Teaching Statement

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I find teaching extremely challenging and can hardly imagine my life without it. I love teaching now, but at the beginning of my career, over ten years ago, my experience was very difficult. My teaching load as of a lecturer included up to 34 semester hours. Several years later, when I moved to the United States and became more familiar with its system of education, I started enjoying teaching. Now my passion for teaching extends far beyond the college classroom, and I really appreciate talking about mathematics with others. Many of my friends with children in either high school or college often seek my help in solving mathematical problems because I am known to be able to explain hard mathematical problems in a simple way.

My more than ten years of teaching experience include lecturing in the classrooms of different class sizes, recitations and lab recitations in which students work through applications using computers with mathematical software (such as Maple). I taught courses of different level in mathematics, statistics and information technologies. I discovered that teaching effectively is a constantly evolving process which extends far beyond simply knowing the material. As an experienced teacher, I am aware of difficult spots in a subject and can focus specifically on them. I consider simplicity of explanation one of the most important factors in teaching and try to explain difficult things in a simple and sometimes nonstandard way, using examples from everyday life for visualization. Seeking such explanations and examples leads to continuous improvement of my teaching abilities.

At the beginning of my teaching career I realized that enthusiasm does not guarantee success. I quickly learned that the time an instructor dedicates to the proper organization of the course always pays off, since it allows him/her to explain the material easier and faster, therefore providing students with a clearer understanding of the matter. To me, constant monitoring of each student’s comprehension through in-class discussions and quizzes is very important, and I encourage communication with the students during office hours, by appointment, and email. I also believe that the teacher-student relationship must display elements of a partnership of individuals.

My experience led me to the principles that I have postulated and always follow:

- Be well prepared with a structured lecture before entering the class.
- Come to class with a good attitude and provide a comfortable and friendly environment where the students can ask questions and discuss course material.
- Adjust the speed of the lecture so that the students do not fall behind.
- Explain hard things in several different ways, clearly and with as much simplicity as possible.
- Never rush to provide a solution to a problem. Instead, give hints and work with the students to come up with a collective solution.
- Be accessible to students. Listen to their questions and be willing to help.
· Begin and end the class on time, and never delay grading.
· Provide reviews before tests and quizzes and always explain solutions to the exercises after they are returned.

Here is what students have said about me in their feedback forms (the original forms can be provided upon your request):

· “Very motivated to teach; enthusiastic; kind”.
· “He always provided a comfortable and friendly environment where students could ask questions and discuss course material”.
· “You are always willing to help and show how to do a problem correctly. You are always very nice and respectful”.
· “Makes sure he explains material in a way we can understand (gives alternative examples, etc.). Gives back quizzes/homework on time and explains the correct answers”.
· “He is very attentive and willing to help. He seems generally concerned that the students learn and often inquires whether everyone understands. He takes his time when explaining the problems to make certain that everyone comprehends”.
· “He did an amazing job at making math a truly fun subject and by doing so helped me understand the material. He also would bring up challenging questions about mathematics just to keep the students interested and challenged throughout the course. Surprisingly, his English was also very good, as well as his understanding”.

While experience helps improve one’s teaching ability, I believe teachers must work hard each semester to present material in a clear and fresh way to their classes. I strive to improve my teaching by seeking students’ feedbacks, reading and experimenting with new methods, and attending teaching seminars. I look forward to embracing new teaching methods and discovering those that are the most effective at conveying the material to my future students.

In the spring of 2007, while in Pittsburgh, I initiated, organized and conducted a unique virtual mathematical Olympiad for high school students in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Prior to its start, I spent several months preparing the students by discussing problems and solutions in an online forum. This event was a huge success and was followed by a couple of articles in the local newspapers in Tashkent.