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After my loving family, the people who impacted my life the most, are some of my teachers. They have been my mentors for life and growing older myself now, I strongly feel, this is my calling too. I absolutely enjoy engaging with the youth and listening to their fresh, unadulterated ideas and hopes. And I find immense value in helping and guiding them toward those dreams. In today's world, I personally believe that an educator's role is much more than just disseminating textbook knowledge and skills. Rather, it encompasses mentorship, the ability to connect and train them for the real world, and also providing them with an open space where they can really get the chance to be creative and critical thinkers. To ensure that, along with superb knowledge and skill for teaching, a genuine passion for this service is required. And being a person highly driven by purpose, I take pride in having that genuine passion and am on my journey to hone my skill to become really good at it.

During my PhD at the University of Houston, I taught three classes as an Instructor along with many classes as a teaching assistant. The Department of Economics at the University of Houston awarded me the **'Best Graduate Teaching Award'** for 2022 which is usually awarded to one of the fifth-year students who are on the job market to acknowledge their excellence in teaching.

Although my teaching experience dates back to my early teenage years when I used to tutor juniors at school, my formal teaching began when I was working at [Jame P. Grant School of Public Health](#), which has an internationally renowned MPH program in Bangladesh where public health students and professionals come from all over the world. I was working there as a Senior Research Assistant in their research division and one of my roles was to facilitate the MPH students in their Research Methodology course as their Teaching Fellow. That was my very first experience of providing assistance to graduate level students and practitioners in a formal setting and that was the time when I really gained confidence and realized I like teaching. Later in 2017 I started my PhD in Economics at the University of Houston (UH) and started being TA and instructor to a whole new audience. As a city, Houston is a melting pot of people from all around the globe, and me being an international student here for the first time in America, I met students coming from various ethnicity and cultures for the first time in my life. During my PhD here at UH, I taught as an Instructor for Principles of Microeconomics and Macroeconomics, both online and in-person (Please find my evaluations [here](#)) and also as teaching assistant for multiple undergraduate and graduate level classes. Being involved in teaching for some time now, and being exposed to both the fulfillment and challenges of this profession, I have realized that I have formed a strong preference for teaching Economics.

I design my classes to be very interactive where I try to know most of their names and connect with them at a deeper level. Being very well aware of the fact that different people have different learning styles, I always clarify the roadmap for the semester in detail on the very first day of the class and focus on keeping everyone on the same page. I make sure to stay after class every day and sometimes walk back to the office with them which actually enables me to make some of the introverted ones speak up. Most of the time these students are too shy to give their views on the topics discussed in front of the entire class, so they wait till the end, and I love to hear them out and have those enthusiastic

discussions full of counterfactual scenarios and policy prescriptions. I love how they really start to dive into thinking deeper about the economy and how they really try to assess their day-to-day life scenarios using the lens of economics. Sometimes I make them write essays using the concepts they learned for extra credit and sometimes I use third-party platforms to enhance their conceptual writing abilities and also have a very interactive experience among themselves where they can comment on each other's writings and discuss further. Many of my students are still in touch with me and I'm very happy to mention that I referred two of my students for the jobs where they are working for a while now. Also, I have been a mentor for a high school student for his AP Capstone: Research class in 2020.

My deep urge of taking teaching as my career roots in a very personal childhood experience. My father used to work abroad and my mother was a full-time working mom raising us by herself in a constrained setting. I barely had anyone to guide me in my studies. Growing up to become the first-generation college graduate of my family, I experienced the subtle but profound effect of asymmetric information and observed how inter-generational privileges play a significant role even in a 5th graders world. I experienced the subtle discrimination between the so-called good students and backbenchers by the teachers although most of the time it was unintended. Yes, there are always some students who don't put effort and 'choose' to be the 'backbenchers'. But for many others, it's a trap you fall into once, and then it's really difficult to get out of the cycle- something like the S-shaped poverty trap we studied in development economics. Experiencing that from the other side at that young age, hurt me deeply and I could see how being 'poor' once as a student keeps one 'poor' and remain stuck at the lower curvature of the S-shaped trap. With the passage of time and much hard work, I was fortunate to be able to catch up and excel. But that journey was extremely lonely and difficult. And this is not something only I experienced- a lot of children every year somewhere in the world just lose their sparks sitting in classrooms like that feeling completely incapable and unworthy just because of the lack in a little kindness and empathy in some people. So, the one vow that came out of this experience for me is, if I ever get the chance to be on the other side of the classroom as an educator, I will be particularly attentive to the ones who need the most care; the ones who can't speak up loud; the ones who are struggling; the ones who are from a marginalized background. Having those experiences myself, I believe I know how and where it hurts and exactly how to take care of that.

Now, when I stand in a classroom in front of my students, I remember my childhood days and try my best to make sure everyone is on the same page. At UH, I've observed that a large number of students actually come from smaller community colleges and join UH as a junior or seniors. So, adjusting to a new reputed institution and also the rigor we maintain here for courses, becomes challenging for some of the students. So, of course, one of my prime goals remains to fuel the star student with all the resources and help him to jump to the next higher trajectory. But while doing that, I absolutely make sure that the shyest or quiet student in my class is also on the same page with others and is feeling seen and feeling important. Some of the comments from my students in my teaching evaluations corroborate this and it gives me immense inner peace knowing that I am actually being able to do it. Especially today, when children are being raised lonely with devices as their only best friends and mental health crises are rising at an alarming rate, educational institutes' role cannot stay limited to only disseminating skillset and merely preparing them for some 9-5 jobs. As mentioned earlier, I feel extremely grateful to meet some amazing human beings at different stages of my student life who went way beyond teaching a particular subject matter and became true teachers of life. I want to follow in their footsteps to add goodness and value to society and try my level best to pay it forward.

