## **Teaching Statement**

Qihang Sun

My parents love telling me this story from my childhood: in the evenings after dinner, I asked them to sit together so I could show them what I had learned as a small "teacher." I went to a good kindergarten and primary school in my hometown where the teachers were creative and kind to children. Teaching is not just about imparting the knowledge but setting a good example for students to follow – that's what I got to know from these experiences.

My first teaching experience was during my undergraduate years, when our head-teacher asked me to assist her probability and statistics class. Students always had questions from every aspect and different knowledge levels, some of which I had never thought about. It was quite a challenge finding the "why" behind their questions and figuring out "how" to guide them among the problems in probability theory. Yet, I found I was happy to hear "That makes sense. Thank you very much" (in Chinese, of course) from students, especially when I felt so tired but still tried to make every step reasonable to them. Teaching means empathy and help – I understood this and became used to hearing and understanding others.

At the University of Illinois, I have experienced nearly all of the teaching styles. As a grader, I try to point out what the student is missing among the steps and remind them to review a certain topic. As a tutor, I break down each question into smaller steps and provided a logical thought process for every student. As a leader in our discussion-based active learning class, I try to help all of the students follow the progress of classes well and to explain the main goal for each chapter. I usually start with reviewing key concepts and formulae, including working through example questions on the blackboard. During the group study time, I sometimes call for attention and explain carefully about the common confusions from students. These active learning classes became more challenging during the covid semesters. I actively participated in the class forum and kept communication with students in quarantine through email and Zoom to ensure they could effectively follow along with the class. I have also taught for NetMath, an online remote-learning program, where the communication is mainly through Mathematica. These various types of teaching made me become affirmative on the principle: treat every student with respect and understanding, keeping in mind that we are all learners.

I'm honored to share a few comments from my anonymous students' evaluations:

• Qihang Sun clearly has a deep understanding of the topics in Calc 3. He did everything right in discussions, put helpful notes on the board, gave us a quick run-down of the worksheet, and was available if you needed help. He was also extremely kind and respectful and I always felt welcomed and heard in class.

- The instructor would explain a problem that a lot of students struggled with from a previous class first thing before doing a new worksheet. He wrote the basic information that was needed to complete a worksheet on the board which was very helpful.
- Very smart and patient. And kind.
- A great TA, wish I had him as an actual teacher instead of just a TA.

In Spring 2021, I was on the <u>list of teachers ranked as excellent by their students</u> for Math 234 (Business calculus).

In conclusion, my teaching experiences, from "childhood role playing" to teaching at the university level, makes my teaching philosophy rooted in empathy, patience, and inspiration. In my next academic job, I will continue to ensure that every student feels valued and understood.