Satyaki Chakravarty
Teaching Statement

I am passionate about teaching because it provides me immense joy when I see students enjoy, understand, and apply economics to explain real-world phenomena. Economics is about understanding trade-offs, an inevitable reality. But we as students fail to recognize this upfront. I consider myself the most fortunate teacher in the world who had the opportunity to be there for hundreds of excited students in their defining years of life and explain to them the fundamentals of economics that can be applied in every aspect of their careers. I take this responsibility with utmost seriousness.

I currently teach at Elon University which has a liberal arts setup of classes — about 33 students in each section, and I have previously taught at UNC Greensboro which has University style large lectures — about 150 students in each section. My approach is tailored to the two types of class sizes. However, regardless of class size, the most common issue that I find is that students do not respond to in-class questions due to the fear of wrong answers. To overcome this, I administer anonymous "low stakes" quick quizzes using a QR code. Anonymity takes away the fear of wrong answers. This informs me if my students understood the topic correctly. Students match their original response with the correct answer and explanation to clarify their understanding.

As an undergraduate, I struggled to understand and connect the theoretical aspects of economics and statistics to real-world examples. I took my own time to connect the mechanics of solving a problem to its conceptual understanding. To provide an example: I knew the calculation of consumer surplus or a z-score, but its meaning in a simple sentence, and its relation to the willingness to pay or its relation to statistical significance was unclear to me. They all were separate mechanical tasks to me. The use of calculators and functions in Excel aggravated the problem by allowing me to bypass the calculations that go in the background.

To make sure that my students do not see economic theory and the problems as disjoint, I always provide multiple examples in simple sentences and images and connect each advanced concept back to its roots, the first unit of economics and statistics. I always urge my students to use their understanding of the principles they learned from the first and second units throughout the course. Especially for statistics, I urge my students to use pen and paper to solve any problem, as a first attempt. Once they are comfortable, I let them verify their answers with calculators or Excel, if they really want to use them. My focus always stays on explaining and bridging the mechanics of solving a problem to the economic intuition it reflects.

One crucial difference between small and large class sizes is in-class activities. For smaller classes in a liberal arts setup, the scope to conduct such activities is ample and easier to manage. Prior to starting as a full-time instructor, I conducted recitation classes for several semesters. I bring my recitation experience to the smaller classes I teach and administer extensive in-class work. Guided in-class work complements homework by enhancing their understanding of connecting problems they solve to economic theories and the real world. For larger classes, I modify the "low stakes"

quick quiz that splits a large question into small chunks for students to answer step by step. They later encounter the same question in homework to consolidate the problem.

This brings us to an important teaching tool common to the U.S. teaching system — homework. As an undergrad, my performances were all determined by one examination. But, I believe a three-hour exam should not define a student's life. Instead, I make sure my students put in a consistent effort — one unit at a time. To achieve this, I carefully design homework and make them much more important and serious than exams. I explicitly mention this approach to my students — my emphasis on homework, and I reward them with their points back if they are interested in correcting their homework errors. This reward, I find is a popular tool that students use extensively. Their submission helps me understand if a student requires additional attention, and I usually call them during my office hours to cater to their understanding individually. I find individual attention highly appreciated.

Students with a variety of exposure to mathematics usually take principles of economics and statistics. This challenge to explain the concepts to a varied mix of students allowed me to test and improve my teaching skills. After every few weeks of teaching, I urge my students to critique my teaching approach and suggest ways to improve class participation and learning. Usually, students provide me with constructive feedback and I use that to modify my class conduct. This informal feedback from time to time has allowed me to cater to students' needs immensely. I consider myself fortunate to have received unconditional love from my students and this is what I want to do for the rest of my life.