

To whom it may concern,

The Mathematics Project at Minnesota (MPM) is a four-day workshop organized by graduate students, for UMN undergraduates who come from underrepresented groups in mathematics. The main goal of MPM is to increase the participation and success of underrepresented groups that have been historically underrepresented in math. The workshop includes a mix of professional development, social, and diversity, equity, and inclusion sessions. There is a focus on community building, disseminating information regarding math-related opportunities in academia and industry, bolstering mathematical confidence, and introducing participants to graduate students and faculty in the UMN math department. This workshop was organized by graduate students, along with the help of a faculty advisor. In addition, both graduate students and undergraduate students serve as counselors, helping to facilitate activities during the sessions.

During MPM 2025, participants were involved in a session called “Changing the Culture.” The goal of the session was to give participants an opportunity to discuss their experience in the UMN math department. We split participants into groups of four and assigned one counselor per group to guide discussion. Each group had a list of discussion prompts regarding topics including math courses, mentorship and advising, and general culture of the math department. Please find enclosed anonymous feedback from this session. These are honest, unfiltered accounts from participants, discussing their positive experiences in the UMN math department as well as obstacles they have faced.

As mathematics instructors, we want our students to be able to engage with the course material. However, students from underrepresented groups often face invisible barriers that make it more challenging for them to participate. The feedback that MPM 2025 participants shared is particularly impactful in that it highlights some of these invisible barriers that exist, and suggests possibilities for change in the future. By engaging with this feedback and striving towards improvement, we can make the UMN mathematics department a better place for all students.

With this in mind, we urge you to take a few minutes to read the attached list, in particular paying attention to any section that is more relevant for you. Then, we ask that you reflect on how you might implement changes or continue policies/practices that are beneficial.

Before concluding, we want to acknowledge that a large part of the reason that you are receiving this letter is because you have demonstrated care for the wellbeing of undergraduates at the University of Minnesota. Of course, you are unable to unilaterally improve the experiences of all undergraduate students: this is work that requires an entire department to come together. We ask that your takeaways from this letter inform decisions you make in your leadership role in the department as well as when talking with your peers about expectations and practices for teaching undergraduate courses.

We appreciate your time and consideration,

The 2025 MPM Team