STATEMENT OF TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

Teaching as a science requires a thorough understanding of the material, preparation, good communication skills, a well-organized course structure, and the implementation of an appropriate assessment method. Since my favorite pastime is to read up on material pertaining to economics, I find it enjoyable to prepare to teach my classes. I find that the more prepared I am, the better my ability to be a good communicator by articulating my thoughts into words that students understand. Some of my major teaching goals include training students to think critically and analytically, as well as helping students retain and apply the information from my class throughout their lifetime. In order to facilitate students’ understanding of economics, I use various examples, diagrams, stories and discussions that help them relate to the economic theories presented in class. I also occasionally discuss how certain issues they may have read in the newspaper or seen on television can be explained through economic theory. These real life examples, such as how a recession might prolong their job search and cause them to be cyclically unemployed when they graduate or how teenagers are impacted the most by increases in the minimum wages, inspire students to think critically. I constantly reference government and reliable private websites for the latest economic information to share with students. When discussing Business Cycles, I show them the Bureau of Economic Analysis website in class; when discussing the unemployment rate and the Consumer Price Index, I show them how to find these numbers on the Bureau of Labor Statistics website. The final chapter I cover in my Principles of Macroeconomics course challenges them to think critically as it discusses the pros and cons of five arguments of economic policy in an unbiased way. In my International Development Economics class, I direct them to the World Bank, United Nations and IMF’s websites to gather data and create graphs or tables based on this information. I also talk to them about my personal migration experience when teaching them the Harris-Todaro migration model. I have found that being an effective teacher involves helping students find a deep and personal real world connection to the economic theories presented in class. This personal connection enhances students’ learning, enabling them to be empowered with information.

The organization of my lectures and the class structure is also very important. I always provide students with a detailed course syllabus that gives them information on the topics that will be covered in class along with the tentative dates. All classroom rules and dates of exams are stated on the syllabus. Any deviations from the syllabus are announced in class and through Blackboard. In most of my classes, I provide students with partially filled PowerPoint slides (workbooks) for them to follow along with my lecture. I maintain and frequently update my Blackboard site which contains postings of the course syllabus, grades, a calendar (which includes scheduling announcements), practice questions, and links to economic websites of interest. All of these additional resources aim to assist the students from diverse educational backgrounds and different learning styles enrolled in my classes. I hold my students to high standards and ensure that they are assessed at the appropriate level. Students are assessed through numerous in-class exams, online quizzes, homework assignments, and projects. These assignments are created to enhance student learning and help them reflect on the material presented to them in the classroom.

Teaching can also be thought of as an art, particularly in large lectures, since it is important to present the material to students in a way that maintains student interest. Fortunately, fostering enthusiasm about the subject matter and keeping the classroom lively, enjoyable, and interactive comes naturally to me. I get students involved in the lectures through asking questions. While I inject humor to keep the classroom lively, I try to ensure that all jokes made in class are appropriate and do not target any particular student or group. I am really good in managing the classroom, and am particularly efficient in large enrollment
classes. I try to achieve a classroom atmosphere that is relaxed enough for students to feel comfortable in participating, but professional enough to minimize distractions and enable students to focus on the lecture. The learning experience should be as enjoyable to students as the teaching experience is to me.

I have always been a person to engage fully and perform to the best of my ability in any responsibilities given to me. I have been deeply committed in teaching and my interactions with students. I revived the dormant International Development Economics (ECON 505) course and created an Economics of Sustainable Economic (ECON 509) course at the University of South Carolina. To do so, I completed the necessary paperwork and obtained the approval from Faculty Senate for both the courses, with the help of my Departmental Chair. I first taught these courses in the Fall 2009 and Spring 2010 semesters respectively. Both of these courses have become high demand courses, with ECON 505 now being offered every semester and filling up to classroom capacity within the first few days of enrollment. This course also fulfills the international requirement for all undergraduate Business majors, serving a broad population of Business majors, and is also enrolled by Master’s students in Economics and International Business (MIB). Both ECON 505 and ECON 509 are approved courses for the “Graduation with Leadership Distinction” offered by the University of South Carolina, with the former fulfilling the “Global Learning” category and the latter fulfilling the “Community Service” category.

