Statement of Teaching Philosophy

“The whole art of teaching is only the art of awakening the natural curiosity of young minds for the purpose of satisfying it afterwards” Anatole France, “The Crime of Sylvestre Bonnard”

I love to teach. I believe teaching is one of the most enjoyable activities in academic life, and I feel that the effort expended in its pursuit is far more rewarding than exhausting. In my lectures, I am always thrilled by my students’ tacit respect, by their illuminated faces signaling their understanding of the class material. While the foundations of my teaching philosophy are rooted in my belief that education is the solution to many social problems, its pillars are my enthusiasm for teaching economics, my passion for the subject and my desire to strive for excellence.

I truly believe that some crucial aspects for effectively teaching economics are: to feel passionate about the subject, to incorporate into the teaching style not only great enthusiasm but a solid knowledge of it, and to be able to clearly convey the information. Course material should be challenging, interactive, and relevant to current issues and events. Students retain more information if the material is presented in an environment that is interesting and interactive. Learning economics has been reconfigured, in many ways, by new technologies, the large amount of information available on the internet, and the new supplemental learning tools that have become available. As an economics educator, I use a variety of multimedia devices including videos, slides, and the internet to complement traditional lectures.

As an instructor in the social sciences, fostering critical thinking skills is the ultimate goal of my teaching. For this reason, one of my priorities as a teacher is to help students learn how to think, not what to think. I want students to be able to think independently, profoundly, and systematically. Students have their own opinions, of course, but most of those opinions are one-liners. I want to teach them to learn how to construct a solid argument, how to ground those arguments on first principles, how to be persuasive, and how to marshal evidence in a way that is logical and coherent. In my economics courses, I want them to see economic theory and principles not only as formulas to be memorized, but be able to see from the logic behind the theory, and apply it as ways of arranging and interpreting reality so as to make sense of it and to improve upon it. In order to effectively use the paradigm of economic analysis, one must understand not just an economist’s tools, but one must also understand the strengths and the limitations of those tools. As such, I always strive to include a distinction between the normative and positive considerations surrounding the economic concepts covered in my courses. Illustrating that economics does not make “value judgments,” that efficiency and equity are not necessarily related in a positive sense, and that it may well be normative beliefs that should guide the positive analysis of economists,
allows students not just to make stronger economic arguments, but enable them to better understand the value and place of such arguments. By providing a more complete framework to analyze social problems, programs and policies, economics can become an invaluable tool for my students well beyond the duration of the course.

I strive to have a balanced and flexible teaching style, instilling my passion for the study of economics every step of the way. In the Introductory Microeconomics, Macroeconomics, and Intermediate Macroeconomics courses I taught at both the University of California Santa Cruz and The College of Charleston, I delivered my lectures in a “step-by-step” style connecting the concepts and definitions with examples that students could relate to. Thus, they were able to connect the economic concepts and ideas not only to abstract levels, but to more familiar daily situations. I provided many practice exercises in addition to homework questions to further strengthen their understanding. While a lecture format was the only option in these courses, the most challenging part, as demonstrated by the blank stares and fluttering eyelids, was to engage students and turn the otherwise “dry” material into an interesting and enjoyable subject. My approach was simple but very effective: to use open and general questions to involve students in the direction of the class. By guiding the students and letting them be my guide, I learned new and useful ways to think about the issues that I would have otherwise overlooked. This effectively bolstered my ability to keep the attention of the students far more than simply lecturing. An important element incorporated in my Intermediate Macroeconomics course was to encourage students to read news from reputed sources, to prepare summaries, and to comment on them in class. Then, the whole group worked to make the connections to the relevant theory just learned. This approach was a resounding success.

In my Latin American Economies classes, I implemented a seminar discussion style of teaching, encouraging students to think critically within an open and friendly environment. Students were highly motivated to search for relevant information, and to articulate their own opinions. The debates and exchange of ideas greatly enriched the information delivered in lectures.

In addition to the classes I have already taught, I am willing to expand my teaching portfolio to include courses such as international economics, international finance, economic development, econometrics, and any other economics course to meet your department needs.

I strive to bring preparation, organization, respect, fairness and patience to all my students. I want to spark their interests in the understanding of the economic environment surrounding us, as well as motivate them to apply what they learn in economics classes to many other disciplines. My reward lies in knowing that my students leave each one of my classes feeling hopefully one step better prepared for the global competition that awaits them just ahead.