Informed by my experiences as a social work practitioner and researcher, I have **three main educational goals**: 1) to integrate the research-practice-theory cycle into social work education, 2) to foster students’ learning ability, problem-solving skills, and critical thinking, and 3) to nurture student’s social work professional virtues such as beneficence and justice.

First, understanding the evidence-based practice and practice-informed research cycle is crucial. When I worked in community settings that were closely connected with research institutions to develop evidence-based intervention, the benefits and challenges I saw in bridging research and practice inspired me to prepare students for this type of collaboration. For example, I invite social work clinicians as guest lecturers to introduce their experiences developing research projects at workplaces. I also introduce transformative research methods commonly used in their practice, such as photovoice and community-based participatory research. In the Social Work Research Methods course I taught, I developed an activity called “journal club” where students identified a faculty researcher at UT who shares the same interest in the population they want to serve or a social issue they want to impact; the students read their profiles and work history, then present the faculty’s research identity and the study findings to the class. I received positive feedback from my students on this assignment saying that they “feel more connected with the school and the population they care about”.

Second, fostering skills are also a critical part of my teaching objectives. There is an old saying in China: “Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime.” The ability to be a self-taught learner, to solve problems independently and to critically appraise various practice behaviors (from micro to macro) are key competencies for social workers, more important than the knowledge in any textbook. I teach my students how to read research articles effectively and how to critique social work interventions with an eye for sample representativeness and the rigor of the intervention design and the evaluation process. When the students encounter difficulties in accomplishing the assignments, I provide guidance on resources they can explore rather than providing them with answers directly.

Third, we would not be successful in training the next generation’s social workers if we fail to teach and mentor them on how to be good social workers and good persons. To model ethics in their professional practice, I create rules in the classroom to form a nonjudgmental safe place for respectful communication. I also incorporate misconduct or unethical practice cases in class to initiate discussion and reflections on potential harms to clients, particularly marginalized clients, when social workers fail to follow the codes of ethics. I had the opportunity to incorporate this part of my teaching philosophy into the classroom while serving as the faculty facilitator of the Foundation of Interprofessional Practice course. This is a course partnership between the Steve Hicks School of Social Work, Dell Medical School, College of Pharmacy, and School of Nursing. This course brings together over 250 students and 60 faculty each year in interprofessional teams for an entire academic year to learn the core competencies and essential skills of interprofessional collaboration and practice. During this course, I led an activity in which students guessed patients’ background and identity based on their appearance, to help students recognize their unintentional implicit biases. We discussed how biases could cause patient safety problems and the activities successfully engaged students in increasing their awareness of their own biases.

To achieve the above three goals, my **three pedagogy approaches** are to 1) create an engaging and inclusive classroom that is safe, motivating and respectful for students with diverse backgrounds; 2) facilitate collaboration and mutual support; and 3) support self-care.
Create an engaging and inclusive classroom. Feeling engaged and included is a fundamental step towards getting interested in the course contents and actively learning. As an international student whose first language is not English, to understand and participate in class was a daily struggle when I first came to the States for graduate school. The exam question used case examples about popular TV series that I have never watched, the class materials were not relevant to my life experience, and most class activities were fast paced in-depth discussions that I had a difficult time following. As an educator, I want to create an environment that can include students from diverse backgrounds and accommodate different learning style. I use multi-media, group discussion and self-reflection papers in my courses to ensure students with diverse learning styles and skills have opportunities to engage. For the course contents, I select readings and videos on a variety of topics with diverse populations. In terms of assessment, I assign weekly presentations, closed book exams and project papers to evaluate learning progress and adjust my course content accordingly. I also create a mid-term instructor evaluation survey to collect feedback on course contents and teaching style to assess and adjust my approaches.

Facilitate collaboration and mutual support. Regarding the increasingly complex nature of social problems, interdisciplinary teamwork becomes unprecedentedly essential. Thus, I integrate working, supporting and learning from peers in my pedagogy. I encourage students to work in a group and I assign peer-review assignments so they can have an opportunity to learn from each other. I also teach them how to professionally communicate their opinions with peers by facilitating small group project discussions. As a faculty facilitator for the Foundation of Interprofessional Practice course, I made sure that in the group discussion, students from different disciplines all get a chance to share their opinions. I set a rule that if one or two students speak more than three times, they need to invite other students in the group who have not spoken up to share thoughts before they can talk again. I also see myself as a collaborator with my students rather than a lecturer in the classroom. I encourage my students to use me as external support and resource for their other courses and career development.

Support self-care. I believe that social workers should be ambassadors of self-care, because of the caring and advocacy nature of this professional. For frontline workers, the ability to take care of their own self can sustain their competence to help others. As an instructor of record during COVID-19, I always encouraged students to express their emotions in class and communicate within their small group to process together. Many students have care responsibilities, which impacts their learning styles and schedules. I provided flexible teaching modalities such as online and in-person hybrid modes and assignment submission formats like written paper or video essays to accommodate their needs. I always prioritize their health and care responsibilities and modify their study plan to ensure they meet their learning goals.

During my doctoral program, I received high ratings and positive feedbacks on my teaching evaluations showing that students respond to this style of teaching. The courses I excel at teaching and courses that fit my teaching pedagogy and experience are Social Work Research, Human Behavior in the Social Environment, Social Work Theories, Interprofessional Collaboration and Practice, Motivational Interviewing, Health Policy, Qualitative Research Methodology and Statistics.

In conclusion, most social work students come to the profession because they care about the well-being of underserved populations and want to incite social change, and this is what I hope to achieve in my teaching. I want my future students to feel confident walking out of my classroom, equipped with not only knowledge in the textbook, but also essential skillsets and professionalism to fight the battle against injustice and to realize social equity.