

Teaching Portfolio

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Statement of Teaching Philosophy

I saw what an effective classroom looked like when I enrolled in an algebra class at my prior college, taught by Rena Petrello. Rena was exactly the kind of professor that I needed to push me over my STEM learning hurdle. She was gentle, used clear language, and was patient with her students. She carefully broke problems down step by step, followed by group work that had problems exactly like ones she had just shown on the board. The hard work that I put into that class is half of the reason I did so well in her class and in general as a biological sciences major. The other half of the reason I succeeded was because of the classroom environment that Rena created. After recognizing that extraordinary learning comes in large part from extraordinary teaching, I decided to pursue university teaching

Community Building

Community building is important because it helps students create bonds with fellow classmates and feel comfortable enough to actively engage in the classroom and approach their instructor when they need guidance. I create community in the classes that I teach by telling students my educational journey and snippets of my personal life. I do this so that there are no hierarchies in the classroom and students know that I am also a student and have a life outside of the classroom. Recently, I tried out a qualitative research method called photovoice with my students, where I utilize google slides and have students share their unique experiences through photos and excerpts that are provided by the participants. I create community outside of the classroom, too, by forming a GroupMe so that students can share their struggles and get feedback from both fellow classmates and myself. I strive to teach students about the importance of team work. This is so that they can be successful in class, but also so that they can learn to be

a good team player in future jobs and assignments. I encourage team work by working through a few concepts and/or problems on a projector so that everybody can see what I am writing and what I am doing. I follow the lesson up by having people break into groups and work on similar problems or relevant discussion questions in a think-pair-share manner, with me walking around the room while they are talking with each other. In an effort to have everyone equally participate, the sharing part of think-pair-share involves holding students accountable for their work. For example, I will assign a role to each student, such as recorder and speaker, so that every student plays an active part during group work. I find, too, that by having students work in small groups, they feel more comfortable asking questions. This helps clarify any issues that students are running into and prevents students from feeling trapped in their own thoughts and struggling alone.

Clear, Explicit Expectations

Providing clear, explicit expectations gives students more time to study and work rather than using that time trying to understand how to navigate through the course and succeed. I regularly remind students of exactly what is expected on their assignments and exams in person, over email, and through a monthly animated calendar that I create. When grades are assigned, I include a rubric with a breakdown of points and where points were lost and gained and why. I create learning objectives that are explicit, measurable and achievable, such as learning how to write out and solve a dimensional analysis problem, with the expectation that by the time they are done, they should know how to write out in *full* all of the steps involved in solving a single dimensional analysis problem. In general, I stress that students be thorough and meticulous in any problem that they come across, in both biology lab and in their everyday life.

Evidence of Instructional Design for Improved Student Learning

I regularly change the way that I deliver class material in order to keep content interesting and understandable, and to recognize the unique ways that students learn. I do this by printing out worksheets, creating PowerPoint lectures, utilizing a screen projector, playing videos and/or displaying images from the internet, providing demonstrations, and translating words into drawings. I will typically create PowerPoint slides to teach students fundamental terms and define them using simple, everyday language. To supplement my definitions, I will also create fictitious, relatable scenarios to solidify these ideas into student's minds. When scenarios are used, I make sure to not use scenarios that are culture-specific as to not make any student feel excluded. I use the projector to guide students through problems, particularly those that involve genetics or formulas, such as how to perform a chi square test. The step-by-step, slow-moving method that I use gives students time to write these problems down and ask questions.

After a brief but informative lecture, students spend the rest of lab doing group work in a think-pair-share format. I have found that students also find it useful when I create Kahoot, where we play a game together as a class to learn lab material or reinforce what we just discussed in lecture. I also use Kahoot during exam study sessions held before each major test, and create written study guides. Outside of lab, for each lab assignment I will create a rubric with point values assigned to each variable. This rubric will be included with their work, as well as extensive feedback such as what was missing, what could be improved, and what techniques or approaches worked well. As an example, I make sure to provide a considerable amount of feedback for the 'Adopt an Ecosystem' rough draft in biology 120 so that students can fix their mistakes or build upon their work appropriately. My work does not end once I leave the lab. I

enjoy helping students and will further guide their understanding of class material by regularly creating video tutorials. My office hours are both in person and via Zoom, and I encourage students to schedule one-on-one appointments with me if the times chosen do not work with their schedule. I utilize formative assessments in my classes by providing students with anonymous google form assessments and asking them what problems and/or concepts are difficult for them, what they think of the class midway through the semester and what should be kept, eliminated, or changed, and what their prior knowledge is going into a new lesson. Summative assessments typically take the form of research-based essays, research-based group and individual projects, and active participation and group work while in the biology lab. Research-based assignments are emphasized in the lab so that students know how to find and refer to literature and its importance in conveying an idea in a respected, intelligent manner. My student's curiosities greatly influence how I present class material to make content as relatable and relevant as possible. As an example, I passed around a worksheet at the beginning of one semester and had students tell me their major. I took note of which majors made up my class and would make it a point to bring up why the material we were learning about is important for their field or how it could be used in their field.

Student Comments from Course Evaluations- Biology 120, Fall 2022-Summer 2023:

- She was always available through email or in-person meetings to help. Very knowledgeable and kind.
- She ALWAYS gave reminders EVERY week for her office hours, even made it online/zoom.

