

To the UCLA Department of Mathematics,

We hope this letter finds you well. This is a petition from current and previous students of Professor Richard Wong, an adjunct professor whose contract at UCLA is ending this year. The purpose of this letter is to present our support for him to be rehired as an associate professor at UCLA.

Dr. Wong has been an exceptional teacher for all the students who have written this letter. Most of us were freshmen when we took his honors series, MATH 32AH and 32BH, classes which not only challenged us to the far limits of our abilities, but empowered us to reach that far within ourselves in the first place. The 32 honors series is a proof-based overview of multivariable calculus. For the vast majority of us, this was our first proof-based math course, and to say it was daunting is an understatement. In the span of a quarter, we were forced to reshape our approach to mathematics; the surety with which we had learned calculus in high school was replaced with curiosity, flexible thinking, and the willingness to grapple with concepts we didn't understand at first go. We all questioned our right to be in that classroom at one point or another, but we also passed that class with a new confidence in our mathematical abilities. We firmly believe this is due to the accessibility and empathy Dr. Wong brings to his teaching, and that very few other professors can manage such an ambitious course with the finesse that he does.

On the first day of each quarter, Dr. Wong's slides begin with a message we students often struggle to take to heart: "You belong here." He ensures that each of us hears an affirmation of our ability, both at the beginning of the class and after difficult midterms. In the often elitist learning environments of STEM, Dr. Wong recognizes that "ability" does not equal "talent" or inherent skill. He works incredibly hard at personal expense to provide a variety of resources so each of us can flourish in the way we need. Unlike many of our other professors, he provides 4 or 5 office hours per week, not including the TA and LA office hours. This is 5 hours of his own time where Dr. Wong facilitates a safe environment for us to work through challenging questions and concepts that has proved time and again to be invaluable for our understanding of the material. However, this is not the only way Dr. Wong is proactive about extending support for students that need the extra help. He is also always available by appointment, and reaches out via email to students that may be struggling to ask if they would like to meet privately and discuss ways to study for an honors class. Far from shaming students for our lack of understanding or our need for extra time, Dr. Wong uses multiple grading schemes and assumes 48-hour extensions on every assignment so that we have the room we need to learn at our own pace. These efforts are key to making an honors class accessible for students of varying mathematical backgrounds and skill sets.

Another crucial part of Dr. Wong's courses is the community fostered under his supervision. There is a regular group of students who attend every office hour; who set up study groups; who confide in each other and learn from each other. A great contributor to this community has been the presence of the Learning Assistants, who are students of Dr. Wong's from the previous academic year. The continuity of old students to new LAs contributes to a

compassionate learning environment and expands the sense of collaborative friendship in Dr. Wong's class. For him to be hired again at UCLA would mean the opportunity for us current students to LA for him next year and continue this cycle of accessible higher math education. We would be able to help him create in new students at UCLA the growth he has created in us.

For many of us signing this letter, learning under Dr. Wong has been an unimaginable positive experience and integral to our UCLA experience as a whole. We strongly believe this is a professor UCLA ought to provide to future students, and we hope that UCLA reaches this conclusion as well.

Signed,
673 UCLA Students