## Selected anonymous quotes from students:

### ○ Microeconomic Principles, Fall 2019

N =96, In-person, Teaching effectiveness=3.22 (Dept. mean=3.99)

- *"Yes! Professor Biju was probably one of my favorite professors at UH. She cares. Shes concise. Shes efficient. Shes communicative. Definitely would recommend."*
- *"very passionate about what shes teaching and offers help when asked"*
- *"Went through all the slides in timely fashion and made sure to answer any questions if students had them. Aslo, she would stop and make sure everyone got the notes they needed and if they hadn't, she would make sure to go back for them"*
- *"The class gave me a good foundation and understanding of basic economic principles."*
- *"Yes, she was amazing. She had great knowledge on the subject."*
- *"I think one of the main strengths of the course was the fact that Professor Biju was always in communications with us and respected us. She was quick to return emails containing questions or concerns. I absolutely wish i could take her again."*
- *"Professor was really prepared and she genuinely cared about the success of the students. She teaches in a simplified manner for everyone to understand the concepts of Econ."*
- *"Good amount of inclass examples and discussion of techniques to find answers."*
- *"very interactive and engaging"*
- *"Yes. Professor Biju was a delight to have as an instructor and the rigor of the course was very manageable."*
- *"Professor Biju did a good job setting class expectations and assignments from the very beginning. She set all our exam dates way in advance. She would also update any changes to the course and notify us in class and through electronic methods which was nice."*
- *"Yes because she is respectful, understanding and thorough"*
- *"She was a wonderful instructor and needs no improvement."*
- *"Yes, I would recommend this instructor because she was very patient with students and always attempted to best explain anything that anyone did not understand."*
- *"Yes, because the professor is excellent at teaching."*
- *"It was a very interesting course to take and I hope the instructor continues teaching."*
- *"It was a pleasure taking this class"*

### ○ Microeconomic Principles, Summer 2021

N=39, Online, Teaching effectiveness=4.10 (Dept. mean=4.22)

- *" Everything was on time. I loved how organized the class was and how much she helped us out being her first online class."*
- *" The strengths of this class was the fact that our professor reassured us not to be afraid to ask questions and made us comfortable to speak up."*
- *" The instructor was very receptive to questions and has a strong grasp on the topics discussed. I never felt that answers for my question were confusing or unsatisfying"*
- *" Very effective real life examples that helped me visualize and understand the concepts."*
- *" The Professor was very kind and helpful to students and the syllabus was adhered to. The reviews were also very helpful source materials to study."*
- *" I would recommend Professor Biju. Firstly she is incredibly sweet, patient, and understanding, and she presents and lectures the material in a way that is easy to understand."*
- *" THE EXAMPLES THE ROFESSOR WILL GIVE IN REAL LIFE EVENTS"*
- *" Very helpful and easygoing. If you were having any trouble understanding a certain topic, the instructor would break it down for anyone struggling."*
- *" Yes, she genuinely cares and will put in work to help you succeed. Her class isn't a chore for her,*

*it is something she is passionate about."*

- *" Yes, she is very good at teaching and understanding students."*
- *" Yes, I learned a lot and made a good grade."*
- *" She cares about her students and despite losing her father right before classes started she always came to class on time and gave her all."*
- *" I feel like she taught me very much in this course."*
- *" she is an amazing instructor who cares about her students due to her background. She always helps out everyone no matter what it is."*
- *" She was an amazing and understanding professor. I would definitely recommend her to other students for this course."*
- *" YES, THE PROFESSOR WAS CLEAR AND GOOD TEACHER TO LEARN FROM"*
- *" Yes!! Amazing professor who engages students' interest throughout the lecture. She is understanding and lenient if you need help!!"*
- *" she is a very nice and thoughtful person. Actually cares about her students' success in the course."*
- *" She's an amazing professor! I would take any course she teaches."*

○ Principles of Macroeconomics, Summer 2022

N=36, In-person, Teaching effectiveness=4.38 (Dept. mean=4.37)

- *" The professor really tried to make sure everyone in the class understood the topics. She also provides a lot of opportunities for students to get help and fully understand the material."*
- *" I enjoyed how thorough Professor Biju is, it is very apparent that she wants her students to know the inner workings of Economics. This in turn helped me understand the content and make connections across the various topics discussed in this class."*
- *" Yes! Professor Nabila was very passionate with the subject and used real life examples of the materials. She did an outstanding job at making the material easy to understand and was able to go at a pace that was easy to follow even though the course was condensed in 4 weeks."*
- *" Yes. Students will learn so much that will change their outlook on society. Students may also look at the subject of economics in a different, more practical way."*
- *" Professor explained concepts perfectly. Every time I had questions or misunderstandings, the professor would clear them up perfectly to make sure we were on the same page."*
- *" Yes, because her caring nature shines in her teaching style and she is willing to work at a student's pace to ensure they understand the material."*
- *" she wants her students to succeed. She makes sure that there is a clear understanding for every problem she reviews."*
- *" Yes, I think Professor Biju is great at explaining the topics discussed in class and is very adamant of building rapport with her students. I would say this a quality I don't see enough in my courses"*
- *" I wish I could have this professor again for another course. I really enjoyed her teaching"*
- *" Yes, because she clarifies any misunderstandings, takes time to answer questions inside and outside the classroom, and seems to enjoy teaching this subject."*
- *" I would definitely take a class of this professor again she genuinely cares about her students!"*
- *" Yes, the professor truly wants to help students understand economics and wants to help them with what they want to pursue in the future."*
- *" I very much enjoyed your class and it made me more interested in economics, Thank you."*
- *" Overall, this professor is a very good professor. I enjoyed taking this class in the summer and learning about macroeconomics."*
- *" The instructor did a great job, nothing I would add! "*