Department of Mathematical Sciences

Where Are They Now?

Casey Noll

2018, Mathematical Sciences

Please introduce yourself—We'd love to know when you attended Ball State, your area(s) of study, and any other tidbits that help us get to know you.

My name is Casey Noll. (They/Them) I attended Ball State from 2014-2018 and graduated with my BA in Mathematical Sciences. I then attended Indiana University - Bloomington, and received my MS in Mathematics in 2020.

Tell us about your current job. We'd love to hear about the day-to-day work and your broader projects.

I currently work at the University of Indianapolis as an Instructor of Mathematics. I mostly teach the mid-range undergraduate classes; finite (of which I am the course coordinator), college algebra w/ trigonometry, statistics, and calc 1.

What is the most fulfilling part of your current job?

I love working with students who previously didn't like math. I try to listen to my students; I take them seriously when they are struggling, and use the tools I've learned to break the process down in a different way that they might better grasp. I treat my students as human beings first, and am understanding when life issues come up. I think/hope that this has broken down some of the barriers and anxiety that students feel when talking to their professors. I love building connections, and seeing students' minds change about their most feared class.

Will you describe your career path. Did you land your current job immediately after graduation or find your way there circuitously?

At Ball State, I worked as a math emporium assistant from 2015-2018, where I helped students in 110 & 111. This was the very beginning of my love for teaching math. After graduating from Ball State, I immediately went into grad school at IU, where I began teaching my second year. From there, since I graduated right at the beginning of the pandemic, job opportunities were definitely atypical. Most universities had moved to fully online, which allowed me to adjunct remotely, widening the schools that I could apply to. Between fall of 2020, and spring 2023, I have worked as an adjunct with multiple Ivy Tech locations, IUPUI, and IU Bloomington. I also worked as an in-home math tutor in the greater Indianapolis area from 2020-2021. In 2021, I was hired as an associate adjunct at University of Indianapolis, and was promoted to full time instructor in fall 2023.

How have you grown and learned in each of your successive jobs that led to your current position?

The math emporium position was great because it allowed me to see the teaching styles of many different instructors. This was really helpful when I first had my own class, since I had experience seeing a plethora of teaching styles for the same classes. This role also helped me understand many specific pitfalls that students go through when learning the material, since I answered questions and taught on an individual basis, rather than teaching to an entire class right away. I could see the questions that multiple students had, and was prepared to address those misconceptions right away when I eventually did have my own classroom. I fell in love with teaching right away, as a grad student at IU. Actually, teaching helped me to feel more confident in my career path, and I'm so grateful for the support that I had at IU. Tutoring in Indianapolis had similar benefits to the emporium. It allowed me to work on an individual basis, so I could see specifically what students struggled with, and talk through it with them, but this now offered that opportunity through a much larger range of classes, since almost every student was at a different place, learning different material. Adjuncting remotely allowed me to teach in a completely different environment. I was able to utilize tools and learn skills that I otherwise would not have (teaching through Zoom, pre-recording lectures, using a document camera.) UIndy is home. I feel valued and listened to, (even while I was part time) and I have learned so much. Here I learned what goes on behind the scenes of university departments (placement testing, student engagement, hiring processes, committees, committees, committees.) I have grown more confident in my teaching, and truly love what I do.

What are the most valuable skills you learned as a Ball State student in the College of Sciences and Humanities? How have they helped you post-graduation?

I learned how valuable it is to do what you love. I had begun my college career as a physics education major, and switched to mathematics while taking calc 2. I loved the class, and it reminded me of how much I had loved my high school math classes. I had initially wanted to do physics because I love science, but I had never enjoyed my physics classes as much as I did my math classes.

Is there a particular class, professor, or professional opportunity that had a particularly significant impact on you?

I am so grateful to Dr. Dan Rutherford, and his calc 2 class that made me change majors. I loved each additional class that I took with him after switching majors (abstract algebra I & II, geometry and topology, and research.) His class was what first interested me in geometric topology, and if I go back to school for a PhD, that is likely what I would study.

What advice do you have for current or future students in your major or who might hope to follow your career path?

Do what you love, even if it means changing your plans. I was fortunate to have changed majors early, during my Freshman year, but I know many others who have made changes later, and it's always been absolutely worth it to do what you love.

Don't sweat the little things. After becoming an instructor, I'm able to really see how a few points on small assignments aren't going to have any impact on the bigger picture. I was a perfectionist as a student, and would become extremely anxious and disappointed in myself if I made a mistake, and it's just not worth it. (I *still* remember a test question that I got wrong in Dr. Rutherford's class) It's so hard for small mistakes to influence your letter grade, and even harder for them to impact your career path in any way. Give yourself the understanding that you deserve. If you do follow my career path, and have your own classroom someday, give your students the same understanding.