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Teaching Effectiveness

The School of Business at Fairmont State University and the Economics Department at West Virginia University has afforded me the opportunity to teach courses in various formats. This semester, I am teaching my sixteenth class with full responsibilities. Being on the other side of the classroom has been equally exciting and fulfilling for me.

As an instructor of record, I have taught three classes as a graduate student at WVU. These classes have varied in size (up to 120 students). I have previously taught, and am currently teaching Introductory Economics, an economics course for non-business majors. As an instructor of record at Fairmont State University I have taught 12 classes. Being a smaller university, Fairmont's class sizes ranged from 8 to 50 students.

At the end of each course, students (at both universities) are given the chance to complete Student Evaluation of Instruction (SEI) forms. In these forms, students are able to give anonymous feedback on overall course quality, learning, and teaching effectiveness on a scale of 1 to 5. In Table 1 below, I report the averages of each of these dimensions per class. There is an upward trend in each category, signaling my continual improvement as an instructor. Of note, Introductory Economics and Economics for Non-Business Majors are courses with notoriously low SEI scores in general due to the lack of business course experience that can sometimes be challenging for students.

In addition to these likert scale measurements, SEIs also provide students the ability to answer open ended questions such as "What helped you learn in this course?" and "What recommendations do you have for changes?". Below, I provide some selected quotes from students. Complete versions of SEIs can be obtained upon request.

Something I take great pride in, is connecting with my students and helping them feel comfortable in my class through two primary methods. First, I learn my students names through a game of my own invention, simply called the Name Game. I ask the first letter of their first name and I get three guesses at correctly guessing their first name. If I fail to correctly guess their first name after the three attempts, they have to tell me what it is. By learning the students names' it often makes them feel more included in the class and overall more comfortable to ask questions, participate more in class, and come by office hours for help or just to chat.

Second, at the beginning of every semester I do an ice-breaker on myself in hopes of the students feeling more relatable. I share some things about my personal life such as where I'm from, where I completed my undergraduate degree, hobbies, my dog Paisley, and also my wife, Rachel. Then, I have them complete my own version of an ice-breaker where instead of having students verbally state their ice-breaker material in class I have them type up a one-page document answering general questions about themselves. I get to learn so much more about my students by having them type something up rather than verbally go through the icebreaker. Plus, by typing it up and submitting the ice-breaker, it allows

me to go back and review their answers. This version of an ice-breaker helps me better customize each class to what the students are interested in and show how economics is involved even if they are not a business major. An example of my icebreaker can be obtained upon request. I thoroughly enjoy teaching, I love developing new ways to connect with my students and to continue to improve how I get through to them. In fact, I would enjoy doing the same for the students at .

Table 1: Summary of Student Evaluations

Semester	Course	Students	Quality	Learning	Teaching
Spring 2023	Introductory Econometrics	34	4.89	4.37	5
Fall 2022	Introductory Economics	100	4.76	4.25	4.80
Spring 2022	Introductory Economics	70	4.68	4.17	4.77
Fall 2021	Introductory Economics	120	4.50	3.97	4.68
Spring 2020	Principles of Microeconomics (F2F)	8	3.50	4.00	4.50
Spring 2020	Principles of Microeconomics (asynchronous)	29	3.38	3.50	3.75
Spring 2020	Economics for Non-Business Majors	29	3.34	3.52	3.59
Fall 2019	Principles of Macroeconomics	30	3.48	3.73	3.52
Fall 2019	Principles of Microeconomics	22	3.41	3.73	3.64
Fall 2019	Economics for Non-Business Majors	36	2.97	3.33	3.11
Spring 2019	Economics for Non-Business Majors	41	4.40	4.1	4.10
Spring 2019	Principles of Microeconomics	11	4.6	4.5	4.10
Fall 2018	Economics for Non-Business Major	28	3.5	4.3	4.3
Fall 2018	Principles of Microeconomics	27	3.6	3.8	3.8

Selected (Verbatim) SEI Comments

I had been warned that this class was very dreadful and miserable, but I actually enjoyed coming to class everyday. Professor Heflin’s constant positivity and eagerness to help students understand the difficult content was very helpful. Using Rstudio was nerve racking but he helped introduce and learn to use it very good and I feel more confident than I did before. Great teacher and learned a lot. - Spring 2023

The class was very engaging in class discussions and professor Heflin was always very helpful when I needed extra help. - Spring 2023

The lectures were really interesting and thought-provoking. It didn’t seem like like a traditional lecture, where a professor just stands there and reads off a screen. Our lectures were more of a discussion, which really helped me learn more. - Fall 2022

I really liked my professor. He made a not so interesting topic very interesting. I feel like I truly learned a lot from the class. - Fall 2022

Justin was a great guy, he made the course super fun. He was super helpful and always encouraging. He wanted us to do well. - Fall 2022

I think how personable and relatable the instructor made the course really helped me learn. The instructor made me want to attend class more as it was engaging and interesting to learn about topics. - Spring 2022

Justin is a great teacher. He goes out of his way to make sure that everyone understands the material. His teaching style has helped me learn in this course. - Fall 2021

The professor uses a lot of examples when teaching, it makes the information become more of a reality and engaging than just learning it. - Fall 2021

I think this class was very well taught by Professor Heflin. In the half of the semester we were there, it was a 3 hour class that felt more like an hour. For the time online Professor Heflin very well organized all the material and made it easy to know what was due when and where to look for it. He encouraged questions and made sure we understood the material before we moved on to anything else. The video material he included online was very detailed and gave us multiple sources for information. He made microeconomics easy to understand and relatable to every day life. 11/10 professor and anybody would be lucky to take this class! - Spring 2020

I always had bad experiences with online classes, but this instructor made this a very enjoyable experience, with classes being able to be accessed week by week. I really liked how I had a scheduled time during my week to complete this class - it was a very good help when all of my classes became online, and I knew what to expect. Heflin was also great - I messed up a few times through the semester, and it was very easy to access him with him only being a message away. He always responded timely. - Spring 2020

Professor Heflin was an excellent professor and a great choice to teach this course. Even though it was online, he was always available to help us students out and was willing to meet with us when we were struggling to understand any concept from any chapter. He also was very helpful in terms of giving us points on quizzes or exams if there was mass confusion or a certain topic skipped over. His knowledge and experience in the field made him a very good professor for helping non-accounting/business/marketing majors understand economics as a whole. I would take him for other courses for sure, as he was a great professor and led a great course. - Fall 2019

Justin is the best teacher that I've had in a long time. He is very personable and takes the time to help any student if they do need it. He delivers the information very clearly. He is also a no non-sense kind of guy in that there are no surprises with him on tests or quizzes. I really like Justin as a teacher and if I had to take any other business course I would definitely look for Justin's name when it came time to register. Thanks for making economics a good time and keeping things interesting and engaging. - Spring 2019