3.1 Narrative Summary of Teaching

"What we have ignored is what citizens can do and the importance of real involvement of the people involved - versus just having somebody in Washington to make a rule."

— Elinor Ostrom

Teaching Philosophy

Why do I teach? One of the most transforming lessons I have learned through my research is that citizens should never stay there to wait for "somebody" to decide for them. They have to become responsible citizens and reflective leaders who can actively and effectively participate in public affairs. As a teacher, my goals are the same. I hope my class can become a platform for students to develop collaborative leadership, set up initiatives to improve their communities and appreciate the diversity and complexity of the real world. To achieve these goals, I have three overall teaching philosophies that guide all my teaching activities: teaching is about inspiration, learning by doing, and meeting students where they are. In the following sections, I describe how my teaching philosophy is reflected in my current course offerings and instruction strategies.

<u>Teaching is about inspiration</u>

I believe effective teaching emphasizes the why and how, instead of what. The world is changing fast and specific contents and information covered in classes are outdated faster than we realize. It is, therefore, critical to inspire and motivate students to be life-long learners and problem solvers. I achieve this goal in two ways. First, I design course modules that focus on the "heart" part of management and leadership: storytelling and value communication. This is particularly powerful for students from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds as these exercises help them discover why they care and who they are. It is through our stories and choices in challenging times that we communicate our value proposition. In Management and Governance of Nonprofit Organizations (PA 5101), I devoted two weeks of the class to help students draft and practice the story of their leadership journey and why they are here. In Management of Organizations (PA 5011), I designed a new module on trust-building and used Andrew Yang's speech at the DNC Summer Meeting to showcase how he creatively transforms his disadvantages into advantages and how he builds trust with audiences who hold bias again him. When I survey students about which modules are most impactful for their skill development, storytelling and trust-building always stand out.

Second, I leverage my background and winding roads in my journey to model vulnerability and relate to my students. This helps them see possibilities and hope. In the Integrative Doctoral Seminar in Public Affairs I (PA 8003) and Doctoral Research Seminar in Management, Leadership & Governance (PA 8106), I use my own experiences as an international scholar to connect to their struggles, so they understand that their challenges are not unique and there are strategies to turn their disadvantages to advantages. In particular, I emphasize the importance of finding role models, mentors, and peer support groups in academia. One student commented "The instructor shared his life journey, dilemmas, reflection, and learning as a Public Affairs researcher. He understood my location as an international student and responded according to my

strengths and possibilities." I believe that true inspirations mean that students can see the path to where they aspire to be.

Teaching is about learning by doing

As an applied discipline, public affairs is ultimately about practice. Humphrey students often come to their programs with the ambition of changing the world. In my class, I bring students to the diversity and complexity of the real world through case analysis and management simulations. Management is a challenging subject to teach since there is no absolute line between right answers and wrong answers. The real world is very complex, and students need to understand and apply management concepts and techniques in real-world scenarios. In Management of Organizations (PA 5011), I design the class in a way that every major theory section is paired up with a case analysis or simulation. In Quantitative Research Methods and Analysis (PA 5056), students learn core statistical concepts and skills from the process of designing and implementing their quantitative research projects, instead of solving abstract problem sets or taking exams. When working with doctoral students in our program, I design a process through which students first learn the publication process in a project I am leading as collaborators and co-authors.

To integrate my research and provide locally relevant teaching materials, I also write teaching cases and simulations. With my teaching assistant Brooke Dirtzu, we wrote a role-play simulation designed to help students understand the challenges of creating a collaborative governance regime when actors involved have different understandings of the core issue. The simulation is situated in the context of advancing racial equity in the Minneapolis park system so students find great relevance to their own life and work. This teaching simulation won the 2020 E-PARCC Teaching Case and Simulation Competition organized by the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University. Many instructors inside and outside Humphrey have used this simulation and the case has also been translated into French. Dr. Jane Fountain at the University of Massachusetts Amherst commented that "When I used it last fall, students found it engaging, understood what they should do in their various groups and, I hope, began to see how performance measures and metrics, as well as budgeting could be used to reduce structural inequalities." It is my goal to write a teaching case or simulation for each of my new research projects.

