

MATH DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER FALL 2024

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Potsdam

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

WE'RE BACK!

Due to many challenges, we have not been able to produce a newsletter since before covid. There have also been distribution challenges, too. Going forward, our newsletters will be distributed by College Advancement. Following their lead, we plan to send shorter newsletters on a more frequent basis, rather than a long newsletter each year. We have lots more news to share with you, so expect to see a longer newsletter early in the new year. The good news is we're back in communication with you! Please join our department Facebook group and please contact us at any time. We love hearing from our former students!

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Dr. Laura Person Retires

Dr. Person joined the math department in the Fall of 1989 and after 34 successful years of teaching, retired at the end of the Fall 2023 semester. Dr. Person's career was characterized by excellence in teaching, scholarship and service – but most importantly teaching. This was evidenced by her President's Award for Excellence in Teaching (2007), Clarence F. Stephens Award for Distinguished Teaching from the Mathematical Association of America's Seaway Section (2008), SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching (2015), and by her appointment to the rank of SUNY Distinguished Teaching Professor (2016). She taught a broad spectrum of mathematics courses, including (uncountably?) many Calculus sections and eighteen classes of Theory of Sets, and she directed 23 graduate seminars. We invite each and every one of you to share stories of your experiences with Dr. Person, best wishes for Dr. Person and stories of where you are now. Please email them to Dr. Yuen or Dr. Madore. We look forward to sharing them with Dr. Person and with you all in a future newsletter.



Figure 1: Dr. Person presents award to Inca Picon

SEAWAY MAA CONFERENCE

Dr. Foisy and Dr. Madore were delighted to accompany 5 students to R.I.T. for the fall meeting of the Seaway Section of the Mathematical Association of America, October 4-5, 2024. Those students were Inca Picon, Isaac Morais, George Clapper, Kay Hilley and Krish Weraduwege. The students all agreed that they liked everything about the conference.

“Compared to other conferences I have attended, the speakers at this conference went out of their way to ensure their presentations were accessible to the students in attendance.” – Krish Weraduwege

Among the many things they experienced were keynote presentations on the mathematics of juggling, the illustration of math, providing feedback when grading math proofs, and rebuilding the mathematical community post covid. In addition, they were able to attend several shorter talks by students and faculty. R.I.T fed us well and there were several breaks to allow for snacks and much conversation and networking. The students made a lot of new contacts among the students and faculty from around the state.

We also witnessed the presentation of the Seaway section's Clarence F. Stephens Award for Teaching Excellence to Alfred University Professor of Mathematics Joseph Petrillo. Our students were delighted when they realized the award was named after Potsdam's own Dr. Stephens.

Overall, it was a successful learning experience for all, a chance to rejuvenate our passion for math and math teaching, and a way to check in with the math community across the state. This event was entirely funded by donations from alumni like you! Many thanks to all of you who contribute to make these kinds of educational experiences possible. Thanks are also due to the Math Department and Dean's Office for making this possible.



ASSOCIATION OF MATH TEACHERS OF NEW YORK STATE (AMTNYS) CONFERENCE

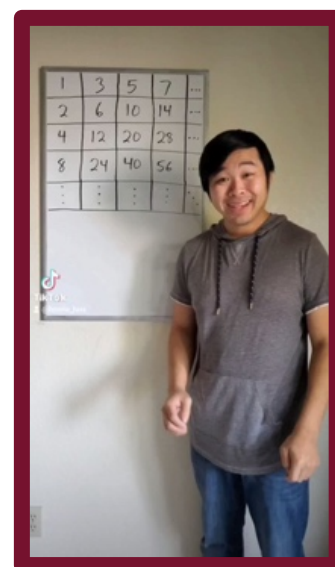
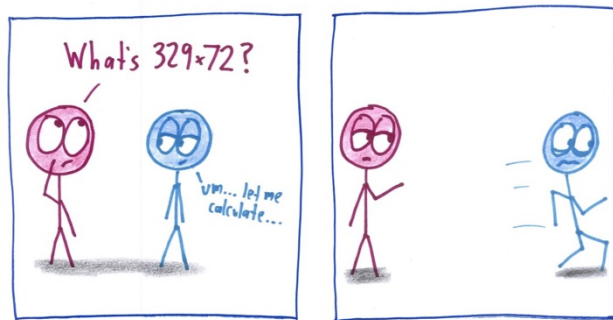
The annual fall meeting of the Association of Math Teachers of New York State (AMTNYS) took place in Albany from Thursday November 7 to Saturday November 9. Over 600 Math teachers from K-12, administrators, college professors, preservice teachers and math exhibitors met to share their love of all things related to math teaching.

