

MATH CONNECTIONS

A Newsletter from the UConn Department of Mathematics
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FROM THE DEPARTMENT HEAD

by Chuck Vinsonhaler



Welcome to the sixth edition of Math CONNECTIONS. This will be my last column as department head. Miki Neumann assumes that position as of July 1, 2003. Miki brings outstanding credentials with him, including an internationally recognized research program that is currently supported by a National Science Foundation grant. We are all excited by the ideas and energy that Miki will add to the department.

Looking back on my 5+ years of service, I was surprised by some of the statistics. Since I took office in the fall of 1997, we have hired 11 new faculty members. We also initiated a Postdoctoral Fellow program that will see 11 recent PhDs bolster our research and teaching mission during the 2003-2004 academic year. Over half the department has come on board in the last five years! The process of change looks to continue as a number of the rest of us are approaching retirement age.

This year, given the severe budget conditions faced by the university, we were fortunate to be able to hire Assistant Professor Keith Conrad. Keith comes to us from a postdoctoral position at the University of California at San Diego, having completed his undergraduate work at Princeton and his graduate work at Harvard. In addition to his exciting work in Number Theory, Keith brings a reputation as a superb instructor. Two other new Assistant Professors, Reed Solomon and Erin Terwilliger, will join us in the fall after one-year leaves at Notre Dame and Georgia Tech, respectively.

New postdoctoral fellows for next year include Nirmelendu Chaudhuri (Partial

Differential Equations), Bjorn Kjos-Hanssen (Logic), Martynas Manstovicious (Probability and Statistics), and Edlira Shteto (Partial Differential Equations). We look forward to the energy and enthusiasm they will add to our classrooms, seminars and research projects.

Yung-Sze Choi won the Chancellor's Award for Research Excellence, continuing the success of our department in garnering this honor. Alexander Teplyaev is being nominated for a Sloan Fellowship. Joe McKenna is the only faculty member from UConn currently listed on the web site ISIHighlyCited.com, part of the ISI Web of Knowledge. The site lists scientists most frequently cited by other researchers.

Rich Bass and Maria Gordina were awarded three-year NSF grants. Evarist Gine received a similar award from NSA.

Two of our number accepted the golden handshake offered by the university early in the spring semester. Roger Hansell and Jim Hurley will join the ranks of Professors Emeriti after more than 30 years of service to UConn. Their student evaluations indicate that their pedagogical talents will be sorely missed. We will all miss their many contributions to the Department, the College, and the University. Fortunately, Jim has agreed to continue running the mathematics part of the High School Cooperative program, which he has built into a model of university-secondary education interaction.

We restructured our graduate program administration this year, with Manny Lerman taking over as Coordinator and Gene Spiegel handling admissions. Other responsibilities, such as mentoring and recruitment, were handled by subcommittees of the Graduate Studies Committee. The system seems to be working, thanks mainly to some hard work by Manny and Gene and by our new graduate secretary, Sharon McDermott. Coincidentally, applications to our graduate program mushroomed and we are looking forward to a stellar entering class of 15-20 PhD candidates and an equal number of Master's candidates.

We will graduate three PhD's by the end of the summer: Gabriela Bulancea (University of Puerto Rico), Jianhong Xu (University of West Florida), and Peng Zhou (Sun Life). We wish them well in their new positions (that pay considerably more than a Teaching Assistantship).

A new Professional Master's in Applied Financial Mathematics, supported by a Sloan Foundation Grant, was approved by the Board of Higher Education. The degree has generated considerable interest and we expect a group of about 10 students in the program in the fall. This summer, program director Jim Bridgeman will convene the Advisory Board and investigate ways to publicize the program.

The actuarial program enjoyed another good year under the leadership of Dick London. He again increased corporate donations for scholarships and other program activities. Total donations now exceed \$80,000 per year. Jay Vadiveloo had a busy second year as Deloitte Professor and Director of the Center for Actuarial Studies. Jay began a consulting project in Indonesia to establish an insurance program at the University of Jakarta, and he continues to work on a cooperative education project with the Indian Actuarial Society and with financial institutions in Brazil. This June, Vadiveloo and I visited Dillard University in New Orleans to discuss the creation of a joint project to increase minority interest in actuarial science. A two-week summer program is part of the plan.

As you can see, in a time when budget considerations have damaged and discouraged other departments and institutions, the Department of Mathematics at UConn is going strong. Enjoy the rest of this newsletter and let us hear from you.