Teaching Statement

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As a gardening enthusiast, I find that teaching is akin to nurturing a flower into bloom. When a gardener identifies the suitable climate for a seed and provides necessary soil nutrients, trellising, and pruning, the seed can freely express its genetics and thrive. When a teacher fosters a supportive environment and provides well-prepared materials, guidance, and feedback, students can connect with their inner drive to learn.

A garden experiences its ups and downs throughout the season influenced by uncontrollable natural factors. The most beautiful moments of teaching come from unpredictability and improvisation. At the end of the day, I hope the students find economics to be a valuable tool for understanding the world around us and that they develop critical thinking skills through the analysis of economic topics. Additionally, I want them to be equipped with a wealth of resources to draw upon as they continue to learn and apply economics in the future.

Spacing is crucial for garden design, just as students need space and time to think, explore, and express in class. An engaging class activates various parts of students' brains, including those for drawing, writing, speaking, and strategizing, as well as language processing. When I taught the Principles of Economics, students particularly enjoyed class experiments and team-based learning. In the fish market experiment, students played either the fisherman or fish buyers. They bargained exuberantly and genuinely lamented when the fisherman had to accept a price close to zero. Even the more reserved students enjoyed this playful interaction with their classmates. Through role-playing, students developed a deeper understanding of how the market functions, from which we further extended to topics such as sunk costs, inelastic supply, and the birth of the EU emissions trading system.

During team-based learning, students first work on a set of multiple-choice questions individually, submit their answers, and then form teams to uncover the correct answer hidden on a scratch paper. To win as a team, they needed to avoid scratching off the incorrect choices. Students practiced their debating skills while trying to convince their team members that their answers were correct. They highly valued the sense of community fostered by this regular activity. In each class, I allocated around 15 minutes for students to write or draw on a worksheet. They were often asked to draw a diagram related to the content we had just covered. Occasionally, I asked them to use this diagram to teach a nearby student what they had just learned. During this process, students practiced summarizing and corrected each other, ensuring that they were on the same page. This think-pair-share approach helped them internalize knowledge.

Plants grow the most at night, and most learning happens outside the classroom. This means that careful design of assignments goes a long way. I select short articles or news pieces, along with a few reflection questions, for students to read and answer before classes. This helps them to see the link between the textbook and the real world, generating excitement for the upcoming class. After class, they work on assignments that delve into more technical details, such as concepts, mathematical calculations, and case studies. I believe that learning occurs when

students are exposed to the same idea repeatedly, at different levels, and from different angles – much like climbing a spiraling ladder.

My approach to assessment naturally aligns with the idea of the spiraling ladder. Ideally, assessments should start early, occur frequently, be low-stake, and take various forms. Realistically, there is only a limited amount of time that teachers can spend on creating questions and grading. I find that a mix of frequent, completion-based assignments, regular low-stake problem sets, and exams with the option to overwrite a low exam grade works well to balance the needs of both students and the teacher.

A garden is most resilient when it has a diversity of plants. The key to inclusive course design is having an organized structure that facilitates students' executive functioning while remaining flexible to reasonable accommodations. Students appreciate having slides and assignments posted consistently on time and assessments aligned with learning objectives. I take proactive measures to ensure all students feel valued and supported, including making clear statements about inclusiveness and highlighting available resources to students with disabilities in the very first class. In terms of course content, I have featured the work of female economists, such as Melissa Dell and Elinor Ostrom, to inspire the girls in the Principles of Economics course. Additionally, I dedicated two class sessions on inequality and discrimination to show students how economics can be used to analyze these pressing issues. We learned about statistical discrimination through a class experiment and discussed the backfire of the "ban the box" movement.

Teaching is a craft that comes naturally to me despite language and cultural barriers. During my PhD studies, I was awarded the Outstanding Teaching Assistant honor for three consecutive years by the Department of Applied Economics. Multiple students stated in their evaluations that I was the "best TA ever." Upon teaching a full course for the first time at St. Olaf College, I received a thank-you note from the college expressing that I had helped foster a sense of belonging for first-year students.

"I enjoyed how the class was structured in an organized way. I always knew what to expect. Also, she was very helpful in explaining topics with real-life examples." – Comment from an undergraduate student.

"Ling was an exceptional TA. I found the material very challenging, and Ling's recitations organized the concepts very well for me. I especially appreciated it when she would make tables to show the similarities and differences between various econometric models. Her recitations were also always very well structured for the time given. She was also very helpful during office hours and available over email for questions." – Comment from a graduate student.

During graduate study, I took the 'Teaching in Higher Education' course as part of the 'Preparing for Future Faculty' program, which opened my eyes to proven teaching methods and philosophies. I am committed to further developing my teaching profile by taking on various teaching responsibilities. I will continually enhance my teaching skills by reflecting on student progress and feedback, as well as by learning from teaching experts and peers across different disciplines.