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Statement of Teaching Effectiveness

Drawing on my experience in serving as the instructor of record for Intermediate Microeconomics, and as a teaching assistant for several undergraduate and graduate courses in economics, I have developed a broad perspective on effective instruction. My teaching evaluations consistently highlight three key areas where my teaching has the greatest impact: breaking down complex material into clear, structured explanations, creating interactive learning environments that encourage collaboration and engagement, and offering accessible academic support that helps students succeed. These responses align with my broader approach to teaching – helping students develop intuition alongside technical skills and recognizing economics as a mathematical and experimental social science crucial for informed social policy, structuring participation to reduce disparities in engagement, and ensuring that support is available in multiple forms.[1] In this statement, I discuss how I approach each of these areas in practice, using feedback as a lens to reflect on my effectiveness in the classroom. Each section includes quantitative metrics and student testimonials that validate my approach, revealing how my methods have helped students develop confidence in economic reasoning while creating an inclusive learning environment. A full summary of quantitative evaluations and a link to all evaluations can be found at the end of this statement.

Clarity in Explanation and Conceptual Understanding

My teaching emphasizes conceptual clarity, ensuring that students build a deep understanding of economic reasoning before tackling more advanced technical material. I do this by breaking down complex concepts into manageable steps, reinforcing learning through guided practice, and ensuring that students develop intuition before moving to independent problem-solving. For example, when teaching constrained optimization, I scaffold the learning process by first guiding students through the foundational steps – writing a budget constraint, identifying the slope, calculating marginal utilities, and setting up the Lagrange function – before asking them to apply these steps independently. By integrating formative activities and assessments with summative practice, I ensure that students receive frequent feedback and have opportunities to solidify their understanding before engaging with higher-stakes assessments. This approach also allows me to assess student understanding in real time, as I observe them working through problems individually and collaboratively. By identifying common stumbling blocks, I can adjust my instruction on the spot to address areas where students struggle before they move on to independent problem-solving. Student evaluations affirm the impact of this approach, with consistently high ratings for statements such as **"The TA explained concepts in ways that supported my learning"** (on average, **96%** responded with "frequently/very frequently" across the five most recent teaching assignments) and **"The TA organized sections/lab meetings well"** (on average, **96%** responded with "frequently/very frequently" across the five most recent teaching assignments).[2] Selected qualitative feedback:

"Gagandeep had a very targeted approach to helping us refine our understanding of the ma-

[1] You can read more about my teaching philosophy in my teaching philosophy statement on my teaching website, linked at the end of this document.

[2] All reported percentages exclude students who responded to a particular statement with "unable to comment." Please read the section on Summary of Quantitative Feedback at the end of this statement for more details.

terial. Primarily by making sure we understood what was expected through assignments."

"During his sections he would have us participate in solving the questions and would guide us through a definition or equations when we didn't understand what it meant. And he would solve each question out step by step while writing down when the equation/process would be used."

"Gagandeep is extremely good at teaching intermediate microeconomics. His sections are well structured and he cultivates a welcoming environment that encourages student participation. He seems invested in his students and to genuinely care about their success. His teaching methods helped boost my confidence and helped me succeed in this class. He was able to break down concepts in ways to where I actually understood course material instead of just going through the motions of solving problems using set equations."

"It was really helpful when he would call on us to explain the next step or define something because it helped me actively recall material and helped me feel like I understood the material."

"The format of sections were very well organized – going through a slideshow every week to study concepts, which were outlined at the beginning of the slideshow itself. It helped very much to understand what our learning goals were, and the practice examples themselves were very informative!"

Student Engagement and Inclusive Learning

I am to structure each class session to ensure that all students can actively and meaningfully engage with course material in ways that directly connect to the course's learning outcomes. In-class activities incorporate both individual problem-solving and collaborative group work, allowing students to develop their own understanding while also learning through discussion and shared reasoning. For instance, in Applied Econometrics, I use collective code-building exercises to help students develop a structured approach to data analysis and statistical modeling. Rather than providing fully written code for students to replicate, I introduce coding tasks incrementally, prompting students to collectively anticipate, experiment with, and implement each step. This process reinforces problem-solving strategies, encourages deeper engagement with the material, and helps students build confidence in applying coding techniques independently. Similarly, in Intermediate Microeconomics, I use a group-based learning activity to teach utility maximization and the properties of demand functions. Each student in a group is assigned a specific role –solving an optimization problem, connecting the solution to a graphical representation, or interpreting the economic intuition – and groups present their findings to the class. This activity ensures that students practice reasoning across multiple modalities – words, equations, and visuals – which both deepens conceptual understanding and reduces disparities in engagement. Students have typically found this approach to be quite helpful, with consistently high ratings for questions like **"Section meetings/labs included opportunities for students to contribute and interact"** (**96%** across the five most recent teaching assignments) and **"The TA provided sufficient support and encouragement for my participation in sections/labs"** (**96%** across the five most recent teaching assignments).

