Personal Statement by Duane Kouba

I. Teaching

I knew in the 7th grade that I wanted to be a teacher. Today it’s a great pleasure for me to be part of the faculty in the Department of Mathematics at UC Davis, where I get the opportunity to teach intelligent, hardworking, and ambitious students. One of the most important points of my teaching philosophy is to maintain very high academic standards, which encourages my students to leave their academic comfort zones and learn some new ways to think and communicate. In addition, it’s a priority of mine to provide to the students as many resources as possible, including teaching assistants, discussion sheets, office hours, tutoring, workshops, websites (containing class notes, homework problems, worksheets, homework solutions, etc.), etc. An ultimate goal of mine is to teach students to become independent learners and problem-solvers, effectively giving them more control of their academic and personal destinies. I encourage students to communicate with each other, to work together to learn difficult subject matter, and to learn to think, listen, and ask thoughtful questions. I believe that this will help them develop a stronger work ethic, enhance their personal self confidence, and learn and refine skills that will serve them as future professionals.

II. Volunteering

 I learned as a child from my parents that it’s better to give than receive. At the time it was difficult for me to understand the meaning of the statement. I didn’t fully understand it until I was an adult. Since 1995 I have volunteered as an assistant coach and administrative assistant for UC Davis men’s basketball. Volunteering means to me the giving of my time, energy, passion, and experience. After 17 years it has proven to me to be one of the purest forms of giving. Volunteering has greatly enriched my life, improved my teaching effectiveness, and helped me better understand, communicate with, and relate to students. Volunteering for UC Davis men’s basketball has immersed me deeply in the culture and pleasures of all levels of amateur and professional basketball, increased my personal and professional contacts across campus and around the country, and given me the opportunity to travel nationally and internationally. Volunteering is extremely gratifying to me. Volunteering energizes me. Volunteering is fun. Volunteering has made me more productive. Volunteering has made me a better human being. Volunteering has filled my life with good people and great experiences.