Statement of Teaching Philosophy – Dr. Hartman

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While understanding the formula for a t-test is nice, my goal as a teacher is to help my students understand how to solve problems. In today's world, people are bombarded with vast amounts of data. It is essential that students are able to find what is important and apply it to their decisions. Whether we make simple decisions (“Which brand of peanut butter should I buy?” or “Should I wear jeans or khakis?”) or complex, life-changing ones, (“Which job should I take?” or “Should I marry her?”) we constantly apply data to make an informed choice. If I can help students become better problem solvers, their lives will be more fulfilling. I enable them to gain those skills through three main concepts: respect the students, make the classroom a safe place, and use technology and non-traditional teaching methods.

Respect the students - Before students accept what I teach, they must know that I respect them and their time. On the first day of class, I take each student’s picture (with their permission). By the end of the first week, I have all their names memorized. While it is a small time commitment on my part, my students know that I value them as people. I also show respect by being available outside of office hours. I consistently remind students that my door is always open and I am happy to make appointments.

Make the classroom a safe place - I have one main rule in my classroom: “It is great to be wrong, just do not be timid.” Because they know I respect them, they are more willing to take risks and make mistakes. When one student does not understand a concept, there is a good chance many of his classmates also do not. When the classroom is a safe place, students are able to learn through mistakes and I receive instant feedback on how well they understand the material.

Use technology and non-traditional teaching methods - At Texas A&M, we constantly looked for new methods to facilitate learning. The majority of our lectures were recorded and placed online for students. Additionally, I wrote assignments in PHP which automatically generate questions and solutions to give students as much practice as they like. I would have loved unlimited practice problems when I took the preliminary actuarial exams. Currently, I am using a tablet to take notes in class so they can be posted online for the students to review. By using technology and non-traditional teaching methods, making the classroom a safe place, and respecting the students, I am able to teach my students to solve problems. An understanding of how to use data in their decisions makes them better citizens, parents, and people. That is why I love teaching. I am able to make lives better.

I hope to become more comfortable with the technology in class and I am attending some classes where the instructors teach very differently than I do to improve my own teaching.