

# Undergraduate Teaching Assistantship (UTA) Reflection

Spring 2019

Marcel Hudiani

May 1, 2019

After experiencing what it was like to lecture in class, I immediately suggested the UTA program to my good friend who shares the same passion about math. Working as a UTA will not be satisfying if you are looking for monetary gains. The benefit is anything but monetary.

I was once a tutor before becoming a UTA. From that experience, I knew that I like to teach. However, working as a tutor does not give me a full experience of becoming an instructor. Being a UTA gave me a fuller experience of working in academia and helped me realize that being a lecturer is something that I can see myself doing in the future. So **being a UTA helped me verify and choose my career path.**

It is a common saying that teaching strengthens understanding. But why (or how)? After attending my instructor's class several times, I realized that when you teach, you will constantly face many questions from students in addition to explaining every class material. This constant exposure to questions forces you to explain (and think about) various concepts in different ways. This is also one of the key differences from being a tutor. Depending on what subject you tutor, problems may be computational and not conceptual. In addition, students only ask questions on certain topics or homework problems (not a comprehensive review on all class material). I was fortunate that my instructor allowed me to lecture the class. I was able to give half-lectures two or three times during the semester in addition to 3 review sessions. This allowed me to get a fuller understanding of the material that I missed when I took the class the first time. Things are always easier the second time. This is another benefit of being a UTA: **You get to retake a class while getting paid!** I highly recommend (if you like to teach) to take as many opportunities as possible to provide lectures. I highly suggest discussing this as early as possible with your instructor and plan out lectures accordingly. You will learn a lot. Your UTA experience will not be complete without lecturing.

Finally, I would like to highlight some of the benefits that might be overlooked. In my opinion, **UTA program also improves soft skills** (skills that are transferrable and needed for all kinds of jobs), e.g. presentation skills and communication/interpersonal skills. When I gave lecture or review sessions for example, I get to practice and improve my presentation and communication skills. In addition, I practiced my interpersonal skills when interacting with students from different backgrounds in tutoring or during office hours. The fact that I worked alongside an instructor gave me the experience working for a supervisor and building a

relationship with a supervisor. Plus, the UTA seminar provides tips in improving your skills in these areas! While the opportunity to practice these soft skills may be limited as compared to internships for example, they are still benefits that one obtains.

For me, being a UTA was fulfilling because it gave me the opportunity to help others while gaining a better understanding of mathematics. I intend to be a UTA again if given the time and opportunity. The UTA program is really beneficial for many students and I hope that it would continue to be funded in the future.