Teaching is about meeting students where they are

Public affairs in inherently interdisciplinary and diverse. This means that students often come to our MPP, MPA, and Ph.D. programs with varying levels of expertise and comfort in certain topics. To be an effective teacher in public affairs, it is critical to design teaching strategies that meet students where they are. I have two strategies to achieve this goal, one inside the classroom and the other often outside the classroom. Inside the classroom, students need to feel comfortable sharing their concerns and asking questions so the instructor and their peers can help address those concerns. They also need to understand that it is these varying levels of understanding that make peer learning possible and desirable. In my classes, I actively use small group discussions and creative idea-sharing mechanisms like the World Café to help students exchange ideas and ask questions in a smaller and safer environment. For more advanced students in my class, I design extra components in the assignment so they can continuously challenge themselves and

feel engaged with the course contents. For example, in my quantitative analysis class, students who are familiar with linear regression are encouraged to run an interaction model in their final assignment. I upload those lecture videos on the interaction model to Canvas so they can learn more advanced content at their own pace.

Meeting students where they are also means creating opportunities beyond the classroom to timely address their concerns and questions, so they feel confident and connected in the subject area. I firmly believe in the principle that "availability is the best ability". I commit to responding to students' emails on the same working day and creating sufficient team and individual office hours for my students. In my course evaluations, students consistently praise how responsive I am and how helpful I am in one-on-one settings. One student commented: "He was extremely generous with his time, offering both group office hours and individual appointment slots. He was also very responsive to emails and offered great feedback to assignments to inform the rest of the work in the class."

Course Developed and Taught

Since joining the faculty in 2018, I have developed and taught five different courses at Humphrey, all core courses in Master of Public Policy (PA 5011 Management of Organizations), Master of Public Affairs (PA 5056 Quantitative Research Methods and Analysis), Ph.D. in Public Affairs (PA 8003 Integrative Doctoral Seminar in Public Affairs I and PA 8106 Research Seminar in Management, Leadership & Governance), and Certificate in Nonprofit Management (PA 5101 Management and Governance of Nonprofit Organizations). Teaching these required classes was challenging as these courses are broad and students often have different levels of comfort and interest in those subject areas. However, they also serve as a gateway for me to interact with Humphrey students in different programs and introduce them to foundational management concepts, analytical skills, and academic research. I deeply appreciate the support and guidance from past instructors of these foundational courses at Humphrey.

PA 5011: Management of Organizations

This course is a required class for all of our Master of Public Policy students. It provides the gateway and foundation to other courses in the management and leadership area. The course draws upon various perspectives so students can analyze organizations from different lenses, including concepts from public administration, sociology, political science, organizational psychology, and management. The highlight of the course is the combinations of different approaches in instruction (class discussions, mini-lectures, simulations, case analyses, and group projects) and the focus on memo writing skills. Students often commented on the value of going through rigorous training in memo writing and case analysis. I actively integrate my research into teaching this course by writing original teaching simulations (e.g., the week on collaborative governance and the teaching simulation on advancing equity in the Minneapolis Park System) and developing applications based on my current research projects (e.g., the week on trust-building).

PA 5101: Management and Governance of Nonprofit Organizations

This course is a required class for our Certificate in Nonprofit Management students and a popular elective for students in the management and leadership concentration. It is built on the foundation of PA 5011 and provides a comprehensive overview of management and governance challenges facing nonprofit organizations. This course covers the definition, history, current size and impact on society, theoretical explanations for its existence in a market economy, and broad questions of leadership and accountability for the nonprofit sector. I am providing students with the opportunity to construct a "portfolio" of assignments, including a reflective essay on the role of nonprofits in society, a "Story of Self" recording on one's origin story in serving in the nonprofit sector, a management memo on selected cases discussed in class, and a book review or Op-Ed.

PA 5790: Quantitative Research Methods and Analysis

This course is a required class for all Master of Public Affairs mid-career students and part of their cohort experiences. For many of our MPA students, this is their first quantitative analysis class in the last ten to twenty years and they enter the class with a high level of anxiety. Therefore, rather than focusing on mathematical proofs and problem sets, I take a project-based learning approach so students actively apply these concepts in the process of designing and implementing their quantitative research projects. Recorded videos on key concepts of statistical analysis are posted on Canvas to assist student learning. In this course, students choose a publicly available dataset to conduct statistical analysis and they need to go through the whole process of collecting, cleaning, and analyzing the data as well as interpreting the results and discussing limitations. By going through the whole life cycle of quantitative analysis, students gain a deep understanding of key statistical concepts and how a quantitative analysis project is designed and implemented.