SUNY Potsdam was represented by, (L to R) Dr. Cornelia Yuen (Math), Emily Prest and Lexi Price (preservice teachers), Dr. Pooja Saxena (Teacher Education), and Dr. Blair Madore (Math).



Howie Hua was the opening keynote speaker. Howie teaches math for elementary education courses at Cal State Fresno. He is extremely well known for his social media work. Howie, through examples and activities, convinced us that, math needs better public relations, and that has to start with those of us in the classroom.

Ben Orlin was our second day keynote speaker. Ben Orlin is known for his book “Math with Bad Drawings”. He is now a writer who is a math professor on the side. He was formerly a math professor who writes on the side, and he just published his fourth book “Math for English Majors”. Ben’s humor based approach leads to some great insights into the nature of mathematics and math teaching.



Dr. Yuen, Dr. Saxena and Dr. Madore attended the college level meeting to discuss issues of concern with college faculty from across the state.

In addition to the keynote speakers, all of us were able to attend numerous professional developments sessions on a range of topics including

- *“What Do Students See When They Look At Algebra?”*,
- *“Leap into Computational Thinking (CT)”*,
- *“Leveraging Visual Representations to Build Student Fluency”*,
- *“Using AI for Lesson Planning and Efficiency”*, and
- *“Disability Awareness”*.



Figure 2: Dr. Madore with Cheryl Stockwell



Figure 3: Emily Prest '26, Lexi Price '25, Faith Gatto '23 and Jill Folino '11

One of the best features of attending AMTNYS is the opportunity to catch up with numerous alumni. Here are some of those we ran into.

- Misty Leroux '07 of Chazy Central Rural School,
- Jill (Dunkelberg) Folino '08 of Watertown CSD,
- Nicole Sullivan '11 of Broad Albin Perth CSD,
- Faith Gatto '23 of Berlin CSD,
- Maggie (Flynn) Loney '05 of Johnson City CSD,

- Will Hardin '03, of Granville Junior/Senior High School,
- Scott Schaefer '97 of Honeoye Falls Lima Central School District,
- Cheryl Stockwell of Niskayuna High School,
- Mary Kate (Graham) Endevieri '17 of Knickerbacker Middle School, Troy NY.

Many thanks are due to the Loughheed Center for providing funding for this highly engaging experience for students and faculty. Thanks to Dean Grant and Dean Imai who directed us to apply for this funding and offered organizational support.



Figure 3: Maggie Loney

“Having the opportunity to attend the 2024 Fall AMTNYS conference was a great experience for me. The sessions I was able to attend were informative and will help me find success in the rest of my education and my future career as a teacher.” – Lexi Price '25

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE DEMYSTIFIED



Figure 4: Alex Farben-Griggs, George Clapper, Dr. Jon Doane, Dr. Joel Foisy, Dr. Cheryl Miller, Dr. Jason Howald

Dr. Jon Doane earned his BA/MA from SUNY Potsdam in 2015 and his Ph.D. from Binghamton in 2022. He is now an AI specialist and Curriculum & Instruction Manager at AI4ALL, a company dedicated to making AI accessible and diverse. On November 14, Jon gave a presentation for us to explain how artificial intelligence really works – using a series of convincing exercises and demonstrations suitable for a general audience. Dr. Doane summed it up as really just “linear algebra and statistics”. Thanks to Dean Imai for attending and taking the photo.



VIRTUAL REALITY POOL

On November 6, Jeff Weeks visited campus to share a presentation about different geometries – including Euclidean, spherical and hyperbolic. Jeff’s innovative approach to experiencing these geometries is to don a Virtual Reality headset and get inside them and play a game of pool! In leads to much deeper understanding of, and insights into, the geometries themselves. This is all done through software and hardware that Jeff designs and programs himself.

We are so lucky that world class geometer, Jeff Weeks, lives nearby in Canton NY. In addition to important research Jeff is passionate about sharing geometrical understanding with students everywhere – and he is very creative in his approaches to doing so. Students from Dr. Miller’s Math 404 Geometry and Math 526 Linear Algebra course hosted the presentation.



