A f t e r m a t h

Senate Happenings

Things have been lively in the University Senate. Major items currently under discussion are the University RPT process and the University's so called "Accommodation Policy". We were recently informed to be prepared for monthly meetings that last three hours instead of the usual two. The most recent (February) meeting was attended by the local media.

The University was recently sued by a student who objected to being required to use swear words in her acting class. The case was settled, but as part of the settlement agreement the University is now legally obligated to establish a procedure by which to handle similar complaints in the future. That's the procedure currently before the Senate. The discussion has been passionate. The key concept of the proposed procedure is the conflict between a student's "sincerely-held core beliefs" and the curriculum in a University class. There is a large group within the University that is worried about interference of the policy with academic freedom. It is hard to conceive of a conflict with sincerely-held core beliefs arising in our department, but even in our own College of Science the Department of Biology is very concerned. The very way biology is conducted these days is under significant attack from two separate directions: animal rights activists and a movement to put the concept of evolution on the same footing as the concept of "intelligent design". The proposed accommodation policy basically provides that a student may request an accommodation, the instructor may grant or deny it, the student can appeal to the dean, and the dean can overrule the instructor only if the requirement is "arbitrary and capricious, or illegal". The dean's decision is final, and the whole process needs to be conducted in writing and be completed within a few days at the beginning of a semester. According to University Council John Morris, the main problem in the lawsuit was that the University had no established procedure to deal with a student's request for an accommodation, and that the University would not have had to settle in that particular case if the proposed policy had been in place at the time. Having a policy seems innocuous enough, but on the other hand, there does not currently seem to exist such a policy at any institution in the country, so that we are breaking ground (and are being observed) on a national scale.

A separate item, the proposed new University RPT procedure will affect our operation only in minor ways, and a major component of it is to give great discretion to individual departments to develop their own procedures.

Your senators this year are Andrejs Treibergs, Gordan Savin, and Peter Alfeld. Senate Meetings take place during the regular year on the first Monday of every month, at 3:00 pm in Room 115 of the Roland C Christensen Center. They are open to the public. Feel free to join us if you are curious or concerned, and don't hesitate to contact any of us for more information.

Congratulations Y.P.!
by Aaron Bertram

The AMS Centennial Research Fellowship is a very generous one-year fellowship awarded to mathematicians that are anywhere between three and twelve years out from their doctoral degree. It was established in 1973 and renamed in 1988 to honor the 100-year anniversary of the American Mathematical Society. The fellowships are awarded primarily on the basis of the candidate's research program, and all areas of mathematics, including interdisciplinary work, are eligible for consideration. It is highly competitive! Last year, only two were awarded, and this year, there will be at most two fellows in total. Y.P. was awarded this on the basis of his past accomplishments and current research program in Gromov-Witten theory. Congratulations, Y.P.!

Boy's Life, May 1973:
Ralph: Dad, will you do my math for me tonight?
Dad: No, son, it wouldn't be right.
Ralph: Well, you could try.

Personality!

Haimanot Kassa is a first year graduate student, interested in the applications of numerical PDEs to finance, who will be working with Jingyi Zhu. He has four brothers and one sister. Three of his brothers live in Chicago, while one brother, his sister and his parents live in Ethiopia. Haimanot is the youngest in his family.

In his spare time Haimanot enjoys playing soccer and watching football and basketball. He is a fan of the the Kentucky Wildcats and the Philly 76ers. According to Haimanot, the NBA is going to be "on fire" with Allen Iverson and Chris Webber as teammates.

Haimanot would like to say "that the people in the math department are very nice and friendly. I love the informality. It is just amazing to address faculty and staff members by their first name."

We are glad that he is enjoying his time here in the math department. If you don't know Haimanot yet, take a minute to introduce yourself.

A Few Laughs

Geekiness Meter

Why do so many math majors confuse Halloween and Christmas?   Because Oct 31 is Dec 25

Response=Geekiness
• Laughed out loud because you knew it was correct=Supergeek.
• Laughed out loud and then checked the math=Major geek.
• Stifled laugh and didn't want to check the math=Reluctant geek.
• Smiled and tried to remember how to do the math=Pseudo geek
• Smiled and had a vague sense of what the joke was=Minor geek
• No idea what the joke means =Non-geek

An astronomer, a physicist, and a mathematician were holidaying in Scotland. Glancing from a train window, they observed a black sheep in the middle of a field. "How interesting," observed the astronomer, "all Scottish sheep are black!" To which the physicist responded, "No, no! Some Scottish sheep are black!" The mathematician gazed heavenward in supplication, and then intoned, "In Scotland there exists at least one field, containing at least one sheep, at least one side of which is black."

Shortest Math Joke: Let $\varepsilon < 0$.

Undergraduate Scholarship Applications
are due by 5:00 p.m. March 15

If you haven't picked up an application yet, they are available from the math department office or at **www.math.utah. edu/ugrad/scholarships.html**