Selected qualitative feedback:

"I enjoyed how he encouraged us to participate in section, whether it was writing on the board

or writing code on a collaborative Google Doc."

"Gagandeep Sachdeva also made us pass around a talking stick to answer what step/ method of the question we do. This made me stay on my toes and be engaged with the material even if we would say the wrong thing Gagandeep would help guide us and learn our mistakes in a way that didn't make us scared to make mistakes."

"Did a great job solving problems using examples unrelated to the specific problem to further students' understanding of concepts. Encouraged participation and helped students stay engaged and gain confidence."

Academic Support, Accessibility, and Encouragement

Creating a supportive learning environment means more than just being available during office hours – it requires ensuring that students feel comfortable reaching out when they need help. This is informed by general approach to teaching and mentorship: I work to build trust with my students, encourage open communication, and try to reduce the barriers that often prevent students from seeking help. I do this by normalizing help-seeking behaviors early on.[3] I make it clear from the first week of class that questions –whether basic clarifications or more advanced discussions – are not only welcome but expected. I intentionally structure class discussions, problem-solving sessions, and review activities so that students have regular, low-stakes opportunities to ask questions, rather than feeling that they can only do so during designated office hours. Beyond structured class time, I ensure that my approachability extends outside the classroom. I keep office hours flexible, but more importantly, I work to make office hours feel informal and accessible, so that students don't hesitate to show up. Students have responded positively to this approach, both in terms of an uptick in terms of office hours attendance, and consistently high ratings for statements like **"The TA made me feel as though I could succeed in this class"** (**98%** across the five most recent teaching assignments) and **"The TA was available in scheduled office hours or by appointment outside of class time (whether or not I attended office hours)"** (**98%** across the five most recent teaching assignments).

Selected qualitative feedback:

"Gagandeep was extremely helpful in guiding us through the homework material and the general course. His mannerisms, presentation of information, and how he explained it were top–notch. He was extremely helpful during office hours and went out of his way to help. His section material supplemented the class very well."

"Gagandeep is super friendly and approachable. Felt like I could ask a question whenever. And whenever I did, he was helpful."

"Best TA ever‼ He is incredible engaging and kind. He is always willing to help even if that means scheduling extra sessions."

"I also wanted to say thank you for all of your help this quarter with the econ 201 course. I really appreciate that you went out of your way to make sure everyone understood concepts, took extra time to teach us in the study room, and even held online classes while sick and gave

[3] Research in STEM fields shows that stigma around help-seeking is a barrier to student success for marginalized students (by gender and race), and that the messaging around help-seeking matters.

us an online option while we were sick. I also appreciate your approachability, I am typically pretty shy but I never felt hesitant to ask questions during or outside of section."

Mentorship

Beyond my own teaching, I contribute to fostering inclusive pedagogical practices for my fellow educators at the department level, by leading workshops for instructional teams supporting high-impact, high-enrollment required courses in the Economics curriculum. These high-impact courses typically also see large gaps in proficiency across students, and as a Graduate Pedagogy Fellow, the workshops I design and lead are intended to support instructional teams to utilize practices shown from the literature to reduce gaps in proficiency and ensure student success for all students, especially in areas of the curriculum that present more challenges for them. In these workshops, we focus on creating scaffolded, active learning activities for concepts and skills that students tend to struggle with and that hold them back from progressing in the major. Feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive, with participants highlighting the practical strategies they can implement in their classrooms that improve student engagement. Additionally, as a peer mentor for the Teaching and Learning Center's Summer GSI Support Team, I have worked with graduate instructors across disciplines to design equitable courses, providing feedback on course syllabi in many disciplines to incorporate universal design, culturally responsive pedagogy, and equitable assessment practices. These experiences have reinforced my belief that inclusive teaching requires not just adopting best practices but fostering an ongoing dialogue about equity-centered pedagogy.

Selected qualitative feedback:

> "The introduction of a pedagogy-focused teacher training in the department really motivated me to rethink how I approach teaching. As a fairly experienced TA, I was stuck in a rut going through concepts that had become, to me, very repetitive and preparing for sections had become quite a monotonous task for me. However, these workshops gave me ideas to how to prepare for sections differently and make it more interesting. For example, while teaching my students about production costs, I conducted an exercise wherein I asked the students to come up with their own business ideas and frame a cost table, based on a specific rubric that I provided. These and other active learning exercises have helped me to engage with my students more and it seems to be helping them too."
>
> "I think you did a great job at getting people engaged with methods of active learning. We expect the students to learn by doing and you helped us understand that we learn (how to lead sections better) by doing too, while underscoring the importance of planning out a section."

