the department requires. I also take my students' availability into account when setting office hours and I have an open-door policy. When I teach, I have my students create name tents. This allows me to more quickly learn their names and a few facts about each one of them. This way when I see my students, past and present, around campus I can greet them by name and have an idea of their interests outside of the classroom.

I love teaching so much that in my spare time I run a YouTube channel (www.YouTube.com/@InCaseofEconStruggles) about economics where I post new videos every week. Since I started the channel in 2021, my videos have over 350,000 views and I have over 3,000 subscribers. More than half of those views have come in the last year. It's extremely rewarding for me to see comments letting me know that I made a positive impact on students outside of Binghamton. One of the most rewarding comments I have received is from a first-gen college student who cited my channel as the main reason why she passed the first year of her PhD program. I have received hundreds of other comments from students who have claimed my YouTube videos helped them study for an exam, understand concepts from class better, or just generally reduced their stress about an economics class.

These videos do not just cover material from classes I have taught or been a TA for. For example, I created a series of videos covering the basics of reduced-form causal inference videos methods based on requests from students who found my other videos helpful. My ongoing series on Stata tips and tricks is based on what I have learned while doing my own research. No matter how much time I devote to teaching my own students, I expect that I will always make time to help other students better their understanding of economics through my videos.

As an instructor, I take a lot of pride in my teaching. I hold myself to a high standard in terms of making sure students understand the material. Most students need multiple attempts to fully understand a concept, and so providing consistent individual feedback to students is essential. On homeworks, for example, I assign grades based on completion, but the feedback I provide to students is as if I was grading for correctness. This benefits students in two ways. First, I improve my understanding of how my students are doing and where my class might benefit from extra practice. Second, students receive more detailed feedback about their level of understanding of course material, which serves as an extra incentive for students to do their best on homeworks without worrying about their grade.

I structure my courses such that class time is spent where it's most important for me to be physically present in the classroom. Oftentimes that is not lecturing but instead working on problems together. I accomplish this by incorporating flipped-class principles into my teaching. I provide students with the basics of a particular topic before class, with a simple five question pre-quiz to ensure understanding prior to class. I reserve the majority of class time for students to work on pre-written problems in groups. Group work allows students to both get a working knowledge of the material and learn from each other while I walk around and provide feedback to individual groups. Each question is therefore an opportunity for students to learn and to receive feedback on their understanding prior to a summative assessment such as an exam.

I have received positive feedback from students both in evaluations and from revealed preferences. For example, as a TA for intermediate microeconomics I often had more students in my discussion section than students registered for my sections. Demand for my office hours often meant students were standing for at least part of the time and several students who routinely came to office hours were not enrolled in my discussion sections. At the end of each semester, I often had students ask which courses I would be TAing for in the next semester. As an instructor, I often had perfect attendance in my summer classes despite holding 5 classes a week. My environmental economics class this fall was oversubscribed, despite it being the first time I was teaching the course.

In striving for teaching excellence, I realize that pedagogical training is also important, not just economics training. I have consistently sought opportunities to improve my teaching and to integrate what I learn into my courses. I attended an online teaching and learning conference about economics and I audited a class at Binghamton on scholarly teaching. Both experiences have informed my use of peer instruction in class and my emphasis on making my lessons active and student-centered. I will continue to participate in formal pedagogical training throughout my career.

Being a teacher is a central part of my identity as a graduate student and it will continue to be a central part after I graduate. This is why I am especially interested in working at a liberal arts college, which values dedicated instruction as a central part of the college mission.