Date: October 20, 2017

To: Sangeeta Pratap, Associate Professor

From: Lisa George, Associate Professor

Re: Teaching Observation of Richard Nugent

You requested that I observe the teaching of adjunct instructor Richard Nugent. I attended a session of ECO221, Economic Statistics, on Friday, October 20. In addition, I reviewed a copy of the course syllabus and sample exam.

Overall, I found Prof. Nugent's class to be well-executed, with logical flow and clear materials. Prof. Nugent's has good classroom presence and kept student attention. His syllabus conforms to department standards for the topic and his sample exams were comprehensive and clear.

Some additional detail below:

Content

The class started with brief discussion of the upcoming exam and associated practice assignment. He encouraged students to visit the tutoring center in preparation for their exam, which I was pleased to see. The primary topic for the day was an introduction to discrete distributions, which began a new chapter for students. The first portion of the lecture covered definitions of important statistical concepts as applied to discrete distributions, such as expected value, variance, probability distribution functions and cumulative distribution functions. The lecture continued with the properties of the uniform distribution. Discrete distributions are a standard topic for an introductory statistics course, and I thought the pace and content was just right.

Approach

Prof. Nugent uses power point slides from the text supplemented with whiteboard notes for solving problems and annotating slides. He offered many intuitive examples throughout. I liked his technique of using markers to highlight elements of the power points, as this is much more effective than a pointer in helping students follow mathematical logic. Prof. Nugent is teaching in a renovated classroom with a good projector – unfortunately many Hunter classrooms would not support this effective teaching technique.

Student Engagement

Prof. Nugent held student attention well, and the majority of students were appeared to be following closely. The level of interaction was appropriate for the topic. A substantial number of students were late, with most arriving within 5 minutes of start time then a group arriving 30 minutes after start time. This is unfortunately a common problem with 9:45 classes and is very distracting. Some techniques that can help are marking homework late when students are late, conducting exam review at the beginning of class, and deducting class participation scores for late students. Sometimes I give a "warm-up" problem at the start of class, and students not present do not get credit. It's hard to stick with these strategies and students will tend to give lower ratings to professors who penalize lateness, but sometimes the strategies can make a useful difference.

Syllabus

The syllabus meets department standards for scope and content. It would be helpful to add chapter topics along with numbers for students using old versions of the textbook. Learning goals in the syllabus are appropriate to the course. However I suggest Prof. Nugent confer with Prof. Sevak or Prof. Deza before teaching this course again to ensure the learning goals remain up-to-date. (Learning objectives, especially links to CUNY Pathways, are likely to be updated.)

In sum, I enjoyed attending Prof. Nugent's class. Please let me know if there are questions on this evaluation.

Copy to:

Devra Golbe, Chair and Professor of Economics
Prof. Richard Nugent, Adjunct Professor of Economics