Conclusion

My approach to teaching is rooted in clarity, engagement, and accessibility – ensuring that students not only learn economic concepts but also develop the confidence to apply them. Through structured explanations, interactive problem-solving, and multiple avenues for academic support, I aim to create a learning environment where students can actively engage with material, deepen

their understanding, and take ownership of their learning. Student evaluations consistently affirm the effectiveness of these strategies, and I consciously try to iteratively improve my pedagogical practices based on the feedback I receive.

Summmary of Quantitative Feedback

The table below summarizes student evaluations of my teaching across multiple courses, reporting the percentage of respondents who responded "very frequently" or "frequently" to each statement about my effectiveness. Student evaluations of teaching (SETs) at UCSC typically ask students to rate their teaching assistants for each statement in the first column on a five point scale, ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (very frequently), with a sixth category ("unable to comment"). These results provide insight into how students experience my teaching, but they should be interpreted with two important caveats. First, response rates vary significantly across courses, as evaluations are not mandatory. In several cases, only a small proportion of students completed the survey, meaning that the results may not fully capture the perspectives of all students in a given class. Second, in calculating the percentages, I excluded students who selected "unable to comment," since it is difficult to make meaningful inferences about my teaching effectiveness based on such responses. In most cases, students who respond with "unable to comment" are also those students who did not attend a majority of sections, as inferred from per-respondent reports. You can find the full set of my teaching evaluations for TAships here. You can also read feedback from my asynchronous online offering of intermediate microeconomics (as a Graduate Student Instructor), feedback from the professional development workshops for graduate teaching assistants that I facilitated, statement of teaching philosophy, and other aspects of my teaching on my teaching page.

Summary of Teaching Evaluations (TAships)

COURSE	Introductory Microeconomics	Applied Econometrics I	Intermediate Microeconomics	Intermediate Microeconomics	Introductory Macroeconomics	Intermediate Microeconomics	Applications in Microeconomics	Industrial Organization	Intermediate Microeconomics	Economic Rhetoric	Introductory Microeconomics	Introductory Microeconomics
Quarter	Winter 2025	Fall 2024	Spring 2024	Winter 2024	Fall 2023	Fall 2022	Spring 2022	Winter 2022	Fall 2021	Summer 2021	Spring 2021	Winter 2021
Level	Introductory	Graduate	Intermediate	Intermediate	Introductory	Intermediate	Graduate	Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate	Introductory	Introductory
Modality	In-Person	In-Person	In-Person	In-Person	In-Person	Hybrid	In-Person	Remote	Remote	Remote	Remote	Remote
CLARITY IN EXPLANATION AND CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING												
The TA explained concepts in ways that supported my learning	78%	100%	100%	100%	100%	91%	50%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
The TA was able to answer my questions and clear up misunderstandings about the course material and concepts.	88%	100%	100%	100%	100%	82%	50%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
The TA organized sections/lab meetings well.	89%	100%	100%	100%	92%	82%	50%	86%	100%	100%	100%	100%
STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND INCLUSIVE LEARNING												
Activities during sections were well structured and had clear goals.	80%	100%	100%	100%	92%	89%	50%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Section meetings/labs included opportunities for students to contribute and interact.	78%	100%	100%	100%	100%	91%	50%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
The TA provided sufficient support and encouragement for my participation in sections/labs.	78%	100%	100%	100%	100%	91%	50%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
ACADEMIC SUPPORT, ACCESSIBILITY, AND ENCOURAGEMENT												
When needed, the TA was able to help me prepare for assignments (papers, quizzes, exams).	77%	100%	100%	100%	100%	82%	50%	100%	100%	100%	100%	90%
The TA made me feel as though I could succeed in this class.	88%	100%	100%	100%	100%	91%	50%	100%	100%	100%	100%	90%
The TA provided useful feedback on my assignments if part of the TA duties.	75%	94%	100%	100%	100%	82%	50%	100%	100%	100%	100%	80%
The TA was available in scheduled office hours or by appointment outside of class time (whether or not I attended office hours.)	88%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Response Rate	21/182 (11.54%)	17/19 (89.47%)	9/115 (7.83%)	6/44 (13.64%)	17/159 (10.69%)	14/114 (12.28%)	2/13 (15.38%)	11/51 (21.57%)	3/42 (7.14%)	7/32 (21.87%)	11/299 (3.68%)	11/390 (2.82%)