

Statement of Teaching Philosophy

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During the last four years at Florida International University (FIU), I had the good fortune of serving as a teaching assistant for a great variety of classes. This experience helped me prepare for the teaching component of my academic career. In my time at FIU, I observed how experienced faculty members taught undergraduate courses, which inspired me to become a better communicator by breaking down difficult economics concepts and making them easier to understand. These observations motivated me to improve my teaching further, so I joined the FIU Teaching Faculty Book Club, where we discussed James M. Lang's book, *Small Teaching: Everyday Lessons from the Science of Learning*. The author introduces teaching practices and researched learning techniques that significantly impact students' learning and engagement. Most students in my Principles classes are not Economics majors, so I aim to teach them basic economics concepts, help them understand current economic events, and encourage them to adopt lifelong learning practices. In this statement, I elaborate on some of the teaching methods I use to achieve these goals, not only in my Principles of Macroeconomics and Microeconomics classes but also in more advanced courses, such as Intermediate Macroeconomics.

I employ different strategies to learn about students' interests and connect them with varying economics concepts while promoting inclusion. Walton and Cohen (2011) suggest that interventions that increase social belonging in college improve grade point average among underrepresented groups (e.g., racial/ethnic minority students). In each of my courses, on the first day of class, I ask students about themselves and the topics they are most passionate about. I start with an icebreaker question and allow them to talk to their colleagues, after which they must describe their partner. This helps cultivate a safe environment in which students can openly share and identify common interests. This exercise also enables effective communication within the classroom, along with inclusion. For example, in one course, a few students mentioned that they were interested in learning more about cryptocurrencies. To encourage these students' educational curiosity, I incorporated short videos about specific cryptocurrencies: Bitcoin and Libra. In my classroom, I highlight the free sources of information offered at FIU and local municipal libraries, and I encourage my students to create accounts for each economic magazine or newspaper to find more information about their interests. Moreover, as part of their grade for the class, students must submit short summaries of National Public Radio (NPR) podcasts, broadening their

horizons on economics issues.

Memory retrieval is essential to a better understanding of new concepts; therefore, I try to promote this practice in my class. I encourage memory retrieval by inquiring about the previous lesson; I ask students to describe the topic. Using their own words, they are asked to remember and explain the concepts, building a stronger foundation of those economics concepts. Another way I promote memory retrieval is through unannounced quizzes via Kahoot, an interactive learning platform, in which I post questions on the projector and students answer with their cellphones. This helps engage students in class and encourages them to read the material before class. Through these experiences in the classroom, I realized that I could break down a three-hour lecture with active learning activities such as group work or problem sets. These activities promote memory retrieval and allow students to quiz themselves and identify any deficiencies. This has the additional benefit of partitioning the potential monotony of a long lecture. Quizzes promote memory retrieval and raise students' curiosity on the topic and help them remember economics concepts.

To stimulate students' curiosity, which contributes to a deeper understanding of course concepts, I created a league for the whole class on FredCast, an online game offered by the Federal Reserve at St. Louis. Their challenge was to compete in forecasting. Competition has the effect of raising students' interest in economics and encourages them to read macroeconomics news more often. Furthermore, I routinely ask students to make predictions regarding economics at the beginning of a chapter. For instance, when learning about unemployment, I ask if the economy is in a recession, and the banking/finance sectors were laying people off, would this cause them to reconsider their major. When students do not have enough information to answer a question, they are allowed to search for evidence, which lays the foundation for deeper understanding. Predicting makes them pay closer attention to lectures to see if their original idea about the topic was valid.

Student assessment is an essential part of enhancing students' learning experience, but it also helps instructors measure their teaching effectiveness. I rely on Kahoot quizzes, which offer immediate feedback between questions. This platform shows me descriptive statistics about students' understanding of a topic. Furthermore, I allow students to give each other feedback. For instance, I assign discussion posts regarding current events, and students are required to leave feedback for classmates explaining why they agree or disagree. I understand that continuous self-reflection is critical in maintaining teaching effectiveness. To do this, I request informal evaluations from my students in the middle of each semester. Students appreciate when they are given the opportunity to express their opinions, and thus, they become more involved in the class.

Lastly, my exposure to FIU's faculty—working with the school's multicultural student body—has inspired me to become a better educator by creating an energetic classroom environment. This has allowed me to make tangible connections between economic concepts with news and events from the real world for my students.

As I mentioned above, my main teaching strategies promote lifelong learning, connect economics concepts with current events, emphasize memory retrieval, and stimulate students' curiosity in the classroom. My primary motivation for implementing these strategies is that I want my students to be successful beyond the classroom. Reflecting back, one of my happiest moments as an instructor occurred at the end of a semester when a student handed me a thank you card, stating: "In college, it can be hard to find a professor who truly cares about their students and who wants them to succeed, but you have accomplished that. Your efforts in teaching have made a positive impact. You made time for us and showed us your incredible knowledge of Economics."

References

- Walton, G. M., & Cohen, G. L. (2011). A brief social-belonging intervention improves academic and health outcomes of minority students. *Science*, *331*(6023), 1447–1451.
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