

1 Dossier Narrative

This narrative and supporting materials document my development as a teacher, scholar, and active member of the Hood community over the past seven semesters. I have been a Visiting Assistant Professor from Fall 2016-Spring 2019, and was confirmed as a (1st-year) Tenure-Track Assistant Professor starting in Fall 2019. Under the current rules, I am eligible to wait two additional years before undergoing my Third Year Review, and six additional years before undergoing my Tenure Review. However, I have chosen to undergo my Third Year Review presently, to document my accomplishments while a Visiting Assistant Professor and receive feedback immediately in anticipation of my tenure review in Fall of 2021. I respectfully submit this dossier in support of my application for Third Year review, as described in the Hood College Faculty Code.

2 Teaching Effectiveness

The primary reason I decided on a career in academia was my passion for teaching and discussing economics. I remember how I was enticed into the social sciences (and specifically economics) by the passionate and inspiring teachers that I had as a student. I try to channel the energy and passion that got me into this profession in the first place, and inspire my students. I focus on four main pedagogical aspects of my teaching: skill-building, application and discussion, holistic assessment, and accessible resources and use of technology.

2.1 Skill-building

My main goal for all of my students is to internalize that economics is a *way of thinking* about the world, not a set of (mundane) topics like labor markets, stock prices, and inflation rates. I tell my students that “I am not a 9-to-5 economist,” that is, I don’t stop thinking like an economist when I leave work; economics to me is a set of lenses that helps me navigate our complex world from a useful perspective.

In my view, economics is a liberal art, as it instills a critical thinking mindset and provides a set of tools for approaching any complex problem in the social world. Some students that take my courses may go on to be practitioners - economists in government, academia, business, or the non-profit advocacy or policy world - but many will choose their post-graduate employment not based on whether it is an “economics” job. Not every student is going to earn a Ph.D in economics, or even work in the field, and this causes me to adjust my expectations and goals according to student needs. My overall goal is to take each student - whatever his or her background, experience with economics, and future goals - and make a significant *improvement* in their capabilities and skills, and hopefully spark their interest. I try to build students’ economic intuitions and their communication skills to help them in whatever career direction they take after studying at Hood College. I realize that many of my students are taking some of my courses (particularly ECON 306, a requirement for all Business majors) because it is a required course. The content and tools can be difficult and mathematical, but I try to build students’ intuitions and inspire them as if it is the last economics class they will ever take. Many students decide to take additional economics electives courses with me as a result.

As much as I can, I engage my students in learning by doing. I firmly believe that the only way to truly understand something is to grapple with it in writing or in active discussion. More technical concepts, such as research and data analysis, require learning the tools of the trade (such as industry-level software and techniques) and having students construct an analysis from beginning to end.

2.2 Application and Discussion

I invite my students as active participants in the process of understanding our world. I view successful instruction not as a mere “transfer of knowledge” from “master” to “apprentice”, but an open invitation to joint inquiry. While several of my courses are required theory courses (particularly ECON 306 - Microeconomic Analysis), or contain models and theoretical frameworks I must necessarily explain to students, I try to focus as much as possible on applications and letting my students discuss their interpretations and understanding of the world based on our course content. This works particularly well in my elective courses, as nearly all of them contain a required discussion component. I try to bring students to the “cutting edge” of the profession and engage them in current debates - whether they be about current events, or about active disagreements between scholars or theoretical frameworks. In my international trade course in Spring 2018, we discussed the economics of immigration, the social consequences of neoliberalism and free trade, and how these things translated into the electoral results in 2016, recognizing there are valid disagreements and rational perspectives on both sides (after carefully cutting through a lot of disingenuous, emotive, and sometimes, bigoted noise). In my 400-level public economics course - which is a readings-based-discussion nearly every class period - we discussed a wide range of student-chosen issues from Blockchain technology to the Sharing Economy to Net Neutrality to Basic Income Guarantees. In economic development in Fall 2019, we waded through debates about the efficacy of foreign aid, and the disagreements about the role of geography, culture, history, and institutions play in the variation in economic development around the world. My industrial organization, international trade, economics of development, public economics, and international political economy courses all had regularly scheduled “discussion days” where I stop talking (to the best of my ability) and let students take over the discussion to see what they think. Class participation is a significant (20-30%) portion of their overall course grade, and I grade students on both their contributions to in-class discussion, and also on questions/discussion points based on our assigned readings that they email me prior to the discussion. This latter portion is designed both to incentivize students to do the readings (and not to just talk without doing the readings) and to reduce the penalty to quieter students who do not feel comfortable talking each day. Students often tell me or write in their evaluations that discussions were one of their favorite parts of my courses.

