

Benjamin John Atchison

Teaching Statement

Since 2005, I have been an instructor at the University at Albany for ten courses, spanning five subjects, with enrollments as small as ten and as large as sixty students. My responsibilities as an instructor have been identical to those of the department's full-time faculty, and include the standard tasks of writing a syllabus, maintaining a course website, holding weekly office hours, assigning homework, composing and administering exams, and evaluating student performance. In addition to these basic duties, I also provide myself with detailed lesson plans, as it is my personal belief that there is a direct correlation between an instructor's overall effectiveness in the classroom and her or his preparedness for each lecture. Lastly, I appreciate the use of relevant technological aids in the classroom, and make every effort to incorporate them into course lectures and assignments.

In regards to my overall teaching philosophy, it is the hope that a balance is struck between the level of care that I show for my students and the demands that I impose upon them. Coupled with course material, the central themes that I try to convey are humility, confidence, willingness, and responsibility. Additionally, I encourage my students to prioritize understanding ahead of simply memorizing and employing an algorithm, since figuring out why a given method works is always more enlightening than using the method to obtain a result. These personal beliefs and core values have developed as a result of my own education and personal success, and in many cases, they extend beyond the realm of the classroom.

Learning mathematics requires equal amounts of humility and confidence. In order to achieve success, students must acknowledge early on that although the material is rarely easy to learn, it is never beyond their capabilities. A minimum level of enthusiasm is also essential, as well as a readiness of the instructor to provide assistance and encouragement. Consequently, I often urge my students to speak up in class and attend my weekly office hours. I stress that office hours are usually the best environment to receive assistance, and I make every attempt to be both receptive and accommodating to those individuals who may require extra help, but cannot attend my usual times. My willingness to help students outside of the classroom is, without a doubt, one of my strongest assets, and I believe it has helped to breed a mutual respect between student and instructor over the years.

In addition to the aforementioned values, a certain level of responsibility must be expected from both the students, and their instructor. I take a great deal of pride in my role as an instructor, and work hard to maintain the level of professionalism that the position demands. Similarly, it is critical that each student understands exactly what is expected of her or him, both inside of the classroom and while enrolled at a particular institution. As a result, I try to instill in each individual my view of an undergraduate education as a maturation process, where the student is solely responsible for understanding school policies and fulfilling all course requirements.

Benjamin Atchison

To teach at any level, particularly a post-secondary one, is a great privilege that allows for experimentation of different methods, yet demands constant self-evaluation. Each new term presents the opportunity to both establish and sustain a positive academic relationship with each individual, and requires an equal amount of commitment and hard work from both parties. My history as an instructor at the University at Albany is a testament to the success that I have had in building these relationships over the years.

November 11 2010