Teaching Statement

Hard work in the form of preparation is essential to achieving an effective learning environment. I believe classroom preparation must begin with the syllabus and continue through to every assignment and lecture. After going through the syllabus on the first day, I want the students to understand exactly what I expect from them and the ground rules for how to succeed in my class. I work hard in preparation to make sure I am achieving the standards I set for myself in every class I teach. I believe the effort that I take into the classroom is what earned me an average of 3.9 out of 4 on my course evaluations for both of my first two classes, Introduction to Macroeconomics and Intermediate Macroeconomics. Both of those ratings were well above the department average, ranging from 3.2 to 3.3, and the college average ranging from 3.3 to 3.4.

In order to be an effective teacher, I need to ensure that I am able to convey my knowledge to the students in a way they understand. To stay fresh and current with the subject matter and to provide relevant and entertaining examples, I consistently revisit the material for each lecture. I like to use current economic topics in the news as examples of things I discuss to show the relevance of the subject matter and to stimulate discussion. I try to ensure that in every class I engage students beyond pure lecture. I use slides when I think it makes sense, but I also require students to take notes from the board to emphasize certain points. I want students working in the classroom. I like to mix in small and relevant videos during class to stimulate them and give them a break from straight lecture. For example, when I teach New Keynesianism philosophy versus Neo-Classical philosophy, I play clips of economic speeches from Presidents Barack Obama and Ronald Reagan. Most students have never listened to speeches from either, and allowing the Presidents’ own words to draw the contrasts between the two often-competing viewpoints helps them learn more effectively. I put a lot of time into the coordination and presentation of my lecture material to make it as clear, concise, and engaging as possible.

In order to facilitate learning, a teacher must work to make students feel comfortable asking questions and coming to them with problems or extra help. I try to make sure students see me as more than the person who tells them what they need to know to pass. I try to make the classroom as comfortable and enjoyable as possible without sacrificing learning by injecting short stories or taking a few minutes out of lecture to see what students do outside the classroom. I arrive at class early to give students a chance to ask questions about the material or just talk. For levity, I play a short clip from the Monty Python group titled, "Silly Job Interview," when I introduce labor. Within bounds, I want to keep students
entertained and make them relaxed enough to learn. I want the students to understand I am their instructor, but as a teacher I want them to know I care about them and their performance in the classroom.

Lastly, it is important to me as a teacher to continually put effort into ensuring I have a fair grading system that rewards hard work. I structure my grading so that the students who do all the work I ask of them control about a quarter of their grade. I give routine extra credit quizzes to reward attendance. I believe in grading assignments by the effort I see even if the answer isn’t completely correct. I want to encourage hard work by rewarding it. In the end, I want students to understand that while I will grade them fairly based on their work, I am also pulling for them and willing to work hard for them.