**Teaching Statement**

David Vasquez

I have always enjoyed working with and interacting with people going back to my first job working as a host at Red Robin during my undergraduate degree. Since then, I have found the dynamic that exists on a university campus to be one of the most exciting there is. The ability to be surrounded by experts in so many fields and so many people passionate about learning is truly invigorating. Personally, I have found teaching to be one of the most rewarding experiences there is. It is something that I continually strive to be better at and am surprised and excited by my own personal growth. On a recent review of a LBCC course the Dean wrote, “You do a wonderful job creating an open, welcoming, supportive atmosphere. It’s clear your students feel at ease.” I was excited to receive this feedback as it is something I strive towards.

During my master’s degree in the College of Engineering I was fortunate to be able to work as a Teaching Assistant for two different professors. This opportunity led to one of the professors asking me to design and instruct an entire course at the collegiate level. I still remember the first day very well and the many emotions that I experienced. Unfortunately, that first day the primary feeling was one of nervousness. As the term went on the nervousness grew less and my passion for creating an engaging and inclusive classroom grew. I have grown a lot since then and have designed and taught multiple courses in both business and engineering.

In my classes I strive to create an engaging, welcoming and inclusive environment. The most important aspect of a class is to make sure the students gain a deep knowledge of the subject matter but I have always worked to bring in other things important to students. Things like public speaking, communication skills and a focus on their careers. This was one of the reasons I was so excited about the opportunity to work as an instructor in the four-year Blueprint Program as it aligns so well with my vision of what education should entail.

There are a few things that I view as foundational to my teaching style. These include creating a welcoming and inclusive classroom, creating engagement, teaching the material in a clear simple manner and assigning work in a way that focuses on learning. I know that it is not my job to entertain but I think it is incredibly important to plan every lecture to have a range of teaching styles and interesting things that will keep the classroom engaged and as much as possible excited to be a part of the class.

The methods that I use to teach have changed over time. I constantly work to evolve them to become a better instructor. One of the major shifts I made was moving away from relying on PowerPoint as I felt it was difficult for students to sit and listen and I could feel the classroom losing interest when I relied too heavily on lecturing in this way. I still design in depth PowerPoints for every lecture as a resource for students to have access to and take notes on. I then design each lecture based on this as a guide but use a range of teaching styles to help present the learning objectives. This includes utilizing the whiteboard, digital displays, in class activities and discussions. I also like to engage with the students and find moving around and getting to know them while they work on smaller group work to be very effective in improving the classroom dynamics and helping them feel comfortable asking questions and speaking out. I realize the Blueprint classes are large but even in large classes I do my best to make a connection with every student.

Another important aspect of what has shaped my teaching style is that I am a slow learner and remember clearly being lost or confused in difficult classes. I often need to ask things multiple times or spend extra time reading and finding outside resources. This experience is fresh in my mind as I was faced with a steep learning curve when I began my role as a Software Engineer at Amazon. From my experience I have found that learning complicated material is best done by simplifying it as much as possible and then applying these ideas to larger more complex topics. This idea shapes my teaching style in that I always work to present every idea in a simple, clear and easy to understand manner. I also understand students learn at different rates and always make myself available during office hours or other times to make sure everyone in the class has the opportunity to do well. I also think that reinforcement is important and cannot think of any area of learning where some level of repetition is not needed. Because of this I don’t just present material once and then move on I continue to incorporate past lessons and what we have learned into the current material so that the whole class is able to have a repetition of some of the most important concepts.

I also put a lot of thought into designing testing material that fairly represents what is taught in class. I do not thing students should be exposed to a new type of problem for the first time during a test. I do like to check the depth of student’s knowledge so may have a problem that requires a deeper understanding of an idea. Finally, I like students to feel prepared for big tests and work to eliminate as much stress as I can. I always will do a review session before hand and let them know the important topics to focus on. I truly love teaching and would be excited to teach the interesting courses in the Blueprint program. I also would love to be a part of the College of Business and learn from the other amazing staff and faculty here on campus.