Date: October 20, 2017

To: Sangeeta Pratap, Associate Professor

From: Lisa George, Associate Professor Lisa N. George

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

Date: March 1, 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 ECO301, Intermediate Microeconomics, on Tuesday, February 28. Overall, I found Prof. Nugent's class to be well organized, informative and clear. Prof. Nugent was well prepared, with mastery of the material and thoughtful presentation. I found the language, notation and graphs all very precise and clear. In some cases, additional intuition for the calculus might be useful, as some student questions suggested less than full understanding of the analysis. But overall, I thought the level was appropriate to the course and well done. I hope the following comments are useful:

Content

The class started with recap of the consumer choice problem, then proceeded to derivation of the demand curve under varying preference assumptions including Cobb-Douglas, perfect substitutes and perfect complements. Professor Nugent plotted indifference curves and budget constraints, then described the optimal solution at the tangency point. He reviewed the technique of LaGrange multipliers used to solve constrained maximization problems. Consumer theory is a central topic in intermediate microeconomics and the teaching was at the right analytical level for the course.

Approach

Throughout the lecture, Prof. Nugent outlined and solved the consumer problem graphically, with calculus and with intuition. I was impressed by the clear and precise articulation of assumptions and careful notation. I would say that some additional emphasis on the intuition behind the calculus solution technique might have been useful, though the overall balance was about right.

Student Engagement

The class proceeded at a rather quick pace during the review period, then more slowly with new material. The majority of students were paying attention, with many fully absorbed in detailed notetaking. We know from experience that calculus-based microeconomics is a challenge for Hunter students, so it might be worthwhile to gauge student understanding with additional direct questions during class. However, the overall flow of the class was good. One student asked about the interpretation of the zero condition in solving the constrained optimization problem. This was nicely answered, but I suspected that some additional focus for the whole class on the intuition behind the LaGrange multiplier might have been useful.

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

Copy to:

Partha Deb, Acting Chair and Professor of Economics
Prof. Richard Nugent, Adjunct Professor of Economics

Teaching Observation Report

Observer:	Matthew Baker
Observee:	Richard Nugent
Date and time of observation:	Wednesday, October 14, 2015; 5:35pm
Class observed:	Eco 200: Introduction to Microeconomics

On the day of my visit, Richard began his lecture right on time. Visual inspection suggested that a majority of the students were in attendance. I chatted with a few students before class started to get a general feel for the course, and from this admittedly small sample, estimate that Richard is popular with his students, and has a feel for how to balance student workload with course depth and coverage. The lecture for the evening was a review for an impending midterm.

Evidently, Richard had already handed out some practice problems. At the beginning of class, he checked quickly whether students had done the problems, and then commenced with the review. Richard relied primarily upon the chalkboard for presenting the material. Richard proceeded at a deliberate pace. Although he was primarily working through an examples and associated calculations, it seems he has covered the ground well before his first midterm.

My overall assessment is that Richard is doing a fine job in the classroom. He is well-organized and has clearly thought about how best to present his material. I don't have any big ideas that Richard should follow through on, as he seems to have developed his own effective teaching style.

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October 28, 2014

Devra Golbe
Professor and Chair
Department of Economics

Devra:

I observed Richard Nugent teach Economics 200 to a large class of students on Tuesday, October 28. He used the class period to go over the first midterm exam. The content of the exam gave me a good sense of what Richard covered in the first third of the course. All the standard topics were covered at the appropriate level on the exam. The questions covered applications and calculations, as well as theoretical concepts.

Richard presented the material naturally and with confidence. I think he is an excellent teacher. He's the best adjunct from the Graduate Center that I've observed in about two decades.

Sincerely,

Kenneth J. McLaughlin
Associate Professor

TEACHING OBSERVATION REPORT

Observee: Richard Nugent
Observer: Matthew Baker

Observation Date: April 4th, 2014
Observation Course: Eco 221-Economic Statistics I

Richard teaches his class between 11:10 and 12:25 on Tuesdays and Fridays. I paid a visit to Steven's class on September 30th, and stayed for approximately 30 minutes. The class meets in the basement of the Hunter North building. Class was well-attended and started on time – in fact, as far as I could tell, every possible seat in the room was taken.

Richard began class by laying out several assignments and due dates, which he did in a plain and clear fashion. This suggests that he is well-organized and careful in defining what he expects from the students. In terms of lecture material, Richard's task for the day was to introduce the central limit theorem and explain its application. The general principle is quite difficult to explain (more on this below), but Richard explained the subject with care. He didn't linger on the general theory, but instead emphasized its application in statistics. He worked some examples of building confidence intervals with varying sample sizes to emphasize the point of his lecture.

Throughout his presentation, Richard did a nice job soliciting questions (and answers) from students, and students appeared engaged throughout. At one point, he paused the lecture while students worked out an example; this seemed to be an effective teaching device. His lecture style is primarily "chalk-and-talk", which imbued his lecture with what I thought was a good pace for the material. His presentation style and pace are easy to follow and I think he has made a very good decision in using the chalkboard, and not power point slides, in presenting the material.

Even from my brief visit, it is clear that Richard is well on his way to being a great teacher, and that we are lucky to have him at Hunter! He has an easy-going, relaxed style, and is easy to follow and understand. My only suggestion might be something he is already doing (especially if he does this in some lectures but not others!): use the computer in class to give students quick examples of some principles. Here is one example that I think goes a long way that I have used in my teaching to explain the central limit theorem. The idea is to quickly show the students what the CLT means and that it in fact works: 1) roll a six-sided dice 40 times (simulated in Excel) 2) Repeat the 40-roll experiment 100 times. 3) For each of the 100 40-roll data sets, calculate the mean. 4) Plot a histogram of the 100 means, which look approximately bell-shaped. From this example, students can see that "averages are approximately normally distributed" even though the data generation process – dice rolling – has nothing to do with a normal distribution.

Dr. Matthew J. Baker