TEACHING STATEMENT

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My formal teaching experience started fall of 1998 when I worked as intern at No. 10 Middle School at Changsha, China. During my internship, I taught mathematics three months for a class of grade 8 students in the middle school. From the second year of graduate study at Texas A & M University, I was firstly a teaching assistant for some advanced undergraduate courses, and then I was responsible for some recitation sections for Calculus I and Calculus II. In Spring of 2007, I was an instructor for Calculus for business, economics, life sciences and social sciences. My section has approximately 20 students. The class size allowed for individual interactions and taught me how to manage a class. I found that the main challenge of teaching such a course is to motivate the students to focus their efforts on understanding basic mathematical concepts. I chose some typical problems and allowed them to think a few minutes and asked the volunteers to explain and show their solutions to the class. In the meantime, I often asked students to apply different concepts or methods (some from their previous studies) to solve the same problem and then we made the comparison of different techniques. This made the problem easily approachable and reminded the students the concepts they had previously learned.

My approach to teaching begins with seeing students as individuals. This includes making myself available and approachable to them by setting up office hours and talking to them after class. I prepare each class carefully by selecting examples that convey concepts. Often the examples from interesting application areas are selected to motivate the students to learn mathematical concepts. I try to take advantage of computer equipment (computers and projectors) in the classroom by showing examples using computer animations, when necessary. At the beginning of each class, I try to review briefly what we have already covered and what is needed for the class. I try to create an atmosphere that promotes active participation. After formulating the main facts, theorems, or examples, I ask whether there are any questions. I welcome the questions, and encourage students to ask questions by often praising them and their inquires.

To show the students that I am available, I often come to the classroom five minutes early and linger after the end of the class to answer immediate questions. I remind them of my office hours and my contact information. I encourage them to send me an e-mail, and I promise them a prompt reply. I often try to reply to the students' e-mail within 5-10 minutes from the time I have read it, and check my e-mail very regularly. Many students like this option, because it provides them flexibility in their schedule. I also like using matlab, maple or other softwares to enhance the understanding of the material.

I plan to improve my teaching continuously based upon the experience I have gained in the classroom, the evaluations I have received from my students, and the advice I have received from course supervisors. I have found students' evaluations to be particularly important in improving my teaching. Reading them carefully, I try to discover approaches that will motivate the students to better learn the subject. Moreover, the evaluations tell me how I can improve my teaching.