

## STATEMENT OF TEACHING

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My abilities as a math teacher first emerged at the beginning of my high school education. Passionate about math, fascinated by the beauty and truthfulness, I always wanted to share my excitement with my schoolmates. By the conclusion of the school year, I had become a personal math tutor for my close friends. Even at that early state, I was encouraged by the praise of my peers; they suggested that with my ability to explain and clarify the material, I should replace our teacher. Their enthusiastic words allowed me to dream of becoming a math teacher. I should say that my history as a student, of mathematics in particular but even more generally, had not always been so bright. In fact I was a very bad student until my final year of middle school; I actually disliked mathematics until then. Luckily, I had the good fortune to find myself as a student under a great math teacher. His outstanding and clear style of teaching, his encouragement, his unique enjoyment of mathematics along with his good sense of humor so inspired me that in that same year I decided to become a mathematician. Since then I improved significantly in my education. I was not only excellent in mathematics but also in physics and chemistry. The change fostered in me as a result of this teacher gives me huge respect and admiration for good teachers; I always strive to be such a teacher.

My style of teaching was significantly shaped by the experiences of tutoring individual and small groups of classmates. Such moments helped me to develop into the successful math teacher I am today, mainly because I got to know how an individual best learns. One understands the best if he or she is challenged by a problem and gets engaged in it. As a teacher, I challenge the students by raising a question or writing a problem on the board and asking students to share their ideas with me and the rest of the class. This provides the students with the opportunity to think about the problem on their own, to determine their own strategy. During the discussion, they also have the advantage of seeing other ways of approaching the problem. When the problem proves too challenging, I usually give them small step by step hints and direct them to the answer. I also make sure that we spend enough time discussing all the ideas suggested by students, not limiting the discussion to the ones I know are correct or most effective. This might be time consuming at the beginning of the course, but based on my experience, this method arms students with good tools. They have tried and experienced many different ideas on their own and as a result, they become sharper in grasping the materials. The preparation for such a style of teaching is not

a very easy task; besides preparing the lectures, I also have to decide which questions I want to ask and where I fit them into the lectures.

I am proud of my teaching style, and know that students appreciate my hard work. After teaching Linear Algebra, I received the following encouraging comment on one of my evaluation forms. One student said, *I never liked or understood mathematics, but after taking Hamid's Linear Algebra class I think I like math and I am very excited about it.*

I should also mention that as a teacher I am always willing to improve my performance. As an example, over the years I have come to recognize the importance of keeping the students entertained and making sure they maintain a high level of attention. As a consequence, I now allow myself to reveal my sense of humor to the students, which I rarely showed in my classes previously. As a consequence, I and the students enjoy the class much more.

### Teaching Experience

Since 1996, when I started my higher mathematical education, I have had the privilege of teaching students. As a graduate student at Johns Hopkins University, I worked both as a teaching assistant and an instructor in many different courses. You can find a complete list of my teaching experience in my accompanying CV. At Johns Hopkins University, a TA assigned for a course has to lead one or two classes a week to help students with their questions and clarify and review the materials from the main lectures. I also had the privilege of instructing a Linear Algebra course (Summer 2006) and also two Putnam training courses (Fall 2007 and Fall 2008).

**Ratings.** At Johns Hopkins, students rate their TAs in a number of categories including Knowledge of Material, Explanations, and Enthusiasm. On a scale from 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest, my average rating was mostly above 4.5 in every category and class.

**Teaching Award.** I am proud to say that I was the only winner of the 2008 year "William Kelso Morrill Teaching Award of Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics at the Department of Mathematics of Johns Hopkins University". Every year, this teaching award is given to one or two graduate students who have shown excellent performance in teaching mathematics.

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