

### UTA Reflection

The Fall 2021 academic semester marked my second semester working as a UTA for the Mathematics Department. The Fall 2021 academic semester also marked the glorious return to in-person classes. These two combined meant the UTA job was no longer a remote position like this past spring; I could finally be physically present in a classroom with my students.

This semester, I was a UTA for Math 120R: Calculus Preparation. My experience as a returning UTA was desired in a lower level course this semester, and not without reason. Almost all of my students were freshmen, all of whom had just been through nearly two years of entirely virtual learning. This course was also unique because it was not concurrent with all the other regular academic session courses: students spent the first three weeks determining if they could move on to Calculus, complete with a proficiency exam.

This course did not realistically provide much engagement with mathematics as a subject. Pre-Calculus is a subject I have known for many years, and TA'ed for in high school. The topics did not require any brushing up on. I will say, however, working as a UTA for Pre-Calculus improved my public speaking skills and boosted my confidence, if only by a small margin. My most demanding duties were hosting review sessions for the three midterms and one final exam. No longer did I have the luxury of hosting a Zoom meeting from the comfort of my apartment. This was a traditional classroom review setting, albeit with masks. The mask requirement meant I had to make efforts to enunciate more clearly and less quickly, otherwise my spoken words would have been rather unintelligible.

Other than the exam review sessions, my duties involved grading and coming to class a couple times per week, neither of which were particularly helpful to me, but I'd like to think grading was of substantial help to both my mentor and the students. That was my overall mindset for this semester's UTA work: even though I may not get much out of it, it is all for my students, and I will help wherever I can. Personal communication was a toe out of line that I felt was in due order, so students could actually have reliable answers to their questions. Not that I ended up communicating with a large number of students, just a few who utilized the proposed way to reach me.

I have grown more on the fence as to whether I would recommend the UTA program to other students. It has become apparent that it is not about how good you are at math, although it is preferred that you have some liking towards math. It's about your mindset and willingness to help, the extent of your altruism and whether you can afford to give up a significant portion of your time for the benefit of students you may never speak to again. Perhaps I made a lasting contribution to their academic careers; I should hope that none of them come to me after their final and vent their struggles during it. It has become a double-edged sword: the UTA program offers lots of resources and opportunities outside of the class you TA for, but you will have to sacrifice a good portion of time. It is ultimately up to you, potential applicant, to gauge the tradeoff.