Draft Teaching Philosophy Statement

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Date: Oct 19, 2025

Teaching Philosophy Statement
Teaching is much more to me than sharing facts or guiding students through academic routines. My journey in public health and cancer research has shown me that the most powerful learning happens when people come together, share ideas, and tackle real problems. During my postdoctoral and graduate training, I had the chance to teach, mentor, and learn alongside students, clinicians, and oncologists in different collaborative research meetings. These experiences shaped how I want to teach, why I think certain learning theories matter, and how I plan to help my future students succeed.

My Motivation for Teaching
I am drawn to teaching because learning changes lives, both the learner's and the teachers. Each time I helped a student understand a tough topic or supported a clinician with cancer data, I saw new confidence and understanding emerge. These moments made me realize that teaching lets me amplify my impact far beyond my own work. I want to help students see their potential and harness data and evidence to make real changes in public health and patient care.

Learning Theory and Philosophy
I believe that students learn best when they actively build knowledge and connect it with their own experiences. In my view, teaching is more than lecturing; it is about guiding students to ask questions, solve problems, and work together. Two learning theories help guide me:

Constructivism: This theory says that people learn by building new ideas from what they already know. When I teach, I encourage students to think about familiar situations, like cancer cases or public health challenges, and connect those to new facts and methods. For example, during research meetings with clinicians, we often discuss patient data and brainstorming solutions for community health issues. Watching people reason together and tie new information with their real experiences reminds me why active learning makes a difference.

Connectivism: Today, information is everywhere. I have learned the value of digital tools, research databases, and online collaborations in my own work. Connectivism means helping students learn how to find good information, work with it, and connect it to bigger ideas. For instance, I developed and shared digital dashboards for cancer research, and mentored students to use these platforms for finding answers to patient care or community health questions. Collaborative feedback and online discussions help students see learning as a network, not just a solo activity.

Teaching Methods and Evidence
The ways I teach are always connected to these ideas and my real experiences. I use simple, practical methods that help students develop core skills and confidence:

a. **Group Learning Activities:** I give students real data, like cancer rates or health statistics, and let them work in small groups to analyze trends and suggest solutions. These projects mirror my own work with research teams and show students the value of teamwork.
b. **Digital Dashboards and Data Tools:** I introduce students to online resources, such as epidemiology dashboards or public health data portals. They learn to filter credible sources, interpret data, and share findings with their classmates, gaining both technical and communication skills.
c. **Short Talks and Interactive Discussions:** Instead of long lectures, I use brief lessons and open questions so all students can contribute ideas. One example is asking, *how would you approach this cancer risk in your own community?* This sparks more meaningful reflection.
d. **Feedback and Reflection Logs:** I regularly ask students to think about what worked for them, what was challenging, and how their views changed after working with others or with new tools.

Evidence for these methods comes from many sources: student projects, survey feedback, improved skills in group settings, and written reflections. Students consistently say that learning together and using hands-on tools helped them understand theory and practice.

Assessment of Student Learning
I believe in fair and transparent assessment. For each class, I design a mix of simple checks and more in-depth projects so that students can show what they know in different ways:

a. **Team Data Reports:** Groups prepare short summaries based on cancer or public health data, clearly showing their analysis and solutions. I use straightforward rubrics focused on clarity, teamwork, and use of evidence.
b. **Individual Reflections:** Students write about their own learning journey, how they participated, and how group work shaped their understanding.
c. **Quick Knowledge Checks:** Short quizzes or written prompts help me check progress and let students know what concepts they still need to work on.

I always make my grading methods clear beforehand, and I share examples, so students know what is expected. This approach helps students focus on learning rather than worrying about grades.

Assessment of My Teaching
Teaching should always improve. I keep track of my own performance through feedback from students and peers. I use quick surveys during and after units, ask students what worked and what was confusing, and invite colleagues to observe and share tips for better teaching. For example, after introducing a new dashboard activity, I looked at student feedback and adjusted instructions to make the process easier to follow.
I also attend professional development workshops and read new ideas in teaching and learning, so I can bring fresh strategies to my classroom and improve with every course.

Conclusion

Teaching is my way to help students and communities grow stronger. My time as a postdoc and graduate assistant showed me the value of bringing people together, guiding them to connect data and real-world problems, and always encouraging active discussion. By focusing on simple, practical teaching methods, clear assessments, and continuous improvement, I hope to inspire every student to become a confident problem solver and thoughtful contributor to public health and cancer research.

In every classroom, I want students to feel safe sharing their ideas, to learn by doing, and to leave ready to make a difference in their field and their communities. That is my promise as a future educator.