

Teaching has always played a crucial role in my life, both as a student and as an instructor. I had always considered being a teacher growing up, but I became much more serious about it during my undergraduate degree at San Diego State University. Specifically, it was my upper division math courses which made me want to become an instructor in higher education. The material of these courses was interesting and enjoyable, but it was really the positive influence of my professors that sold me on teaching as a profession. During this same time period, I also had my first experience as an instructor for a precalculus lab. This further reinforced my passion for teaching. It is because of these positive influences and experiences that I wish to find a career in academia.

As a graduate student at Clemson, I have served as the instructor of record for Calculus I (2 semesters), Calculus II (1 semester), Introductory Statistics (1 semester), and Business Calculus I (4 semesters). I have also TA'd for various classes at both Clemson and San Diego State, including Differential Equations (6 semesters), Calculus III (1 semester), and Precalculus (1 semester). With several semesters and a variety of classes under my belt, I've learned how to best incorporate effective teaching practices in my classes.

An often overlooked skill needed to teach at the college level is being able to manage the logistics of a class. This includes maintaining an inclusive classroom environment, keeping grades and resources up to date, managing accessibility accommodations, managing TAs, and communicating information to students. I struggled to juggle all these components when I first started teaching. However, with several semesters of experience at this point, I have now learned how to manage these logistics. I did this by improving my organization, taking extra time to prepare, and staying on top of grades and emails. This has made the classroom experience better for both me and my students, which has contributed greatly to their success.

Another aspect of teaching which I find important is accommodating student needs. As instructors, it is our responsibility to adapt to our student's learning styles, skill levels, personalities, and anything else that contributes to their classroom success. Especially with introductory courses, students enter with varying backgrounds and skills in mathematics. By implementing extra office hours, extra reviews before exams, and responding thoroughly and kindly on email questions, I always aid my students in their learning outside the classroom – including those who may have weaker backgrounds and may need more help. Keeping the instruction entertaining and engaging also helps their learning inside the classroom. I like to crack jokes and show real-world examples of concepts to keep class fun and captivating for my students. The more engaging class is, the better they learn and retain information.

I have taught classes in a variety of structures at Clemson. This includes classes of a traditional lecture style, as well as “flipped” classes where classroom time is solely dedicated to collaborative activities. I’ve learned that a combination of the two is usually most effective for students. This mix of both lectures and collaborative activities paces the class in a way so that all the material can be covered through lectures, but still allows for hands-on learning for students with the collaborative activities. The activities allow for more instructor-student interaction for those who learn better with doing problems, while the lecture style still caters to students who crave a more traditional approach. I’ve evolved my teaching practices towards this mixed style, which I plan to continue and further improve upon to better accommodate student learning.

Lastly, one of the most important and motivating parts of teaching to me is building bonds with students. From a student learning perspective, students feel more comfortable approaching their instructor with questions if their instructor is personable and has a connection with them. Beyond the classroom, knowing that I’ve been a positive influence and made a difference in a student’s life means the world to me. This is what motivates me most to build relationships with students and be the best instructor I can. To this day, I still run into my students from past semesters on and off campus. It is always nice to hear what they are up to and how their other classes at Clemson are going. I’ve had several honors as an instructor in Clemson’s math department, such as being nominated for an outstanding graduate teaching award and being asked to sit on teaching panels of experienced instructors. I believe it is my personal connections with my students that has made me a good instructor deserving of these honors.

In conclusion, I am eager to serve in a teaching position. I am looking forward to contributing towards the success of students, bettering my own skills, and serving in a teaching role. Teaching is very enjoyable and meaningful to me, and I am excited to take on a position where I will have the opportunity to teach.