

Statement of Teaching Philosophy

Even today, I can still remember that very moment: the thrill and fulfillment I experienced from being a teacher for the very first time. Back in junior high, our math teacher once left the class due to a family emergency, and I was designated the “substitute teacher” by the class to elaborate on the remaining subject. I stepped on the platform and stood against the blackboard, showing everyone the tricks that I proudly found from our math exercises. Since that very moment, I started my long journey in pursuit of teaching. Along the way, I am very lucky to have exemplary teachers in the classroom and devoted mentors to students and professions. It is with those model educators that I form the following cornerstones of my teaching philosophy, working towards more effective teaching and learning.

Stay relevant, stay applicable. The first thing I have learnt in teaching is that students learn best when they make personal connections with the content conveyed. While concepts present ideas in the most accurate and concise way, it takes various real-world contexts for students to grasp the essentials. I adapt Authentic and Active Learning practices in my teaching and craft applied assignments to integrate knowledge and skills with the authenticity to better motivate and engage learners. Students in the Introduction to Commerce course apply management tactics in their own career plan and personal finance. Students in the Economics principles course apply economic theories to real world events in their news reflection essays. Students in the Excel application course finish an infographic on agricultural and food issues. In the Agribusiness Management course, each student creates a business plan for their own entrepreneurial idea. In the Food Economy course of Fall 2020, the class designed, launched, and analyzed a UA Food Insecurity survey, collaborating with the UA Campus Pantry and the Office of Assessment and Research. The project was reported by the Arizona Daily Wildcat entitled “[Food insecurity among UA students doubled during the pandemic](#)” in April 2021. Students in the Agribusiness Financial Management course work in teams to tackle Harvard Business School (HBS) cases and conduct a thorough financial analysis on a publicly traded company. When students relate the content with the application, interests are stimulated, questions are raised, an active learning environment is present thus deeper learning takes place.

Be challenging and supportive. I communicate two messages on my first day of classes: first, I thrive to be a teacher that is challenging and supportive; second, the whole class, including myself, is a learning community and we are in the course together. The first semester that I start teaching at the University of Arizona, one student wrote “*challenge me*” in the background survey. Reading it confirmed my belief in challenging students to fulfill their best potential. Coming into my classes, students expect a demanding course with high standards. Meeting the challenges are never easy. That is when my supportive approach and the sense of learning community comes in. I approach each class as a learning community, where all students feel safe, welcomed, and motivated to share and contribute to our learning experience. Informed by the Affect Theory, I realize the necessary and inevitable influences of affect and feeling on pedagogy. The sense of being respected, caring, and ultimately belonging awakens students’ intrinsic values therefore a sustained commitment to learn.

I build class learning communities by taking down barriers and cultivating trust. From day one, I make my intention of building our learning community explicit and prioritize “Who are we in our learning community?”. Together, we map out some demographics of our learning community and by the end of the first day or week, I would have made myself and my approach clear, learned my students’ preferred name, and listened to, and talked with each student publicly or privately. My students will have met the community members they are going to work with during the next few months, know that

they will be challenged to work towards their potentials, and understand that I will always be there to support them. After the first few cracks on learning barriers, I then intentionally weave in activities to build trust throughout the semester. I begin all my class sessions with two things: check in with asking “How is everyone today?” and respond to students’ Note Card questions from the previous class session (index cards that are collected at the end of each class session; it would be the Chat questions in the Live Online modality). The regular check-ins do not aim to solve or make better but allow us to surface and feel together as a learning community. I discuss confusing points to not only clarify the content but also makes students’ voices heard. In addition, midterm feedback surveys are conducted anonymously in all my courses. A summary report is shared and discussed in class, and most of the time, changes are made based on student feedback. At the end of a course, we take a group picture to celebrate our time together. During the past year when all of us were challenged by the pandemic and brutal realities of social injustice, it became even clearer to me that an open and inclusive learning environment should have top priority in course design – it is critical to the learning of underserved students and necessary for the rest. It is my goal to create an open, safe, and supportive learning environment where all students could challenge themselves and learn outside of their comfort zone.

Be professional and personable. A true educator always goes beyond teaching a course to cultivate students’ personal development and prepare students for their career and dreams. I model myself to be the professional that I aspire my students to be. I believe intentional course design would gradually shape students’ professional conducts. I present the syllabus as a contract to stimulate the sense of responsibility in students. I ask students to develop and maintain a time budget to exercise time management. I respond to and make changes based on student feedbacks to demonstrate constant learning and improving. I use innovative assignments like an immersive Project Manager and Private Contractor model to allow students practice leadership as well as professional and effective communications in team environments. Ultimately, student growth as a person and a professional show the value of education. The internal reward to the educator is beyond expression.

Keep learning and innovating. I approach course design as a skill that I keep improving and see myself as an educator who is also a student and innovator in teaching and learning. I make sure to listen to and learn from my students first. I conduct several formative assessments throughout a semester, including expectation survey, mid-term feedback survey, and finals reflection. In addition, I innovate through scholarship of teaching and learning. Despite having no formal research appointment, in the past four years, I published five teaching research articles, two teaching commentaries, and one teaching method article in double-blind peer-reviewed journals. According to the [AgEcon Search](#), six of my published teaching articles have been downloaded a total of 944 times as of June 2021.

In conclusion, I thank my students. It is their feedback that guide me to improve. It is their nodding in confirmation, passionate work and efforts that deepen my love of teaching. As a return, I strive to equip all students with solid knowledge and exquisite skills to enter the professional world, meeting the challenges they are facing, and we are facing.