

John Sheehan

Fall 2022 UTA Program Reflection

Fall 2022 was my first time participating in the UTA program and it was an amazing opportunity to grow as a person and learn more about teaching mathematics. Everyone in the program I interacted with was supportive and wanted to see me succeed. Being a UTA for a course I previously took allowed me to engage with the material more thoroughly, since now I was able to make deeper connections that improved my own understanding and also improved my ability to explain the material to students seeing it for the first time. Because I was revisiting material I had already learned, I was able to strengthen my understanding of the content in the class and content in adjacent classes.

Being a UTA improved my communication abilities when discussing mathematics because it taught me to think ahead to the goal of the explanation, crafting what I say to lead the listener to that goal more easily. Not only has this been useful for understanding and teaching difficult concepts in academia, but I have been able to adopt the method of speaking more generally, so how I communicate with others has more direction. Part of my UTA learning was attending some of the lectures to watch my mentor teach, which was very beneficial to experience a lecture without having to learn the material. Going to class every week proved to increase my proficiency in notetaking and retaining information after lectures since I learned to pick out the important information easily.

I learned many new skills from the weekly UTA seminars, which were aimed at supporting us in our duties as UTAs and introducing us to tools that the mathematics community uses frequently, such as LaTeX.

Interacting with the students was one of the most enjoyable parts of being a UTA since I got to help them grow by virtue of them coming to my review sessions and office hours. The learning with my students did not go one way, though, as they almost always had a different perspective that made me think about things differently, which was for the better.

I greatly enjoyed being a part of the UTA program. Dr. Peca-Medlin and Dr. Upadhyay helped tremendously by conducting the seminars and other forms of support, and I learned more from my mentor and students than I would have ever expected. I highly recommend other undergraduate math majors to be a part of the UTA program because of the experience that comes from helping teach a class of students and the wonderful community that I got to engage with more.