2.3 Holistic Assessment

While I recognize that grades are important (and most students view them as the *sine qua non* of a course), I provide multiple avenues for students to demonstrate their understanding of course materials. I care less about rote memorization of facts or what year Adam Smith wrote the *Wealth of Nations*¹ than students learning to develop their critical thinking abilities via the economic way of thinking, and their communication skills. In nearly all of my elective courses, I opt for a variety of writing assignments instead of formal exams, or where I do give an exam, they are often in-depth take-home essay questions. This again focuses on students internalizing the material and developing their ability to digest complex ideas coherently and build a reasonable argument with them.

Much of the content that I regularly teach (ECON 306, ECON 480) is quite challenging and mathematical. ECON 306 is among the most difficult courses that all Business majors are required to take. Following suggestions from my department colleagues, I allow students to “correct” their exams. Students are allowed to redo questions for which they lost points by describing on another piece of paper what the correct answer is, and more importantly, *why* the answer is correct (rather than just letting them write “the answer is 40 but I wrote 20!”). This not only allows marginal students to avoid poor grades in required courses, but allows students to *internalize* the material and demonstrate

¹1776, easy to remember!

to me their progress in mastering the subject area. I view this as vastly superior to applying a simple curve to all grades if the average is low. I have also, from consultation of my colleagues, decided to grade homeworks based on a combination of completeness (70%) and accuracy (30% of one randomly-chosen problem). This encourages students to try their best and attempt each problem, but not stress about each and every problem being correct and fearing a low grade (not to mention, it's also easier for me and my Teaching Assistants to grade).

I try to assign multiple different types of assignment throughout the semester, ranging between problem sets, writing assignments, exams, and in-class discussion. Every single class I teach contains a writing assignment of some magnitude - whether short papers, an Opinion-Editorial, or a research paper. I am very fond of the E. M. Forester quote "How can I know what I think until I see what I say?" I explain to students that one cannot truly internalize and understand a complex idea until one grapples with it enough to be able to craft an argument about it verbally or in writing. I ensure students know that this includes, notably, myself. I have learned *an enormous* amount from teaching and from writing about ideas, and proudly share that I have changed my mind on some issues from writing, reading, and discussing them with others. I also spend class time in ECON 306 discussing how to write a good paper with a guide that I have developed.²

A favorite assignment of mine is the empirical research paper project in econometrics. Students are required to come up with a research question that they will find data for, clean up the data, analyze it, test their question, and write up and present their results in a paper and accompanying class presentation. Rather than have students play with "toy data" that have been pre-cleaned and sterilized for textbooks, students become exposed to the real world of "data wrangling" and analysis that real data scientists and empirical researchers experience. Furthermore, I make this a "high impact practice" by scaffolding this assignment so that students first submit ideas, then describe their data, then write a short literature review, then present their projects so far, and finally submit their written report. At each stage, I give feedback and provide suggestions to improve their projects. By the end, the students have remarkable work products that they can be proud of; many of them expand upon this very paper in their Senior Seminar in Economics, Departmental Honors papers for Economics, and one student even published their paper.

2.4 Technology and Accessible Resources

I am a major advocate of using technology in and out of the classroom, and someone who tries my hardest to give a wide range of students every opportunity to succeed. I do this by incorporating a wide variety of resources to assist students beyond mere textbook readings and homework problems. All course materials (lectures, slides, homeworks, etc) are materials I that have made and disseminated myself³ - I don't use "stock" textbook powerpoints.

I always try to ensure that my courses are accessible to students in more ways than one. In terms of affordability, I eschew \$200-300 textbooks in favor of open source alternatives or I personally compile a list of key journal articles or popular books and applications for students to read or buy on Amazon for \$20-30. I also try to make the *material* accessible to students by frequently incorporating clips from movies and TV shows ranging between *The Wire*, *Monty Python*, and *Silicon Valley* to demonstrate concepts like black markets, price elasticity, constitutional design, and patent trolls.

We simulate double auction markets in Microeconomic Analysis using a platform called **Kiviq**: students are randomly assigned to be "Buyers" or "Sellers" who are randomly given "Valuations" and "Costs," respectively, for a fictional asset.

²All economics and business majors must take ECON 306, so I know that nearly all of my students in any elective courses have experienced this from me! I discuss more about my guide(s) in the next section.

³Informed by textbooks or several academic sources, of course!

They then must make bids and asks for prices to buy and sell, and ultimately we see these converge to a market-clearing equilibrium price where Supply meets Demand. In my Game Theory course, we played about a dozen or more games over the semester on [Moblab](#) to get some hands-on experience in thinking about the strategy and incentives of prisoners' dilemmas, coordination games, Cournot-, Bertrand-, and Stackelberg-competition, and other types of games.

