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April 20, 2026

To: Dr. Yanan Wu, Assistant Professor of Geography

From: Dr. Lori Isom, Instructional Consultant and Professor of Chemistry

Subject: Instructional Consultation Feedback

Background

The purpose of this letter is to verify that Professor Wu has completed the instructional consultation process during the Spring 2026 semester. Participating in an instructional consultation is a voluntary service provided by CETAL for faculty members who wish to analyze their teaching and solicit feedback to engage in professional development. The consultation process is independent of performance review and is confidential to the extent allowed by law.

Professor Wu's consultation included a classroom observation of GEOG 3403 Geographic Information Systems II by Dr. Lori Isom on Tuesday, March 31, 2026. The feedback provided is organized into three sections: content expertise, content delivery, and learning atmosphere.

Content Expertise

Professor Wu earned her Ph.D. in Geographical Information Sciences from the University of Texas at Dallas in 2024 and joined UCA in the fall of 2025 as an Assistant Professor of Geography. Before assuming this role, she taught as a Visiting Assistant Professor at Clark University. Based on the materials reviewed for the course and the in-class observation, Dr. Wu is very knowledgeable about and comfortable with the content for the course. In my view, Professor Wu has both the educational and experiential backgrounds to provide the expertise necessary for teaching Geographic Information Systems II.

Content Delivery

Professor Wu began her class with a lecture providing the background for an in-class tutorial for using ArcGIS to view visual data. Dr. Wu took great care in her deliberate content delivery choices and construction of engaging, clean, and clearly presented slides with figures carefully explained and important points bulleted. During our initial consultation, Dr. Wu requested feedback concerning the effectiveness of her content delivery. She was especially concerned about students understanding and following what she was communicating. Dr. Wu's efforts to accomplish this for her students was highly successful due to three strategies she integrated into her lectures. First, Dr. Wu was very conscientious

of her meter and tone when she lectured as well as carefully observant of the pace of her delivery. Second, Dr. Wu used creative sectioning of her slides that included a Question section denoted by a 🤔. At the bottom of most slides, Professor Wu would include the easily recognizable emoji, followed by Question #1, Question #2, etc. Here, Dr. Wu would type out the exact question she was asking the class to respond to and read it out loud in real time. The questions varied in type and included understanding checks as well as some that required students to extend or apply the material. Third, Professor Wu was careful to include clear graphical data and legends, which helped make her specific point clear. Students were engaged during the lecture as evidenced by their willingness to quickly respond to and ask their own questions.

After providing the background material in lecture, Dr. Wu seamlessly transitioned to providing a real-time tutorial instructing students in how to use and process ArcGIS software. This portion of her class was also well constructed with logical sectioning and scaffolding of skills. Students would watch Dr. Wu's procedure and then she would give them time to reproduce the analysis. This scaffolding of information, demonstration, and practice seemed highly effective and a productive use of class time.

Dr. Wu asked specifically for feedback concerning student engagement during her lecture as well as for ideas for making the course information more relatable to the students. Despite the availability of technology and a darkened classroom, during the class observation, every student was engaged and on task while Dr. Wu was teaching. Common temptations, including email and social media as well as other distractions, were not a problem during the observed class. Students were responsive to questions, demonstrating their understanding of the material presented. Some ideas to make the lecture content even more relatable include selecting specific examples with data at a specific place and time when some major event or change happened that would be obvious in the data. Then, students could race to quickly investigate and offer ideas about why that change happened or what it reflected. For example, she could choose a timeframe and region where an event happened (like a specific weather or natural disaster event) and include the timeframe of the event so that when the data are presented, the event is obvious. Then she can direct students to find the time and investigate the cause. Another example would be an extension of the New Zealand tourism data shown in class to include a time when tourism spiked in a certain area and have the students investigate the cause of the spike. Alternatively, students could be assigned once a semester to select some data showing an event (the Olympics, for example) they choose, share it in class, and their classmates can do the investigating to find the cause.

Learning Environment

The classroom in Burdick Hall was a large computer lab, with pairs of long tables with computers on each side. Having the computers available to compile data and run real-time simulations was a very effective choice for this course's content delivery. This effectiveness could be increased by rearranging the tables and computers to allow students to comfortably view screens and use the workstations. Two large screens project slides on a side wall, parallel to the tables, and on a screen perpendicular to the tables at the head of the classroom. The arrangement of the tables in the room so that students face each other

across tables was an uncomfortable learning environment for those with their backs to the screen or not positioned to see the screen at the front. Two students also had to move to other computers in the middle of class because their computers were not functioning properly. This disruption put those students behind and briefly disrupted Dr. Wu's content delivery. Dr. Wu was quick to notice when students were having trouble completing the tutorial steps she demonstrated and presented. The two students who had to move during the lecture needed extra assistance and struggled with the assignment more than others. During this time, some students, who had completed the task, began to tune into off-topic distractions and then had some trouble catching up when the lecture continued.

A suggestion for improvement includes the department rearranging the room to allow students to better view the slides presented and to make sure that problematic workstations are labeled so students don't choose to use them initially. Other suggestions to help keep students who have completed the task engaged while others need help include 1) encouraging those students to help other students who have questions and 2) giving an extension activity or using the investigation idea presented earlier to provide an on-task activity.

Conclusion

I thoroughly enjoyed observing Professor Wu's class. I conclude this letter with a summary of the many strengths she brings to her teaching. Dr. Wu is clearly an engaged professor who makes deliberate, effective efforts to ensure her students understand the material she presents and can follow her instructions. She is in tune with her students, quickly sensing when there is confusion or misunderstanding. She chooses examples that are interesting to increase student engagement and active learning to help her students learn. Dr. Wu's desire to make the material more practically relevant to her students reflects her desire to always serve her students to the very best of her ability. Adding some of assignment suggestions offered here to allow students to connect and have ownership over their contributions will deepen their enjoyment and foster community in the class.