

# Teaching Statement

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Education is my Aladdin's magic blanket. It has brought me from a small town in China to the great city of Beijing and now to my dream department to study from the leading figures in Applied Economics. Looking back, the indispensable factor in my journey is a row of great teachers who inspired me, helped me, and cheered for me along the way. Standing at the gate to becoming an educator, I believe that the best way to thank them is passing on their gift to future generations.

As an international student, overcoming the language and cultural barriers in teaching is the eternal theme in my pursuit of an academic career. How can I ever be like my teaching role models who foster vibrant class discussions and turn the classroom into an active learning playground, when words are not at my disposal and cultural unfamiliarity looms over my head? Working as a teaching assistant is the perfect stepping-stone to build confidence. It has allowed me to make mistakes with relatively low stakes and find my strengths in the process. When I sought ways to make the Friday afternoon PhD econometrics recitation attractive, I thought about practical study methods that proved helpful when I took the course. I organized ideas and concepts into charts and tables in a logical way, just as my high school teachers did when preparing us for the college entrance exam. With a diagram or a table as the framework, I took the students to the birds' eye view and mapped out core ideas with stories. To my surprise, this method received the most positive feedback from the students. Now, even though I am still constantly improving my English, at least I am sure I can meet the bottom line of helping students to learn in my special way.

Like many other international students, I came to study in the US as a pilgrim to cutting-edge educational principles. After studying in the US for three years, I had fully

experienced those principles as a student. Yet I lacked the insight into the rationale and philosophy behind them, which will be needed when I am in the teaching position. The Teaching in Higher Education course from the Preparing for Future Faculty program allowed me to formally study a variety of topics. Activities such as reflecting on the learning paradigm shift, discussing the use of technology, and jig-sawing alternative assessment strategies have broadened my horizon and deepened my understanding. Observing the instructors I assist is another way to learn the code of conduct. From Professor Hurley, I learned about the importance of meticulous course design and the power of compassion toward students in struggles. I witnessed how Professor Ritter infected the students with his passion for econometrics and R programming. I admire that Professor Glewwe would address all questions patiently and informatively.

Being an enthusiast in gardening, I enjoy the same fulfillment in teaching as nurturing a flower into bloom. Teaching means to live with a gardener's nurturing mindset, to be a caring person, to stand strong in the face of uncertainty, to appreciate imperfections, and to truly celebrate student success. Teaching is also reciprocal. I believe that learning is a spiraling ladder, and each repeated exposure accompanies new apprehension. Organizing and delivering knowledge not only benefits students but also brings me to a higher step on my learning ladder. Through the teaching assistant position, I had the chance to know the inspiring life stories of our students and to establish invaluable relationships. Teaching has become much more than a means to survive financially through graduate school. I will continue to build on my teaching profile by taking on more challenging teaching tasks. I will keep updating my teaching philosophy and skills through reflections on student progress and feedback, as well as learning from teaching experts and peers across disciplines.