IN BRIEF

- There will be more presenters in the spring semester of 2025 but we do not have specific talks organized, yet. If you are interested in speaking to an audience of college math students, please get in touch. Our students love learning about the real world, what our alumni do, and how that fits in the very wide field of mathematical sciences.
- In February 2025, we will once again be honoring the legacy of Dr. Clarence Stephens Sr. We will have guest speakers including faculty, alumni, and students. Watch for an announcement early in the new year.
- The Math Department hosts **TEA TIME** every Thursday at 3pm in MacVicar 226. Students and faculty gather to share tea and cookies while discussing topics of current interest or playing math games together. If you're in the area, alumni are always welcome.
- Do you have something you would like us to share in an upcoming newsletter? Or a question you would like us to answer? Please contact us – we'd love to hear from you.



Figure 5: Eric Gordonos at Tea Time

New Manipulatives

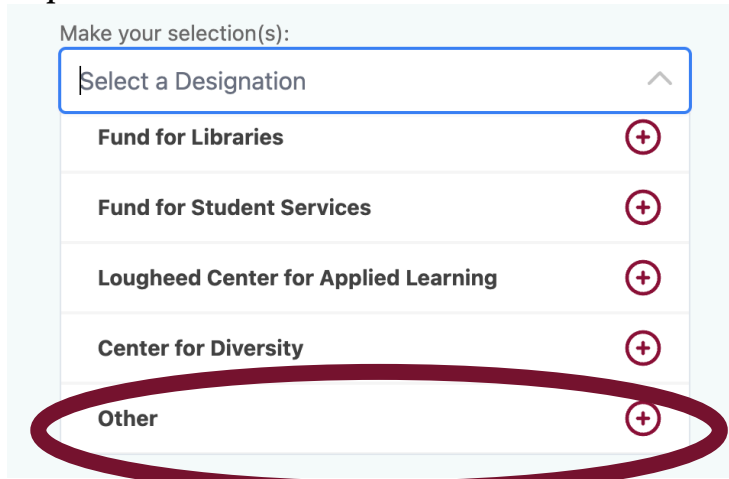
Thanks to a grant from the Arconic Foundation (PIs Page Quinton and Jessica Pearson) we were able to purchase very large polydrion pieces. Just like the small polydrion pieces we've had for decades, they are very useful for studying polyhedra, but now the size adds a team building element to the lessons. We've used them thus far at Tea Time with our students, at Open House with prospective students, and with visiting middle school and high school students. Recently they were even used onstage as part of a Crane performance!



PLEASE HELP – HOW TO MAKE A DONATION

In the light of challenges to higher education, private support has become critical to our programs. The gifts that you make on a regular basis allow us to continue taking students to conferences, to fund the many awards our students rely upon to continue their education, and to continue providing the small additional experiences and supplies that keep our educational offerings high quality. A gift of any size will be greatly appreciated.

The easiest way to make a gift to is to visit our website: <https://www.potsdam.edu/give>. If you want to donate to the Mathematics Department, please **choose Other and type in Mathematics Department**.

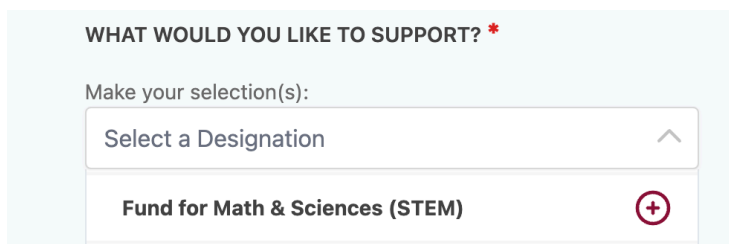


Make your selection(s):

Select a Designation ^

- Fund for Libraries +
- Fund for Student Services +
- Lougheed Center for Applied Learning +
- Center for Diversity +
- Other** +

There is also a STEM option on the drop down menu. While gifts to that fund have benefitted our department, **it is not under the control of the Mathematics Department**. That fund is designed to benefit STEM needs more broadly and is administered by the Dean of Arts and Sciences.



WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SUPPORT? *

Make your selection(s):

Select a Designation ^

- Fund for Math & Sciences (STEM) +

We are extremely appreciative of any and all gifts! Thank you!