I am very passionate about encouraging students to engage in undergraduate research. To this extent, I require research projects in my upper-level economics courses. In my International Development Economics course, undergraduate students are to write a paper and present a poster about an economic issue faced by a developing economy. They are required to tie in the economic theory and indicators presented to them in class with their research project. In my Sustainable Development course, students are required to complete a “Green Technology Project” whereby they have to propose a green project and calculate the economic, as well as environmental, costs and benefits of this project and prove that their proposed green technology is cost-competitive and environmentally superior to existing technology. I meet individually with all the students in my office to discuss their ideas and give them input on my expectations. The trash compactor was adopted at the Student Union as a result of my student’s projects from this class and is now used throughout campus. Other projects they have presented include solar powered lights, recycling bins, energy efficient overhead light bulbs, energy efficient exit sign lighting, water saving faucet heads, increased use of recycled paper, improvements in heating efficiency, improvements in bus service leading to a reduction in car trips, carpool lanes, a reduction of bus idling times, parking apps that enable drivers to efficiently find open lots, and solar ivy parking lots. Graduate students in both of these classes are required to complete more extensive research projects with regression analyses of data. These projects enable students to connect the information presented to them in class with the real world, giving students the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the material. Learning should occur both within the classroom, as well as beyond the classroom.

A few years ago, I received an Integrative Learning grant from the Center of Teaching Excellence for conduct an experiential learning project dealing with emissions from the transportation sector in my Sustainable Development class. After completing the project and fulfilling the grant requirements, I won second place in the “Best in Class” teaching awards judged by the National Economics Teaching Association for my idea. I am currently assessing the effectiveness of this experiential learning project and presenting a paper at the American Economist Association’s (AEA) Conference on Teaching and Learning in Economics Education (CTREE) this year. I created a project for students in my Principles of Macroeconomics course while working with the undergraduate economics society to help students understand the weakness of the Consumer Price Index by creating their own expenditure basket. This exercise was published in the Journal of Economics Teaching in 2016. I also created instructor resources
Teaching has allowed me to take part in a very important responsibility - shaping the intellectual development of the future generation. This is a vital task that I pursue earnestly. In order to be a more effective teacher, I am continuously improving and experimenting with new technology in instruction and assessment. A couple of years ago, I recorded some short videos that contain solutions to practice problems from the workbook and introduced the use of “virtual office hours” with my students. The virtual office hours are scheduled once a week as well as the nights before exams when I chat virtually with students about the course material (while drawing graphs or solving equations if necessary). I have many students log-on, especially the nights before exams, to clarify questions that they might have about the lecture material. Exam reviews through virtual office hours allow students the flexibility to be able to participate from any location by logging on with their phones or computers. I also request informal feedback from my students and act upon this by incorporating these new ideas and approaches into my classes. Students are encouraged to approach me with questions or ideas, either during class or outside class. For example, a student mentioned how he would like my classroom to be more interactive and based on this input, I introduced the use of “i-clickers” in my principles classes in spring 2014. As a result of the introduction of i-clickers, classroom participation and attendance increased dramatically. Not only was I one of the earliest adopters of i-clickers in the Business School, I also provided other faculty members with i-clicker training sessions as we are moving towards adopting i-clickers in almost all the large introductory Economics and Accounting classes. I also adopted i-clickers in my International Development class last year. I create the majority of the i-clicker questions and place them within partially filled PowerPoint notes that I provide to my students. It takes very careful planning to create these partially filled PowerPoint slides while ensuring that the i-clicker questions are placed in the correct order within slides to ensure that students are continuously quizzed as the is presented to them. After experimenting with MyEconLab, a new interactive online tool aimed at fostering student learning, as an additional learning tool in my Principles of Macroeconomics classes from 2014-2015, I started using a different learning tool, MindTap, in fall 2016. While there are challenges associated with new technology, I will continue to work towards finding ways to use these innovations in a way that is beneficial for my students to learn.

To develop my teaching skills, I participate in teaching workshops and conferences. In addition, I devote time towards referring to various sources (such as websites and books) that offer teaching tips. I have participated in the Teaching Innovations Program sponsored by the American Economist Association’s (AEA) Committee on Economic Education (CEE), which offered specific techniques of incorporating interactive teaching and learning into university economics courses, and have also participated in a research project titled “Efficiency in the Use of Technology in Economic Education”. I have attended and presented at the AEA’s CTREE the past three years.

While given this valuable opportunity to teach young minds to think critically and analyze complex situations, I believe I have a personal responsibility to teach my classes in a way that not only supports the mission of the university, but also meets students’ needs while fostering their learning and developing their critical thinking skills. I am fortunate to be in a profession where I can have such a profound impact on society, a profession in which I will never stop learning, one that enables me to continuously grow and improve.