As someone who loves the world of coding, applications, and technologically-induced convenience, I tried to apply these tools to my courses as wherever possible. I have written a variety of guides for my theory classes, particularly ECON 306 and ECON 480 - ranging from handouts on mathematical concepts and models, to cheatsheets and guides to using statistical packages in Stata and R to accomplish a wide variety of tasks. Over the Summers of 2018 and 2019, I learned R, a leading programming language for data science, to use in my econometrics course each Fall. For Summer 2019, I received an Academic Innovation grant to produce additional R resources for students. I have coded visualizations for students of key concepts in Microeconomics and Econometrics using R and Shiny, which allow for students to tangibly and intuitively see how changing certain parameters will affect the outcomes of the model. This Fall 2019 semester, I personally produced course websites for each of my courses to act as a platform for all course content (lecture slides, assignments, readings, tools and links, etc) in one accessible location. My colleagues have taken notice of my leading the charge with R and other software. One of my colleagues, Dr. Mel Zuberi, is currently auditing my econometrics class in order to learn these techniques and software skills himself.

Finally, I strongly believe that teaching should be a positive externality on the world: not only should my *own* students benefit from learning and completing my courses, but anyone else who wants to should as well. By making my courses "open source" and sharing all major materials on the web, *anyone* can benefit from my materials for free, in addition to [my blogging](#) about these subjects. I often am asked by friends and colleagues at academic conferences for some of my materials, or am happy to learn that a *colleague of a colleague* followed along with my lectures and materials in my econometrics course through my website.

Please see the [Evidence of Teaching Effectiveness](#) section of my dossier for additional documentation.

2.5 Scholarly Achievement

Similar to most junior faculty, upon earning my Ph.D, my major scholarly goals were to translate my dissertation into articles to be published in academic journals and to develop a new research agenda. In summary, I have published two academic journal articles, have several currently actively under review or near submission-stage, and by December 2019, will have given four conference presentations. I have presented original academic research at one or more conferences each calendar year in my time here at Hood, and intend each presentation to lead to a publication in an academic journal. Looking forward, I have developed a robust research agenda with some coauthors that I foresee leading to at least a half dozen future journal articles in the next few years.

My research agenda has developed into two broad strands. First, I explore the economic history and political economy of innovation and creativity. My first academic publication, "The Perils of Copyright Regulation" (2016) in the *Review of Austrian Economics*, traces how the 1976 Copyright Act, the first major revision to U.S. copyright law, has had significant unintended consequences that raise the transaction costs of producing creative works. My second academic publication, "Institutional Entrepreneurship, Wikipedia, and the Opportunity of the Commons," (2016) in the *Journal of Institutional Economics*, looks at how Wikipedia is able to facilitate anonymous users to contribute high quality articles for free in an open source context with the right set of rules and governance. In a working paper, "Pirate Thy Neighbor: International Copyright Protectionism in the United States, 1790-2000," I explore the interest group dynamics of

publishing to explain why the United States did not respect international copyright until the late 20th Century. I am still revising this paper to be sent to an academic journal. Finally, in another paper under review at the *Journal of Entrepreneurship and Public Policy*, “‘Public Goods’ or ‘Good for the Public’ How Political Entrepreneurship Endogenized the Public Funding of Science,” I explore the nature of public goods in economics with a case study of how scientific research has become considered a public good (in the economic sense) and is funded by governments.

I also have three projects that I am still revising before I submit them to journals: for one, which I received a Board of Associates McCardle grant over the summer of 2017, called “Kickstart My Art: Is Crowdfunding a Substitute or a Complement to Intellectual Property Laws?” explores the institutional differences between patronage, intellectual property, and crowdfunding in how they incentivize creativity and innovation. Second, “Distributing Patronage: Intellectual Property in the Transition from Natural State to Open Access Order,” explores the political-economic history and dynamics that lead to the world’s first copyright law in 18th century England. Finally, I explore the promise and pitfalls of protecting intellectual property with blockchain technology in another project, entitled “Crypto-Copyright: The Potential of Protecting Intellectual Property with the Blockchain,” for which I received another McCardle grant in 2018. At present, this first strand of research is a solo effort, inspired in part by some of the ideas I explored in my (2015) dissertation, *Essays on the Institutional Analysis of Copyright and its Alternatives*.

