

UTA Program Reflection
Jenna Gorham
Fall 2020

This was my second semester as a part of the UTA program. I worked with a section of proofs (Math 323) taught by Dr. Jason Aubrey. Proofs remains to this day one of my favorite classes that I have taken, so I was thrilled to have the opportunity to work with the course as a teaching assistant. I feel that as a UTA, I am able to pay it forward by putting my love for the course material into my work, and my hope is always that the students I help can come to enjoy the class as much as I did.

Dr. Aubrey taught his section of proofs using a flipped-classroom model in which students watched recorded lecture videos outside of class and used class time to work through problems in small groups. I attended class twice a week to help facilitate these discussions. In doing so, I got a lot of practice working directly with students. Between the time I spent attending class, holding office hours, and staffing the virtual calculus tutoring room, I spent five hours a week teaching hands-on. It was a wonderful learning experience. My mathematical communication skills improved significantly, and I pushed myself further by trying to find different ways to explain concepts to students.

I also spent a couple of hours each week producing videos in which I demonstrated solutions to select problems on the previous week's homework assignment. This was unlike anything I've done previously. It forced me to think about how best to present material and how I could most effectively teach someone the idea behind a proof. My LaTeX skills improved as I used Beamer presentations as the basis of my videos, and I practiced speaking clearly and succinctly over my slides. I still have a lot of room to grow, but over just a short few months, the quality of the videos I was producing increased significantly, and the time it took me to make them dropped.

I strongly recommend the UTA program to any undergraduate passionate about mathematics. The UTA program provides students with a unique opportunity to put their love for the material they study to good use by sharing their knowledge and enthusiasm with others. The program allows UTAs to build skills they might not have many opportunities to practice otherwise. And importantly, working as a UTA is immensely enjoyable. I looked forward to attending class and holding office hours each week because working one on one with the proofs students made me so excited to talk about mathematics, and every day I've worked as a UTA has made me glad I decided to apply.