

UTA Program Final Reflection

This was my third semester in the undergraduate teaching assistant program. I worked with Michelle Ort in the course Math 195M, a seminar for first year mathematics majors. Given that my first two semesters in the program involved teaching calculus, this was fairly different from what I was used to before. The possibility of doing some work in-person also added some freshness to this semester's teaching assistantship.

My main duties in 195M were holding office hours and grading. Office hours were a little different because I was able to hold them in person for the first time since I started TA-ing, which was really exciting. I would say I generally had a little bit more participation in those than I had before; there was a student in office hours something like four or five times over the course of the semester. It was fundamentally different as well in the sense that my job there was more or less LaTeX troubleshooting more so than teaching math. Grading was also a different experience this time around. I had quizzes to process but the two main projects that came later in the semester were grading research project presentations and then resumes. Those require different methods of assessment than your typical math assignment so in that sense it was good practice in mixing things up. I particularly enjoyed grading the presentations. It was a lot of fun to listen to students talk for a few minutes about mathematical topics that they were excited by.

On the tutoring side of things, I generally had much higher attendance in my calculus tutoring hours than previous semesters. I believe my peak attendance was about nine students at once and I almost always had at least two people in the room. I tried out some new approaches to instruction for the purpose of managing these larger groups of students and making sure everyone got the help they needed without just giving out answers. Eventually I settled into a method where I provided just enough instruction for each person to be able to work on their question independently for a few minutes and then moved on to the next person. This was a little concerning at first because I was afraid I wasn't doing enough but it seemed to be like the students actually really liked this way of doing things. I feel like I was able to really streamline my communication by putting this into practice.

Overall, I would say that my participation in the UTA program this semester has certainly continued to increase my involvement in the mathematics department as well as with math as a subject. It provided many opportunities for me to practice providing instruction to students as well as with other important aspects of teaching a course like grading. I would say that these have helped me gain a greater understanding of and appreciation for what it takes to be a great teacher.

I would like to thank Dr. Duron and Dr. Peca-Medlin for organizing the program this semester and making it such a great experience to be a part of as well as Michelle for providing me with opportunities to continue growing as a teaching assistant.