Teaching Statement

Da Gong dgong005@ucr.edu

Teaching goes beyond the transmission of knowledge. It involves cultivating a unique mindset for all students equally. While knowledge is undeniably important, instilling an economic perspective equips students with the essential tools to comprehend the intricacies of the world and make informed decisions that resonate throughout their lives. My commitment to this philosophy has been shaped by both my role as an empirical economist and my extensive experience in teaching over the years.

I utilize causal inference not just as research instruments but as perspectives to guide instruction. For instance, when introducing the topic of inequality in the job market, I initiate a thought-provoking dialogue with my students. I encourage them to ponder whether they believe inequality exists in the job market, considering the ongoing real-world debate. We delve into the complexities of the issue, discussing the relevance of factors like ability and education in identifying gender or race effects. The challenge then becomes disentangling these factors in the real world. In essence, I perceive these questions as more than a quest for definitive answers, they serve as tools for cultivating thoughtful consideration of real-world issues and fostering wisdom in students.

I use virtual interface, data and movies for enhanced conceptual understanding. For example, I developed an interactive Python program to illustrate optimal choices on a budget line. I consistently utilize real-world data when introducing topics like inequality or global warming. I use Martin Scorsese's "The Irishman" to elucidate the rise and fall of labor unions. I utilize "Trainspotting" to illustrate various life decisions and the variables students might consider when constructing their utility function. These examples enable students to grasp the intuition behind economic theory and foster a deeper understanding of empirical questions.

I am an advocate for student-centered teaching. On the first day of class, I send surveys to understand my students' interests and concerns, tailoring my examples and questions to align with their preferences. Addressing worries about mathematical or programming aspects, I invest additional time in fundamental knowledge and operations. For students expressing concerns about their performance, I emphasize an open-door policy, inviting them to seek assistance and assuring them of my commitment to their success.

My commitment extends to underrepresented students through my contribution to programs like Data Science Pathways and MacREU. I provide instruction for students from community and four-year colleges to delve into data science and programming.

In addition to my role as an Instructor and TA, I serve as the GradQuant Lead Consultant. I conduct workshops and consultations in statistics and programming for graduate students and postdoctoral scholars. Through daily one-on-one consultations, I have cultivated my ability to effectively communicate with students from diverse backgrounds and efficiently address their questions. The statistics and programming workshops I deliver not only tackle challenges faced by students but also offer a clear, hands-on guide for applying cutting-edge methods to their projects.

My teaching philosophy centers on cultivating a mindset beyond the classroom through critical questioning, real-world examples, and hands-on applications. I strive to empower students as thoughtful, analytical thinkers, prepared for the challenges of our ever-evolving world. Additionally, I emphasize the importance of equitable education for students from diverse backgrounds. I am eager to bring this philosophy as a professor in economics, where I can continue to inspire and guide students on their intellectual journeys.