

Reflection

As the semester progressed towards the end, I began thinking about what I've learnt and what I have contributed so far in the UTA program. Before we dive into that, let me talk a little bit more about my background.

My name is Xinyi Hu, a sophomore majoring in Statistics and Data Science. In the Fall 2021 I was an Undergraduate Teaching Assistant, under Tynan Lazarus' First-Semester Calculus class. My mentor, Tynan, always inspired me to think of the UTA program this way: "Don't always think of what you need to do for students. Think about what you can learn from this experience." Just as he described, besides helping his classes, I also developed academic and communication skills and was able to view a class from the perspective of an instructor.

The worksheet on the Normal Distribution is the most important task I've done in the UTA program. The hardest part was how to phrase my words in an accurate, easy to understand, but also intriguing way. The first draft I came up with was insipid and full of mathematical terms, but soon I realized that if even I wouldn't bother to read it, it cannot possibly attract any attention from students, especially if it is not for credit. In my second draft I deleted all hard-to-understand terms and rephrased them using my own words; I also incorporated visual representations and linked interactive resources for students to explore. I believe that passive information input is much less effective than active learning, during which students may think, "huh...interesting. I'd like to try it myself and learn more about it."

I also attended classes on a regular basis and facilitated group discussions. During the process I learnt to situate myself into students' view: what do they know and what are they confused about? Where is the gap in understanding that needs to be fixed? For me all concepts in

Calculus 1 are easy and intuitive. However, it is not the case for someone that just got to know it and is still trying to fit the concept into their knowledge framework. Each student is unique and I tried to adapt my teaching based on their style and background. Although I do not consider teaching as my future career goal, the ability to explain a complex concept in an easy to understand way is always important, regardless of the career you enter into. It's even better if you could attract the attention of the audience and lead their eyes along the way.

After this experience, I would recommend the UTA program to other undergraduate students because it benefits participants' academic, professional, and interpersonal skills at the same time.