PA 8003: Integrative Doctoral Seminar in Public Affairs I

This is the essential and foundational course for all Humphrey doctoral students. It requires a broad knowledge of the field so the instructor can draw connections and speak to students in various subfields. I add to the curriculum by not only covering foundational concepts and approaches in public affairs, but also key professional development topics for our doctoral students including the publication process, how to design their research career, and how to be an effective peer reviewer. Faculty members both within and beyond the Humphrey School are invited to the last hour of the weekly seminars so students can build connections with scholars from diverse backgrounds. My key objective in teaching PA 8003 is to model how to ask critical questions and stay curious and open to different approaches in public affairs. Students appreciate my background as an interdisciplinary and international scholar who is relatively new to my current academic position since I can directly relate and speak to their dilemmas and challenges as fresh public affairs scholars.

<u>PA 8106: Research Seminar in Management, Leadership & Governance</u>

This course is a required class for our Ph.D. in Public Affairs students in the management & governance subfield. It used to be a course collectively taught by all Humphrey management & leadership faculty members (each faculty member took a special topic for a few weeks). I completely redesigned this course in Spring 2020 and took the instructor role so students can get consistent feedback from one major instructor and have a foundational level of understanding of public and nonprofit management scholarship. We typically devote the first 90 minutes of the course to the discussion of the readings on selected public management topics. For the remaining one hour, I spend time covering career development and professional development topics such as strategic positioning in the public management job market, conference networking, how to write good article reviews, how to respond to reviewer comments, and data sources in public management.

Teaching Evaluation and Professional Development

I consistently receive excellent student evaluations. Students particularly appreciate my flexibility, responsiveness, and constructive feedback on their assignments. On average, students gave me 5.74/6 on my preparation for classes and 5.87/6 on my respect for students. A full summary of my quantitative teaching evaluations is provided in section 3.3 and the narrative reviews from students are provided in my dossier. In Spring 2020 and Fall 2020, I received formative reviews and in-class peer observations of teaching by four Humphrey faculty colleagues (all past recipients of the University of Minnesota's highest award for excellence in graduate education). They all commented that I engaged students and organized interactions in class very effectively. As we shifted to remote instruction in Spring 2020, I quickly adopted new class activities that took advantage of collaborative online tools like Google Docs, Zoom breakout rooms, and flipped classroom designs so synchronous class sessions can be oriented towards effective student engagement and interactions. Faculty peers observing my class reflected positively that were learning from the technological innovations I introduced.

I am committed to continually refining my teaching skills and more effectively integrating my research into teaching activities. I have taken advantage of many opportunities to develop my skills as a teacher. I completed the year-long Early Career Teaching and Learning Program organized by the Center for Educational Innovation in 2018-2019 so I have a deeper understanding of student learning and a portfolio of diverse teaching strategies. I actively seek mid-course feedback from students in all of my classes and have made numerous adjustments to my teaching practice as a result of student feedback. In Fall 2018 and Spring 2019, I worked with the Center for Educational Innovation to complete a course observation and feedback session in my Management of Organizations and Management and Governance of Nonprofit Organizations classes. I recently joined the MPA teaching team so I can regularly bounce ideas with other instructors and bring my expertise to our innovative cohort-based MPA program.

Mentoring and Advising

I am very active in advising students and research assistants at the Humphrey School. I was the primary advisor for one doctoral student from 2019 to 2021 and serve as a committee member for another two doctoral students at Humphrey. I also advised one international visiting student

and two Humphrey International Fellows. During my time at Humphrey, I have advised and supervised four teaching assistants, eight research assistants, and sixteen MPP students. I attended the Current Research in Public Affairs doctoral seminar regularly so I can support Humphrey doctoral students beyond those formal mentorship roles. I take great pride in my students' achievements. My students have won the University Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship, U Penn Doctoral Summer Fellowship, and ARNOVA Doctoral Fellowship.

Leveraging my students' strengths and engaging them in all stages of the research progress are my top priorities as an advisor. Given we have a very small doctoral program at Humphrey, I actively reach out and involve doctoral students in my research so they can be competitive in the job market. With Humphrey doctoral students Jung Ho Choi, Shuyi Deng, and Ahmad Banamah, we have co-authored papers that have been published in top public and nonprofit management journals and edited books, including *Public Administration Review*, *VOLUNTAS,* and *The Encyclopedia of Nonprofit Management, Leadership and Governance*. My mentoring strategy for my doctoral students is that they work with me as coauthors and collaborators for projects I am leading first so they can learn and experience the publication process. I then actively encourage and advise them to become the first or single author on projects they expect to lead. My ultimate goal is that my students can become independent scholars who have their distinct intellectual agendas.

To close, I consider teaching and advising a critical part of my job. I am privileged to be part of my students' intellectual development and I aspire to be a role model they can look up to and relate to. It is so rewarding to see my students embrace who they are and grow as responsive and reflective citizens, leaders, and scholars. This motivates me to become a better teacher and scholar every day.