I am incredibly glad that I was asked to be a TA last year by my wonderful Vector Calculus teacher, Mariamma Varghese. I went in to speak with her after the final and she recommended that I apply for the position and ask to have her as my mentor over the course of this last semester. I'm incredibly thankful that she asked me, because I never thought that I could have been a TA. I had assumed my TA from Vector was a graduate student who was much further in his mathematics career than me. I had only been at the university for two semesters and had only recently declared a math major- although I had done well in Vector I would certainly have called myself a novice (math has never come easily to me- it's a lot of work!) and would have thought myself completely incapable of helping with a class. Call it an impulse, I said 'yes' without letting my fears hold me back. And I am so, so glad that I did.

Initially when I started I thought I was clueless- I was given my first set of homework to grade and almost panicked- I had no idea that I had to actually write the rubric and solutions! Although the first homework I graded was a mess (full of lots of pen marks crossed out or long unnecessary explanations of what went wrong in the problem) Mariamma encouraged me to improve, and the two ladies running the UTA seminar, Gabriella and Lydia, taught me better ways to grade assignments. Gradually, I improved and I became less nervous. I got better at answering questions and was more confident in my knowledge at office hours and in the tutoring lab.

Although my confidence was increasing, initially I still wasn't very sure of myself. My first review session was terrifying! I thought I was an excellent public speaker, but I learned I still had a lot to learn. I would fumble over things I knew and get flustered when people asked me questions that I couldn't immediately answer. Honestly, learning how to address a group of people without panicking and being willing to answer any question that came my way (even if the answer was "I don't know") has been one of the most valuable lessons I have learned so far, and I am sure that I will continue to use that skill in my professional career. This semester has helped me not only gain a better understanding of vector calculus and taught me how to teach- it has also taught me how to be confident in myself as a mathematician.