

UTA Reflection

In Fall 2018, I had the wonderful opportunity to be an Undergraduate Teaching Assistant (UTA) with Dr. Jeremy Booher for Linear Algebra (MATH 313). This experience has helped me grow professionally and academically. I dedicated 7 hours a week to the program and in return, I received an experience and skillset that will last a lifetime. My time was spent each week by holding one office hour, two hours in MTL 121, two hours of grading and two hours of preparing lectures, giving lectures, holding review sessions, etc.

By holding an office hour once a week, I was able to engage with the students as well as review any material I might have forgotten. My office hour was held on the days that homework was due. This allowed me to assist students with the difficult problems as well as identify potential problems that might be worth grading.

MTL 121 is the tutoring room for Vector Calculus (MATH 223) students and Calculus II (MATH 129) students. I took both courses nearly 3 years ago, thus my time in MTL 121 was difficult. At times, I felt discouraged when I couldn't help a student. When I could help, it was extremely rewarding. I think that if I had been a UTA for one of these courses, my time in MTL 121 would have been more productive. However, after spending two hours a week there this past semester, I feel as though I remember more from both courses than I ever thought I would. MTL 121 was my opportunity to help students as well as remind myself how to do the difficult problems in those courses.

On weekends, I would spend two hours grading. Some people might describe grading as being boring, but I think it was a productive task. Besides helping Dr. Booher with the amount of grading he has, I was able to engage with the material. By grading, I could identify difficult concepts and common mistakes so that these could be mentioned in class and corrected before an exam. Additionally, grading helped me prepare for review sessions by keeping me up-to-date with the course timeline.

Each week I would get a new task relating to teaching that I was able to develop and work on at my own pace. The most rewarding tasks were lecturing and creating practice problems. Throughout the semester, I lectured in Dr. Booher's courses three times. Before I would lecture, I was able to practice with Dr. Booher and correct any mistakes. This task, as scary as it was at first, was the most rewarding of the program. It taught me self-confidence and public speaking. Both of which advanced my academic and professional careers. When I would create practice problems, I would type them in LaTeX, a software I had not used before. Since my first introduction to LaTeX, I have written a report for another course in it and I will continue to use it in my other classes.

Overall, I would highly recommend the UTA program. It is a rewarding experience that you only get once. Through review sessions, lecturing, office hours, and tutoring, I have become a more well-rounded individual and grown professionally and academically throughout the semester.