

My time in the UTA Program has made me a better mathematician, communicator, public speaker, and an all around better person. Learning to teach is no easy task. Teaching is not merely about understanding. Helping people to understand requires a very deep understanding that I really did not comprehend until I started practicing teaching by answering student questions, holding review sessions, and working in the tutoring lab. It is easy to get discouraged when you explain something to the best of your ability and a student still does not understand, but I now see it as an opportunity to look at a topic in a different light and see if I can explain it from a different angle. The change in perspective that comes from the teaching process is enlightening, and leads to deep understanding of the topics you are teaching.

Teaching is a difficult process if you do not know how to communicate with people effectively. This is a skill that I lacked severely before my time as a UTA. I have become much better than I was just a short four months ago at expressing the ideas that I have clearly and concisely so that those who listen to me can understand. In teaching Vector Calculus, effective communication does not always come from understandable language because of the spatial nature of the class. Through my teaching of the subjects found within the scope of Vector Calculus, I have learned how to integrate visual aids into my communication such as using white boards or even holding out pieces of paper and markers to represent surfaces and vectors. Through the UTA Program, I have become a more effective verbal and non-verbal communicator.

In holding review sessions before exams, I have become a more effective public speaker. It is daunting speaking in front of even just six or seven people, but some of my review sessions had close to 30 people in them! I had to learn how to project my voice to be heard in the whole classroom and I had to keep high levels of energy to keep students engaged. These were both things that I was not good at before I was a UTA, but now I can say with confidence that they are traits I have little to no trouble with.

When I came into the UTA Program and began to TA for Vector Calculus, in all honesty, I felt inadequate, but being a TA has been a real learning experience for me. I learned so much about myself and the teaching process, and I really feel like through the UTA Program, I have been able to rise to the challenge of being a TA in a course such as Vector Calculus.