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Teaching Statement

As a teaching assistant at Brown, I have taught a wide range of courses from undergraduate Econometrics to Applied Economic Analysis for PhD students. From each of these courses, I have learned a unique lesson about teaching.

Being a teaching assistant for the course Introduction to Econometrics for many semesters has been truly rewarding. We are constantly exposed to statistical analyses on news. However, for many it takes training to critically process that information. For instance, the percentage of people buying ice cream among those wearing a red hat is different from the fraction of people wearing a red hat among those who bought ice cream. Although the wording is very similar for the two, understanding the difference would completely change the meaning of the reported statistic. I take joy in knowing that I was able to teach students important notions such as conditional probabilities or the difference between correlation and causation, which could help them in becoming a critical thinker. Although this was an introductory course, I often shared why the concepts I was teaching were relevant or important to researchers. Often towards the end of the semester, I would have a couple of students stay after class or come to my office hours and tell me how they appreciated this and that they were considering going to graduate school. It is times like this that I find rewarding.

The PhD level course I worked as a teaching assistant for had a different flavor than the undergraduate courses. It was the interaction with my colleagues that I enjoyed the most. In office hours I would often get questions that I had not thought about myself and together we would think about how to solve the question. This process connected me to my undergraduate years when I would work on hard problems with peers in a study group and at the same time had me realize that it is still this collaborative work on solving economic problems that excited me. I was also inspired often by the creative and brilliant answers when I was grading the homework. I can confidently say that I learned as much as I taught through my colleagues when I was a teaching assistant for this course.

Ironically, being a teaching assistant through the Covid times has made me a better teacher. Learning occurs both in class and out of class. When the university closed off its campus due to the pandemic, together with the professor, I set up an online discussion board since live interactions where students could ask questions were limited. Students posted all sorts of questions ranging from what they did not understand in lecture notes or their readings to concepts that could have been more elaborated during the prerecorded lectures. This gave me a peek at learning happening both during and outside class. Both the students and I could take more time identifying the cause of confusion because the online discussion board was not a live interaction. Even after in-person classes resumed, I advocated keeping the online discussion board and encouraging students to be

active on it. I made sure to monitor and answer the questions on the discussion board regularly, so the students understood they had someone reliable on the other side who will commit and take as much time to answer the questions as they did in articulating their questions.