

Teaching philosophy statement  
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One of my main goals as a teacher or mentor is to help students weave each new piece of information into a larger picture. I will illustrate this idea with two examples. First, take the policy issue of state-level insurance benefit mandates. A health economics textbook would probably describe how these mandates work, list some examples, and discuss their potential effects on, say, insurance premiums and insurance coverage rates. These bits of information are important to understand in their own right, but they become more meaningful and accessible to students when they can be linked to a broader picture. How can I help students do that? The most important initial step is to make sure students have a firm grasp of who the relevant actors are and how they relate to each other. Without this knowledge, learning about any policy issue, particularly one related to health care, is bound to be a frustrating experience. Then, I would emphasize discussion and thought about the following set of interrelated questions: 1) Where do the policies come from? (Who and what provides the impetus to pass them, and who opposes them?) 2) Ultimately, who benefits and who loses from the policies? 3) How relevant will these policies be in the future under various scenarios in which our health system may evolve? As a second example, take the empirical research technique of instrumental variables. Again, a textbook is likely to provide some important basic information such as theoretical properties, examples, and some associated statistical tests. A broader understanding can be achieved by also focusing on the following issues: 1) In what settings is this technique most useful? 2) How should results using this technique be interpreted? 3) What are some common misperceptions or pitfalls in using this technique? Whether the topic is a policy issue, a research method, or something else, I believe that students retain and process information best when they are able to see clear links between the details and the big picture, and when they are able to apply their knowledge to analysis of important health policy issues. Connecting pieces of information to the questions that ultimately concern us as citizens, policymakers, family members, and other viewpoints makes our knowledge meaningful and memorable. I believe that this basic concept, in combination with a challenging yet welcoming learning environment, makes the process rewarding and exciting for both students and teachers.