My time as a student of economics placed me in many different academic settings. Each of these experiences taught me the value of a good teacher and shaped my opinion of what it takes to become one. From a quirky liberal arts college in Florida to a Dutch research university, I studied alongside a diverse group of students, but it was the teachers who had the greatest impact on me. I have encountered some exceptional instructors, each with his or her own approach to teaching economics. These experiences have shaped my view of what it takes to become an excellent teacher and ultimately molded me into the instructor that I am today.

My approach to teaching and the strategies that I employ in the classroom are derived from my appreciation for the great teachers that I was fortunate to have. Each of them provided me additional insight into what it takes to become an outstanding teacher. I have seen that thoughtfully crafted courses, whose unique features are regularly communicated to students, are appreciated. I have learned that students thrive in a structured and rigorous classroom environment. I have discovered that students put forth additional effort when they want to impress their teachers and peers. These observations as a student shape my goal as an instructor - to support the development of conscious competence of the course material among my students - and inform my approach to teaching.

I aim to create courses that encourage students to work hard and to gain competence employing economic intuition and analytical tools. From the moment I begin to design a course until I pass out the final exam, I make sure that my courses provide students with numerous opportunities to engage with the course material and apply economic intuition to new and unfamiliar problems. I believe that mastering any "tools-based" subject (e.g., mathematics and economics) requires students to regularly practice employing those tools; superficial cramming before exams is not sufficient to gain long-term competence. This belief, combined with my hands-on teaching approach, leads me to assign rigorous weekly problem sets and routinely select students to present their work in front of their peers. Ultimately, by the end of a course, students are not tested on their ability to recall what was covered in my lectures, but on their ability to employ the concepts and tools covered in the course.

Developing competence with complex economic models and analytical techniques requires hard work on the students’ part, sometimes more hard work than a student wishes to put forth. I motivate students to put forth the required level of effort with both traditional grade-based incentives and implicit reputational ones. I attach sizable weight to weekly graded assignments, in-class exams, and either a term paper or comprehensive take-home final exam, but spreading the weight across five unique assignments can weaken the incentives to thoughtfully prepare any one assignment. In order to motivate students to engage meaningfully with each assignment, I complement traditional grade-based incentives with more implicit reputational ones. In each of my classes, students are “put on the spot” regularly. For example, instead of providing students with answers to weekly homework assignments, I select a student at random to present his or her own solution to a particular problem. I find that such reputation-based incentives facilitate a more active learning environment, one in which students want to demonstrate their knowledge of the material. And for those students that are not influenced by such incentives, traditional grades remain in place....

I look forward to further developing myself as an instructor, but I believe that I am off to an excellent start. My students consistently provide very strong evaluations and informal feedback for my courses, and my colleagues have offered similar encouragement. I have been awarded Teacher of the Year Award by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Electronic Platform Professor of the Year by the Heavener School of Business, and the Online Education Excellence Award by the university during my second year.