

Testimony from Lixin Zheng

Sometimes, I look around and think about what my undergraduate math friends are up to. The competitive and driven ones have gone to do quantitative finance or consulting. The analytic ones - data science or actuarial work. So few of them are pursuing a graduate degree.

Then I look around in my department, at the various 5th, 6th, and even 7th years around me. Many of them are frantically applying for jobs, worrying that they won't be funded for the next year, even though their projects are unfinished. Some of them have children, yet they don't get parental leave or time off. Others have to use their low stipend to support their family back home in a different country. Why would people want to go into academia, if these are the conditions we get for six years?

Giving collective bargaining rights for graduate students is not only essential for us, it's necessary for the future of academia. Graduate students are the future of math and the sciences, and a union ensures that students actually want to pursue these subjects in the future.