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Teaching Philosophy Statement

Teaching is my passion. As an educator, it is my responsibility to help students develop intellectually, personally, and professionally. My greatest strength as an instructor is my ability to create and sustain a good rapport with my students. Building a strong rapport allows me to individualize my instruction to help each student develop and reach their academic, individual, and vocational goals. I prioritize two aspects of teaching: (1) I create an active learning environment that engages students and (2) I offer development opportunities outside of the classroom.

I use a variety of pedagogical techniques to create a collaborative learning environment where students have an opportunity to be included in the learning process, are engaged with the course material, and have frequent opportunities to share their thoughts. I believe that this allows me to build a better rapport with students by increasing their personal investment to the course. Here are a few examples of how I create an active learning environment.

I use a team-based learning (TBL) model in several of my courses, such as Adolescent Psychology and Introductory Psychology. TBL is an approach that has students working with the same small team of peers during each class. Students also complete projects and take part of their exams with their team. TBL allows students to develop genuine relationships with their peers, be an active participant in a small group setting, and develop important communication, teamwork, and leadership skills.

I incorporate live statistical programming demonstrations using R into my research and statistics courses. These sessions allow students to follow along with me while I teach, though I also provide frequent opportunities to apply the lessons. I spend most of these class periods walking around the room helping students understand coding errors, though I especially appreciate watching them work together to solve complex problems. All students leave my research courses with genuine R programming skills that can be put on their resume.

I create a classroom environment that is fun, conversational, and encourages active participation. Students should feel comfortable discussing difficult topics about inclusion, race, gender, class, and disability. I encourage this environment by bringing energy and a sense of humor to each class, calling on specific students, and reinforcing genuine effort.

Teaching does not end when the students leave the classroom. I engage students outside of the classroom and demonstrate my own passion for learning. Here are a few examples of how I create development opportunities beyond the classroom.

I am the faculty advisor for the Maryville College chapter of Best Buddies, a global program that promotes inclusion for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. In my role, I support the students by interfacing with the college, help

them develop programming, give advice, and attend monthly parties. I also help them recruit new students, encourage my students to attend Best Buddies events, and introduce the student leaders to community members who can support their efforts.

Some students, especially those applying to graduate school, want to develop their research skills. I run the Cognitive Science lab to help undergraduate students gain concrete professional and research skills. I treat all students in the lab as though they were graduate students and help them achieve a high level of independence. Nearly all students that participate in the lab graduate with the ability to program in R, design an empirical research project, write an IRB application, collect data, and present at a research conference. We also spend time reading articles, discussing ethical issues, collaborate with researchers at other institutions, develop graduate school materials, and complete mock interviews.

I provide opportunities for students to engage with the wider community by inviting guest speakers, requiring students to complete classroom observations, taking students on field trips, and offering course credit for volunteering in the community. For instance, in my developmental disabilities course, I have collaborated with a local non-profit to speak to the class and have us visit their location. Students in that course have also volunteered with community partners and reflected on their experience instead of completing a more traditional research paper.

I have a passion for teaching and mentoring students. I genuinely want to see my students achieve whatever academic, individual, and vocational goals they set. This translates to me bringing an enthusiasm to each class and developing a rapport with my students. Each semester, my formal and informal anonymous student evaluations include comments about my commitment to each student and my investment in their learning. It is these comments that I am most proud of and what motivates me to continue to develop as a teacher and mentor.