

Dear Dr., Ypma, faculty, and staff,

I hope this email finds you well. I'm writing to you on behalf of concerned students and my own personal concerns. I understand the Math department is aware of the troublesome pass and fail rates in Math courses. The majority opinion amongst students I've talked to is that the department is not adapting quickly enough to the needs of the changing and increasingly diverse student body. We have also been aware of pushback from faculty in changing their teaching styles and a fault in the professional working and learning environment curated by faculty and staff.

I understand that the Math department has hired Jen Nimitz to tackle this issue in first-year courses. This shows commitment on behalf of CSE and the Math department towards changing curriculum to meet student needs. I believe that given the right resources, engagement, and communication with the rest of the College of Science and Engineering, Math at Western can be shaped to promote inclusive success. My concerns stem from current decisions that impact current students. Much of the work that Jen is doing will have the greatest impact on future students, leaving many current students feeling trapped within the academic system.

On Friday I became aware that Math 224 is being dropped from the 9-week summer session to the 6-week summer session. I have been through this course three times, Dr. Ypma, twice during the summer. It worries me that condensing this course even further will lead to higher failure rates and a lack of genuine student understanding of the material covered. I am worried that condensing this course goes against the goals established by the math department of inclusive success and more generally, the goals of the college in increasing equity. The material covered in this course is fundamental to the understanding of several different programs within CSE including chemistry, computer science, physics, and engineering. It worries me that this decision to condense the course could be interpreted as a form of gatekeeping due to the number of programs for which Math 224 is a prerequisite.

This notion of gatekeeping is not a singularity, as many students feel that there are other systems set in place within CSE to gatekeep science. Namely, within the Math department, the issues mentioned above. While there is the narrative that the Math department is taking steps to address the issues, the counter narrative is also viable – that is that teaching, grading, and scheduling of Math courses is not done with student success in mind. From personal experience and from the experiences of my peers, the Math's departments resistance to change has added years to many student's time as undergraduates. I don't believe this is sustainable for students' academic, mental, and financial success.

I wanted to write to you to make you aware of these concerns. I also wanted to use this as an opportunity to start a dialogue between the Math department and student leaders who have been collecting information regarding the Math department's progress in increasing student understanding, equity and inclusive success. I firmly believe that proper communication between student groups and faculty can lead to a better understanding of student needs and how to assist current students as well as set systems to help future ones. Is there anything that you think that Student Senators, Ambassadors, and club leaders could do to support the Math Department in achieving its goals?

Thank you for your time,

Kristopher J Aguayo

Él/He/Him/His

Chemistry

AS Student Senator for the College of Science and Engineering

Amacher Lab

SACNAS Club Liason

Send to

Cirriculum of Undergraduate Educaiton

Academic Coordinating Committee

Dean of CSE

Chair CSE Math

All Faculty and Staff within CSE Math

CSE Equity Inclusion and Diversity Chair

Questions

General thoughts?

Should I add additional signatures? Individuals from student senate?

Is it effective to send this letter to the bodies/individuals listed above?

- From personal experience I have noticed that the the threshold of inconvenience that must be created in order for faculty to centralize student concerns is high- hence the thought of mass distributing this letter.

Should anything be changed or added?

Is the letter communicating student frustrations in a respectable way?