

## Almuth D Merkel

### Teaching Statement

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I am a teacher in training, and I will always be. Learning is an iterative process, for my understanding captured best by the idiom “lifelong learning.” Transitioning from being a student to being a teacher does not change but amplifies this perspective.

*Being an instructor.* Being an instructor means to provide students with training wheels until they can autonomously continue their way. For this to work properly, the road needs to be paved accordingly. I understand each textbook as a roadmap, building upon which I prepare my own course materials to guide students through the subject at hand. Often, different wording or dissecting the ‘studied object’ from another angle brings about understanding and comprehension. In my lecture notes, I emphasize the topic’s main themes and connect them to real-life examples. For example, I approach welfare analysis with an easy step-by-step numerical example. Using this example to conduct welfare analyses for a free-market and existing market intervention mechanisms, such as minimum wages or maximum rents, aim at transferring theory into praxis. To further solidify these foundations, I provide problem sets and exercises to reinforce covered material. Working with students through exercises I often gain unexpected insights. After further encouraging students to modify existing exercises, I have received wonderful examples I now use to communicate the topic more effectively. This way, I attempt to ensure solid educational foundations that finally allow students to autonomously move forward.

*Beyond the classroom.* With my actions within and beyond the classroom, I strive to live by the qualities I treasure. I reliably set and adhere to clear expectations and ground rules. I value students’ time by being punctual and maintaining attentive and polite interaction. Offering walk-in office hours and individual appointments, I remain approachable and accessible to students and take their concerns and struggles serious. Being confronted with a global pandemic and changing teaching modalities, I adjusted using a variety of communication mediums. For example, to accommodate each of my students I recorded voice-over power points for my lectures accessible outside the regular class time, set up a virtual classroom for Q&A during class time, switched to virtual “walk-in” office hours, posted announcements on the course website accordingly, and remained readily available for individual written and virtual exchange and interaction. Having also had the opportunity to teach asynchronous online, I followed the same approach, yet following a weekly schedule instead of specific hours. Being flexible within a structured semester schedule is an approach I intend to maintain to accommodate students’ needs.

*Student experiences.* Ultimately, I wish for students to look back at their college experience one day with pride in and thankfulness for their accomplishments. While being true to myself and my principles, I am willing to do everything in my power to support and further student’s academic success and individual accomplishments. Although being a junior instructor, student feedback that I attribute to my dedication are statements such as “I never liked economics, but you make it fun” and, referring to the economic concept of opportunity cost, “I already find myself applying the concepts from class to my every-day life.” Students have also described me as caring, always happy to explain and attested clear grading criteria and good feedback.

Today, I can bring the passion and love for my field, induced by conscientious, inspiring, and accommodating individuals and teachers, to the classroom myself. Delivering education to the best of my abilities, is an offer to students that comes from the heart. Albeit I respect my students’ freedom to choose the extent to which they accept this offer and heed voiced discontent. Consequently, student feedback is always the fertilizer to my professional and personal growth.