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UTA Reflection Report

Coming into this semester as a Undergraduate Teaching Assistant for Math 129, I have to admit that I was nervous and overwhelmed, as I did not feel I could confidently help students with every calculus topic in this course. It has been a while since I took this course myself, and I feel as though there may have been a drop in my understanding of certain calculus concepts that have not been reiterated throughout the rest of my math courses. However, my biggest takeaway from being a UTA is that this fear of not being entirely knowledgeable on every topic is part of every teacher's path, and this job provided me with the opportunity to learn not just this lesson, but many others that will be applicable throughout my future career in education.

As a prospective high school teacher myself, I feel as though the UTA program has provided me with the opportunity to take my first step into a secondary teaching role. My previous experiences in tutoring were mostly with younger, elementary students, so this was a big jump in mathematical content and overall experience as a tutor. It was much more similar to the career path I hope to take, and while overwhelming at times, I think it provided me with the reassurance I have been needing to continue my path in education. While I am by no means a master of every calculus topic, it helped me gain confidence in my mathematics abilities and helped me realize that I know much more than I often give myself credit for. Even though I was not always able to effectively answer every students' challenging questions, I was typically able to lead them down the right path towards a better understanding of the topic, which in turn allows the students to come to a solution themselves.

A few takeaways I have from this experience are the importance of effective communication and continuous check ups on students for understanding, as well as a growth in my own confidence for being an educator. I have been able to see how students react to different forms of communication, and have experienced firsthand how a change in the way messages are relayed from teacher to student can completely change the student's experience. I have also seen that checking in on every student, regardless of whether these students tend to have a better grasp of the course content overall, is important in every class setting. One challenge I faced was finding a way to effectively help students without simply giving them an answer to the questions they were asking. I have learned, though, that this is a skill genuinely learned over time with

practice, and being part of the UTA program has allowed me the perfect opportunity to gain this much needed experience.

I would definitely recommend the UTA program to other undergraduate students. It requires, in my opinion, the perfect amount of effort and time to not feel overwhelming, but also allow for personal growth throughout the semester. I personally feel much more prepared going into a future job in education after getting to see first hand how important the small details of a teacher's communication, commitment, and effort can be in student success.