TEACHING STATEMENT

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When I took calculus for the first time, my instructor was a very masterful teacher. I have tried to emulate the good things that I saw him do during my career as an instructor. He taught with clarity and made the subject come alive, which kept me interested in the material and also helped me to understand it well.

As an instructor, I believe that it is my responsibility to relate the information in the curriculum in a clear and understandable way, so as best to facilitate the students’ learning. I find that I enjoy teaching the most when my students are engaged in learning and when they enjoy learning. I think of the course as a safari and of myself as a safari guide, leading the students through an adventurous and yet unexplored territory.

I try to have a good balance of lecture and interactive learning. When the entire class is lecture, many students become disengaged, either bored or confused. When they are allowed to ask questions or even come to the board to solve questions themselves, they have more participation in the learning process and seem to be more eager to learn. Lecturing is good because it is the most efficient way to convey information however, opportunities for students to engage and apply the information are also necessary. Asking the students leading questions to guide their thinking and having them work problems on their own is helpful to encourage them to assimilate the information being given in the lecture.

When available, I like to incorporate technology in the classroom. If I can write the notes for class using a touchscreen, then I can upload the notes to Blackboard for students to view later. I believe this is useful to students who were not able to attend class on a given day, or who simply would like to review what was done in class.

I value feedback from colleagues who observe me and from my students themselves. Student feedback can be very useful in determine my strengths and weaknesses and examining what needs to be done to improve. Due to this kind of feedback, I believe I have been able to more clearly articulate the concepts being taught, and more fairly and appropriately assess the students’ learning through tests and quizzes.

In all areas—whether it be math, other sciences, arts, or any other field—I believe that the pursuit of knowledge should be an end in itself, and not necessarily just an end to a means. When teaching students, I believe that it is useful to incorporate possible applications of the concepts being taught, since in the case of undergraduate level mathematics the applications are many. At the same time, I believe that this should not be the focus of the course. I believe that the mathematics should be appreciated in itself. This becomes increasingly truer of higher-level courses, where the only application may be further research in mathematics. A teacher is most effective when he or she is successful in instilling appreciation for the material being taught and in inspiring the students to learn more.

I am committed to valuing the individuality of each student. I have taught students with many different backgrounds and have learned much from the diversity that I have experienced. Each student has the right to learn in an environment conducive to his or her personal growth. Each student has individual strengths and weaknesses that should be understood and respected. All students should be given equal opportunity to succeed in the classroom.