

Teaching Statement - Howard Bondell

Here are a few selected comments taken directly from my teaching evaluations from students in courses that I have taught at Rutgers University:

“Mr. Bondell is, by far, one of the finest teachers I have ever had. He should be given more responsibility and considered for a tenured position. THANK YOU!”

“Howard is a natural teacher. His style generates a sense of enthusiasm, even for a topic such as regression analysis. He was always prepared for class and presented material in both a clear and concise manner. I think he did an excellent job.”

“Of the graduate teachers I’ve had at Rutgers, Howard would rank at the top of the list.”

But my favorite comment came from an undergraduate in a basic statistics course:

“I learned a lot in this course, without even wanting to!”

I firmly believe that one of the strongest aspects of my personality is my ability to teach others. I have been a high school teacher, as well as a part-time instructor for both a community college and a university. I have taught mathematics and statistics courses at all levels to students from high school up to, and including, students in graduate school. I feel that you must enjoy what you do in order to be effective; otherwise the motivation to improve is absent. I thoroughly enjoy teaching, and the enthusiasm that I have for it tends to rub off on the students, creating an environment conducive to learning. My greatest moment as a teacher is when I see that look on a student’s face when it becomes clear that they actually “get it”, that moment when the light bulb appears above their head.

After completing my BS degree, I taught high school mathematics for two years, and additionally taught some evening courses at the local community college. I enjoyed being in the classroom; however, I missed the university academic atmosphere of learning and research. So I returned to graduate school with a fellowship from Rutgers University to pursue a PhD, so that I could eventually teach and conduct research at the university level. While in graduate school, I have continued to teach courses (usually around two each year) on a part time basis in addition to my standard workload.

My teaching evaluations from both students and supervisors have always been superb. On the student course evaluations at Rutgers University, the final question asks, “On a scale of 1-5, with 5 being highest, how would you rate the overall effectiveness of the instructor?” Over a total of 12 course evaluations, covering around 500 students, my mean score is 4.71 with 1% giving a 3, 27% a 4, and 72% giving me a 5.

In my initial year teaching at the high school, I was awarded the district’s outstanding first year teacher award (there were over 20 new teachers that year). One of my responsibilities upon entering the high school as a teacher was to take over the Advanced Placement Calculus class. In the previous 5 years prior to my arrival, less than 1/3 of the students who took the AP exam scored a 3 (out of 5) or higher. In my first year, 5 out of 6 achieved at least a score of 3; while in my second year, out of 8 students, one student scored a 3, 4 achieved 4’s and 3 students scored a 5. Needless to say, the administration was thrilled with the performance, and extremely disappointed when I informed them of my decision to return to graduate school. In my second year, I also developed an honors section of the precalculus course at the high school, which

surprisingly had not existed beforehand. The development included deciding on the curriculum and choosing the textbook.

Although it is nice to see students do well on exams, the responsibility of a teacher is not just to make sure that students do well in their course, but the goal is to create independent and logical thinkers. Students need to understand that the most important thing to learn is not necessarily the specific material for a course, but the more general patterns of thought, reasoning, and problem solving that will be used throughout their life. Thus, as teachers, particularly in basic required courses, we must answer the students' question, "when am I ever going to use this again?" with both practical applications and examples of other areas that require similar problem solving skills.

Another aspect of a good teacher is the ability to act as a mentor and set an example for the students as they journey through academia and beyond. In addition to my teaching duties at the high school, I was also the faculty advisor to the Key Club, assisting the student officers in the daily running of the school's chapter of this worldwide community service student organization.

My prior experiences, both in the classroom and outside, along with my passion for the subject of statistics and the teaching of it, have greatly prepared me to excel at teaching in the university setting as well as in mentoring students at the undergraduate and graduate levels.