

# The WUSTROW Way

Learning about one of the greatest minds at UPA

ARTICLE & PHOTO BY ALYSSA GARCIA • DESIGN BY BRITNEY STOUT

“Let’s play my favorite game: What do you know?”

“You are working with the best minds at UPA.”

“You are smarter than a TI.”

These phrases fill the ears of students in UCLA, along with the entirety of the Family Life Center. The voice that fills these halls is math teacher **Anne Wustrow**’s.

Since 2000, Wustrow has enlightened students at three schools: Pioneer High School in Ann Arbor, Mich., Guilford High School in Guilford, Conn., and UPA in San Jose, Calif.

From coast to coast Wustrow has taught to influence her students’ lives.

“I wanted to be a teacher that impacted students,” Wustrow said. “I wanted to have somebody at the end of my career, who would say, ‘Yeah, you meant something,’ and I think I found that more here at UPA than in the big schools. It’s much easier to be a big fish in a little pond than a small fish in a big pond.”

Wustrow revealed that her drive for teaching [Integrated Math 1, Integrated Math 3, Integrated Math 3+—a course created by Wustrow herself—and AP Calculus AB] for 11 years at UPA, comes from the student body itself.

“I have really enjoyed working, and each year I think, ‘Oh, the classes can’t get any better,’ and each year they’re just as good or better than the last year’s class,” Wustrow said.

Wustrow’s motivation for teaching high schoolers derives from her upbringing. Because she grew up with three siblings who almost never agreed with each other, she found a way to argue with reasoning and logic.

“I don’t think I could ever teach elementary because the kids are like, ‘Yes, Mrs. Wustrow. Yes, Mrs. Wustrow,’” she said. “I like students who talk back.”

Wustrow has been co-lead of the Math Department alongside math teacher **Jaz Dhillon** for eight years. Along with aiding her students in academic success, she is looked up to by the faculty and staff.

“She is somebody who is going to look at things and really say, ‘Wait, is this the best for the school? Is this the best for the staff?’” Dhillon said. “And if she doesn’t quite think it is, she’ll speak up, whether it be to a student, teachers, the director, or a founder of the school.”

After years of working alongside Wustrow, Dhillon was able to look past his first impression of her as a stern instructor and now understands her sense of humor.

“All of that toughness on the outside was really because she cares about certain things,” Dhillon said. “She really cares about No.1, the students and doing the most she can to help them, and No. 2, she cares about things being done well. So I think that’s why she projects that on the outside; she wants to let everyone know, ‘Hey, I’m here to work and help people as best I can.’”

To enter AP Calculus AB, a student is required to have a recommendation. Dhillon gave a recommendation for junior **Nur Ambaw**, who is currently taking AP Calculus AB. He remembered a moment with Wustrow that resonated with him.

“When Mr. Dhillon recommended me to the class, he said all these great things about me,” Ambaw said. “And when I did bad on my first test, she took me outside the class and told me, ‘Mr. Dhillon told me you were a great student and doing all this great stuff,’ and I was like, ‘Yah!’ and she said, ‘But I’m just not seeing that right now.’ And since then I’ve been motivated to try harder. She’s blunt but in a way where you need to know that and she’s not afraid to not sugarcoat anything and tell me what I need to hear.”

Along with this instance, Ambaw recalled his first impression of Wustrow while she was a substitute for his Precalculus class last year.

“I had my headphones in and I was doing work and she walks over to me and goes, ‘Take off your headphones!’” Ambaw said. “So I didn’t really like her at first. She came off as stubborn and I thought she was a mean teacher.”

However, first impressions are not everything. Over time, Ambaw began to understand Wustrow’s passion for student learning.

“She is one of my favorite teachers now,” Ambaw said. “She makes me want to learn more. She’s the only teacher who sees how I struggle because Calculus is the only class where I’m like ‘Bro, I don’t get this,’ but she helps me hurdle over those

“I SHOW UP TO CLASS AND THE ENERGY FROM THE STUDENTS JUST TAKES OVER. IT MAKES ME WANT TO KEEP GOING IN THE LESSON PLAN. THEY KEEP ME YOUNG.”

—ANNE WUSTROW



Anne Wustrow uses a Toblerone chocolate bar to visually introduce the topic of cross sections of solids in her calculus class.

obstacles.”

Senior **Dana Feng**, who had Wustrow for Integrated Math 3+ and AP Calculus AB, mentioned Wustrow provides inspiration for others from her sincere passion for teaching.

“When she’s teaching, you can actually see the passion she has,” Feng said. “She has really shown me that you have to love what you do every day and you have to find a subject that gets you excited, no matter how difficult or easy the subject matter is.”

Wustrow is not only a passionate teacher, but she helps steer students towards their best capabilities.

“She taught me that it’s up to me to work hard,” senior **Justina Vystavilova**, who had Wustrow for IM3+ and is currently taking Pre-calculus, said. “She’ll teach you how to do it, but it’s up to you to actually put in the work, do your best and better your ability as a student.”

To relate to her students and provide a sense of comfort while entering the rigors of the UPA math system, she described her struggles in math as a high-schooler.

“She told us that when she was taking Calculus in high school, she got a C in the class,” Ambaw said. “I realized I don’t have to be the best in my class because Mrs. Wustrow, the math God, when she was my age, she wasn’t doing too hot either.”

Math God? She received this title because of her deep understanding and knowledge of math and her dependability to answer any type of question thrown her way.

“She’s heard every question that we have asked from her previous years of working,” Ambaw said. “No one has asked a question that she doesn’t know, any question you might have, she has the answer to.”

She gained her knowledge through 20 years of experience teaching, but at first, she did not want her students to ask questions or expand on the curriculum. Now, she feels excited and wants stu-

dents to dive deeper into the material.

“If a student asks a question, I’m right there with the student and I can go off on a tangent,” Wustrow said. “So, I have become more comfortable with questions over time.”

One of her influences for her teaching style derived from Wustrow’s good friend, Michele Macke. Macke showed Wustrow how to pull in what the students know already and apply it to new problems and concepts.

The infamous phrase, “You are working with the best minds at UPA,” comes from her understanding that students’ combined knowledge can lead to a greater understanding of the topic.

By just showing students a math problem and letting them solve it themselves, she noticed that students are much more capable of solving problems than they think they are.

“Just ask the question and walk away,” Wustrow said.

With her hip surgery on Jan. 31, many longed for her presence in the UPA community through February and the beginning of March.

“I knew that I wouldn’t be the same student without her there because she really motivates us and gets us wanting to learn,” Ambaw said, “whereas a sub just passes out worksheets and leaves us in the dark.”

On March 9, Wustrow returned to UPA to continue the semester. Even after her surgery, she maintains the same energy as before and makes it seem like she never left.

“When I learned she was coming back, I was really happy because when I was learning from the sub, it just wasn’t the same,” Garcia, who is taking IM3+, said.

“I wanted her to yell at me and say ‘You’re smarter than a TI’ so that things would be inscribed in my mind.”

Her surgery also raised many questions as to if Wustrow is planning to retire after the 2019-2020 school year.

“If I was going to retire next year, this is not the venue that I would be announcing it,” Wustrow said.