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Statement of Teaching Effectiveness

1 Teaching History

This is my fifth semester of teaching at the University of Georgia. I have taught Public Sector Economics (Econ 4300) five times and Urban Economics (Econ 4850) two times. Both of these classes are upper division electives, which emphasize economic intuition, mathematical modeling (graphical and using calculus), and econometric applications. In addition, I have offered an independent tutorial class in Spatial Economics, which has been taken by two students over the summer semester. I was the instructor of record for Economics 4800, the economics department internship class, for one student.

In addition to my standard teaching load, I have supervised 15 senior thesis papers. The University of Georgia requires all undergraduate economics majors to write a twenty page research thesis in order to graduate. During my first academic year at the University of Georgia, I supervised the thesis “Sand in the Wheels of Commerce: The Economic Impact of the Financial Transaction Tax” (by Robert “Jake” McBride), which was selected as the best senior thesis from more than two-hundred written papers.

In the past, I was also a graduate student instructor (GSI). As a GSI at the University of Michigan and the University of California, Berkeley, I have taught, Econ 101: Principles of Microeconomics, Econ 102: Principles of Macroeconomics, Econ 402: Intermediate Macroeconomic Theory, Econ 113: American Economic History, and Econ 115: The World Economy in the 20th Century.

2 Teaching Awards

As part of the UGA Career Center’s annual Post Graduation Survey, the university asks graduates to identify UGA faculty or staff who have had a significant positive impact on their career decision-making process. I was recognized by a 2013 UGA graduate as “a person who has contributed greatly to their career development and success.” For my discussion sections taught during the Fall 2008 and Winter 2009 semesters at the University of Michigan, I received a Letter of Commendation for Teaching Excellence from the Department of Economics. This award is given each semester to the ten GSIs who are most highly rated by their students in the end-of-semester course evaluations. There were approximately a total of 55 GSIs who taught for the department each semester.

3 Course Evaluations: Numerical Summary

The Office of Evaluations at the University of Georgia conducts online course evaluations; students are asked to answer twenty-five questions. In the table below, I report the results of three of the questions asked in the online survey; the first two questions are used for merit reviews and for promotion and tenure decisions. The complete set of teaching evaluations are available on request. The University of Georgia does not release the University-wide average for each question. However, as a reference, I calculate and report the averages for the department of economics – across all professors and lectures – for calendar year 2013. The statements that students were asked to rate me on that I report below include:

Q5: Overall, the course was excellent.

Q13: Overall, the instructor was effective at teaching.

Q20: I learned a lot in this course.

The possible responses, with values in parentheses are “strongly agree” (5), “agree” (4), “neutral” (3), “disagree” (2), and “strongly disagree” (1).

For almost every semester, I scored better on Q5 and Q13 than the economics department averages. As is evident, students consistently score me between “strongly agree” and “agree” with regard to being an excellent teacher. The majority of students rate me a (5) on these questions. The one exception to this was my first semester teaching at the University of Georgia. Since that semester, I improved my scores and my courses. My scores in both the urban economics and public economics courses are similar.

Teaching Evaluation Scores – Highest Possible Score: 5					
Semester	Course	Q5	Q13	Q20	Response Rate
Fall 2012	Public Economics	3.41	3.70	3.89	82%
Spring 2013	Public Economics	4.00	4.53	4.40	83%
Spring 2013	Urban Economics	4.27	4.64	4.64	73%
Summer 2013	Spatial Economics	-	-	-	0%
Fall 2013	Public Economics	4.29	4.71	4.57	50%
Spring 2014	Public Economics	4.08	4.50	4.58	86%
Spring 2014	Urban Economics	4.08	4.67	4.67	80%
Spring 2014	Internship Class	-	-	-	0%
2013	UGA Department Average	4.04	4.31	n/a	47%

4 Course Evaluations: Student Comments

4.1 Comments on the Course

- “Dr. Agrawal forced us to understand and apply economic concepts to solve problems. Most importantly, the paper forced me to locate and communicate economic data. ... Being able to analyze data and effectively communicate analysis to somebody else is the most critical skill to have coming out of school with an Economics degree. Dr. Agrawal is the first teacher in the Econ department to force me to do these things well.” (S13, Urban)
- “The exams were fair and did a good job separating students who had thoroughly prepared from those that had only marginally prepared.” (S13, Urban)
- “I think that Dr. Agrawal does a fantastic job of stimulating interest in the information in the course. This was easily the best class I have taken in the economics department. I like Dr. Agrawal’s courses because he is the only professor who meaningfully relates the course material to the real world. Everything is grounded in application and the subject matter is very interesting. Urban economics was fascinating to me in a way that no other econ class can come close to.” (S14, Urban)
- “I enjoyed being taught with empirical studies and examples, which was new for me.” (F12, Public)
- “The course overall has been the most interesting economics course I have taken. The subject matter and class lectures were always intriguing to me, and I felt them to be very useful, as the course helped me to further understand current events I was interested in. I enjoyed how clearly and logically the course seemed to be organized. It was always clear how each lecture related to the previous one and what would be important from each particular lecture to know for the following lecture.” (F12, Public)
- “I would take another class with him again if I could. I learned more in this class than any other class in college I would say.” (F12, Public)
- “I personally used concepts that I learned in the course already.” (S13, Public)
- “The class was taught very well, and even things that I thought would be boring (studying taxes) were proven to be rather interesting.” (F13, Public)
- “The outline and organization of the material was top notch, as always with this professor. He studies what he teaches and he enjoys what he studies.” (S14, Public)

4.2 Comments on the Instructor

- “Dr. Agrawal is a great teacher because he expects each student to work for their grade. Not many of the professors I’ve had... have that expectation. This is something for which I sometimes resented Dr. Agrawal for when work in other classes piled up, but for which I ultimately found to be his strongest quality as an instructor. One of the best teachers in the department and should be recognized as such.” (S13, Urban)
- “Dr. Agrawal was always available for help and guidance at office hours. ... He made a point to welcome students in, answer questions, and think through problems with students. I would recommend his course to other students with the caveat that his multiple choice questions are tricky!” (S13, Urban)
- “This is actually the second class I have taken with this instructor and I would take another one. I liked that we were shown visual images to help us understand the materials. Overall I do not see any room for improvement.” (S14, Urban)
- “Professor Agrawal was really enthusiastic and passionate about the class, which definitely translated into my passion as a student.” (S14, Urban)
- “The professor is one of the most knowledgeable professors I have had so far at UGA. His expertise in the field of Public Economics translated into a class that was well planned and executed. Professor Agrawal also encouraged discussion in his class.” (F12, Public)
- “Dr. Agrawal was extremely helpful in office hours and during/after class. He organized the flow of the class in a way that topics built on one another, and we often discussed topics in the view of current political or media speculation in a very interesting way. Would take another class with him if I had the opportunity.” (F12, Public)
- “His emphasis on critiquing academic research was valuable knowledge to completing my senior thesis. This shows that he was an effective teacher both in public sector but also applying economic tools to other fields too. The grading is actually not very tough because the system rewards hard and consistent work throughout the course.” (F13, Public)
- “Allowed group discussions which made discussing the material fun.” (S14, Public)
- “Agrawal is a really great professor. He is an expert in his field and got me excited about topics I thought would put me to sleep. I liked that Agrawal was willing to expand on lectures that were of particular interest to the students.” (S14, Public)