Second, I attempt to model innovation and its affects on economic growth using computational social science methods. This work is primarily a joint effort between my colleague Santiago Gangotena at Universidad San Francisco de Quito in Ecuador and myself. In “Learning by Doing: Who’s Learning? Who’s Doing? and Other Production Function Myths,” co-authored with Santiago Gangotena, which is currently under review at the *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics*, we explore the problems of modeling technological improvements and the idea of “increasing returns” with production functions. In “A Tale of Two Capitals: Modelling the Interaction Between Ideas, Capital, and Growth,” which I am presenting at the Southern Economic Association Conference this November, Santiago and I provide a theoretical framework for understanding several puzzles in economic and technological history - such as “inventions before their time” and simultaneous invention - by using a network model to link physical capital and innovative ideas (what we call “ethereal capital”). Finally, with Santiago Gangotena, Pedro Romero, and Alex Xerves, in our work in progress “Networks and Growth,” we create a computational network model to explain economic growth in world history according to the structure of networks (which is how we operationalize economic and political institutions) and ideas. Each of these papers we intend to submit to academic journals, and the latter to a first-tier economics journal.

In addition to my two major research agendas, I intend to let my teaching experiences inform my research. Over the 2019 Summer, I received an Academic Innovation grant (see above) to develop resources for teaching R in my econometrics course. After the semester is over, I intend to write up my experiences and insights from teaching econometrics and causal inference with R into a pedagogical journal article.

Finally, in our department, **several activities constitute scholarship**, including technical reports and consulting work. Over the Winter and Spring of 2018, I was a member of the Mayor of Frederick’s Strategic Opportunities Advisory Team, where I worked with a group led by Ted Gregory on identifying opportunities and threats to economic resiliency for the City of Frederick. This resulted in us delivering a Report to the Mayor of Frederick in June 2018. Hood College’s Graduate School **blogged about** my work with this group.

Please see the **Evidence of Scholarship** section of my dossier for additional documentation.

3 Service

One of the primary reasons I was eager to join Hood College was to be able to become a valued member of a close-knit community and have the opportunity to contribute to that community. From my first year, I made it a point to attend several admissions events - including teaching mini-courses at Admitted Students Day - every year, to advise students, to try to serve on a faculty committee, and to lead or participate in students' Departmental Honors papers.

I have served as an elected faculty representative on the Curriculum Committee (2018-2020), and in the current year (F 2019-S 2020), I am serving as the *chair* of the Curriculum Committee. This leadership position has allowed me to gain valuable insight and experience in understanding the behind-the-scenes administrative work at a college, experience leading a small group, and interacting with faculty in other departments.

I have made it a point in my career to focus on student success and be as welcoming and helpful to students as I can be. I have advised a total of 76 students in my 7 semesters at Hood so far, been on the committee for 6 Departmental Honors Papers, chaired 3 Departmental Honors Papers (one of which my student published in an academic journal), taken 2 students to present at an academic conference (the Eastern Economic Association Conference in March 2019), and managed 6 Teaching Assistants for economics. I have written numerous letters of recommendation to students applying for scholarships, study abroad, jobs, and admission to graduate programs.

I have also given several presentations or attended academic panels open to the Hood Community. I was a panelist for two panels, "Globalization and its Discontents" (March 2, 2017) and "The European Union: Dead at 60?" (September 5, 2018), and was the keynote speaker for the Phi Kappa Phi induction ceremony (May 5, 2019).

I have also been very active in representing my department and furthering its goals. I assist with our induction ceremony into our economics, business, and marketing honor societies each spring, and since 2017, have been a speaker for the Omicron Delta Epsilon induction ceremony for economics. I have served on three search committees that led to the hiring of new faculty in the department, and have *chaired* one such successful search for our Visiting Assistant Professor of Economics position in Spring 2019. In April 2018, I proposed several changes to the Economics B.A. to ensure that all majors have job-relevant training in econometrics, and to allow more flexibility with a generalized concentration, which were approved by the Curriculum Committee for Fall 2019.

For my scholarly community, I have been a reviewer for the *Journal of Institutional Economics*, *Review of Austrian Economics*, and *European Journal of Law and Economics*.

As mentioned above, I am a firm believer in leveraging my teaching resources to be accessible to the wider public and to promote best practices among practitioners and instructors. In addition to making all of my teaching resources freely accessible on the web, [my academic blog](#) occasionally covers both academic and pedagogical tools and techniques relevant for economists, data scientists, and academic instructors.

Please see the [Evidence of Service](#) section of my dossier for additional documentation.

4 Concluding Remarks

With the exception of the Fall 2019 semester, I have accomplished all of the above while a Visiting Assistant Professor at Hood College. I respectfully submit this dossier in support of my application for Third Year review. Please see the remaining sections on my [dossier website](#) for additional documentation and evidence in support of this narrative.