- She showed us in powerpoint format how to complete the weekly labs, step by step, which helped alot cause sometimes the wording of the lab manual is confusing.
- She is always considerate to each and every student. She goes around the room to make sure everyone is okay with what we are learning. Her being so kind made the environment a very positive one where the students felt as though they could interact with each other.
- I really like having the study guides that you made, they were always super helpful for the exams.
- She is one of the best and sweetest TA's I've ever had here at UIC. Ashley would send us emails explaining more in depth the grading rubrics and what was required for the big assignments.

Teaching Observation, Fall 2023

Instructor feedback from observing my class: “Exudes energy, engagement, and positivity, communicates the reasoning process behind operations and concepts, follows an outline or organization for the class module, elaborates on or repeats complex information, uses examples to explain content.”

Teaching in Action Video

Please [click here](#) to see an example of the way that I create lab tutorials for the biology 120 classes that I teach, or you can also visit by going to: <https://youtu.be/dYXM05oc9-U>

Evidence of Effective Student/Colleague Mentoring

I have been tutoring STEM since 2014. I am similar to a detective in the sense that I try to identify where and what that learning roadblock is so that we can work together to move it out of the way. An example of this happening is when I tutored an older student at my prior college. When we first met, she was not confident in her ability to do biology. By the time that we ended our sessions, *she was tutoring* students in biology. We identified her weaknesses and let them lead our sessions. When I tutor, I make sure to not hand them the answers and instead encourage them to critically think about a problem and the best way to approach it. At UIC, I am the mentor for a DuSable scholar and am teaching them how to code. The ones who can speak about the effectiveness of my teaching better than anyone are my students:

- She clearly showed interest in wanting students to succeed. Ashley always showed the drive to go above and beyond for students whether they needed help or if she felt that the entire class needed to know a specific piece of information.
- She was always available through email or in-person meetings to help.
- She was good at explaining labs in a way that I feel all students could understand, very detailed explanations.

Evidence of Professional Development

I am currently enrolled in GC 592, and will obtain my certificate in the foundations of college instruction at UIC in Spring, 2024 and am taking BIOS 594 Special Topics: College Level Teaching. GC 592 has provided me with indispensable information about how to run a classroom. I've taken a lot of these suggestions, provided by both the instructor and fellow classmates, and quickly implemented them in my classroom or tried them out to see if they are successful/how people respond. GC 592 has provided me with specific tools and ways of thinking that further strengthened my teaching foundation, and I presume that GC 593 and GC 594 will do the same. I have also taken every opportunity I can to teach. In the Fall, 2023, I am teaching a total of four classes: 2 biology 120 courses and 2 LAS 110 courses.

Ashley Rasmussen

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SUMMARY

Graduate student in ecology and evolution at the University of Illinois at Chicago with 9+ year's experience in STEM tutoring and 2 ½ years of university-level teaching in the classroom.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2022-PRESENT- TEACHER'S ASSISTANT UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT CHICAGO

- Have taught two Biology 120 labs, the biology of populations and communities, each semester for 4 consecutive semesters. Each lab has 32+ students. I am also the primary instructor for two LAS 110 classes each Fall, with 30+ students in each class.
- Extensive experience being sole instructor of a class
- Substituted on multiple occasions for professors, including UIC instructor Alan Molumby's Biology 120 lecture section and UIC instructor Miquel Gonzalez-Meler's Biology 437 Tropical Ecology class.

2014-PRESENT- PRIVATE TUTOR

Considerable experience tutoring students at all educational levels, including pre-algebra, algebra I/II, college algebra, trigonometry, calculus I/II, general chemistry I/II, organic chemistry I/II.

2015-2016- SUPPLEMENTAL INSTRUCTOR MOORPARK COLLEGE, CA

- Sat in on algebra classes and provided in-class help to both students and instructor
- Immediately substituted for primary instructor when unable to teach
- Provided after-class tutoring and study sessions

2014-2015- STUDENT AMBASSADOR MOORPARK COLLEGE, CA

Provided tours for prospective college students, participated in local high school events and gave presentations outlining what college has to offer, engaged in office work which required communicating with potential students in person, through email, and over the phone.

EDUCATION

2021- Bachelor of Science Biological Sciences *Summa Cum Laude*, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ

AWARDS AND CERTIFICATES

- Spring, 2024-Foundations of College Instruction Certificate, University of Illinois at Chicago
- Edison STEM Scholarship
- Honors Continuing Student Scholarship at Moorpark College

PRESENTATIONS AND VOLUNTEER WORK

- 2023-Argonne National Laboratory- poster presentation
- 2023-American Geophysical Union- poster presentation
- 2022- present- CROCUS researcher (Community Research on Climate and Urban Science)
- 2023-present- CROCUS presentation, ecology and evolution seminar, University of Illinois at Chicago. “CROCUS: Community Research on Climate and Urban Science.”
- 2022-present- Graduate student council, University of Illinois at Chicago, biological sciences representative
- 2015-2017- Associated Students, Moorpark College, president and director of constitution and rules
- 2017- Moorpark College Accreditation Committee
- California Community Colleges (CCC) annual meeting participant