

## AMS Committee on Meetings and Conferences

### Highlights of 2014 Meeting

The Committee on Meetings and Conferences (CoMC) held its annual meeting on March 8, 2014, at the Hilton Chicago O'Hare Airport Hotel. Graham Leuschke, chair, presided over the meeting

#### Introductory items

The meeting began with a round of introductions. Time was then devoted to discussing the components that play roles in AMS meetings: the Secretariat, the Meetings and Conferences Department, and CoMC. The history of some decisions made by CoMC was reviewed. Secretary Carla Savage and AMS staff members AED Ellen Maycock and Director of Meetings and Conferences Penny Pina answered questions posed by CoMC members.

#### Reports

- **Secretariat.** Carla Savage reported on the March 7, 2014, Secretariat meeting.
  - **Upcoming Joint International Meetings:**
    - Israel, June 16-19, 2014, in Tel Aviv.
    - Portugal, June 10-13, 2015, in Porto (with the European Mathematical Society).
    - Tentative: December 2016, to be held with the Indian Mathematical Society and the Ramanujan Mathematical Society.
    - Tentative (contingent on Council approval for the AMS to join the Mathematical Council of the Americas): July 23 – 28, 2017, Mathematical Congress of the Americas, in Montréal.
  - **2013-2014 Einstein Lectures.** The 2013 Einstein Lecture was given by Jon Kleinberg at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, on October 12, 2013. The 2014 Einstein Lecture will be held on October 25-26, 2014, at San Francisco State University. James H. Simons will be the speaker.
  - **2013 Erdős Lectures.** A 2013 Erdős Memorial Lecture was held at Iowa State University on April 27, 2013. The lecturer was Endre Szemerédi. Another 2013 Erdős Memorial Lecture was held at Temple University on October 12, 2013. The lecturer was Barry Mazur. The 2014 Erdős Memorial Lecture was given on March 21, 2014. The lecturer was Maria Chudnovsky.
  - **AMS-NZMS Lecture Series.** The first AMS-NZMS Maclaurin Lecturer was

Marston Conder. He delivered an Invited Address at the Eastern Sectional Meeting, held in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts on April 6-7, 2013, and gave colloquia at seven colleges and universities. (Conder was officially the 2012 Maclaurin Lecturer, but his visit was delayed until 2013 to allow scheduling a talk at a Sectional Meeting.) Terrence Tao was the 2013 Maclaurin Lecturer, visiting New Zealand during summer 2013. The third AMS-NZMS Maclaurin Lecturer will be James Sneyd from the University of Auckland. Sneyd's field is applications of mathematics to medicine, physiology, and biology in general. He will give a lecture at the 2014 Fall Southeastern Sectional Meeting in Greenboro, NC. The rest of the itinerary for his Maclaurin Lectures has not yet been determined.

- **CoMC Focus Group Breakfast.** Vicki Powers chaired the CoMC Focus Group Breakfast, held at the Baltimore Joint Mathematics Meetings. As in past years, the breakfast gathered attendees who were diverse in terms of their mathematical ages, their institutions and their reasons for attending the JMM. Suggestions were made about the Sectional Meetings, such as creating links to local industry and having funding for undergraduates to attend. CoMC discussed the value of continuing the tradition of the Focus Group Breakfast, and decided not to continue it in its present form. CoMC would be open to experimenting with other ways to gather input from conference participants.
- **Baltimore Questionnaire.** The responses from the Baltimore questionnaire were reviewed. Once again, the AMS used an electronic survey form and sent email to all participants after the meeting with a link to the survey. Over 1760 participants completed the survey. Specific issues that were discussed included the continuing problems with wireless access, and possible improvements for both the printed program and the online version. CoMC members will make suggestions about revisions to the current survey. During this discussion, CoMC passed the following motion:

***CoMC recommends to the Joint Meetings Committee that the JMM be held in either the first or second week of January.***

- **2014 Annual Review-- Sectional Meetings.** Laura De Carli, Kailash Misra and Vicki Powers (chair) formed the subcommittee that carried out this review. The subcommittee studied the results from a survey that was sent to Fall 2013 Sectional Meeting attendees. Two of the subcommittee members participated in the CoMC Focus Group discussion held at the 2014 JMM.

Overall, the report was very positive. In summary, the report stated:

*The basic finding of the subcommittee is that the Sectional Meetings are valuable and successful and that the participants are for the*

*most part satisfied with the basic structure and organization of the meetings.*

*The AMS staff, the associate secretaries, and the local organizers deserve a round of applause for making the Sectional Meetings so successful!*

The subcommittee made the following recommendations:

1. **Adding more activities for students.** The subcommittee recommends that the AMS encourage local organizers and Special Session organizers to implement activities for increasing the participation of graduate and undergraduate students in Sectional Meetings and for giving them more opportunities for networking.
2. **Choice of location.** Local organizers and associate secretaries should consider the lodging and food possibilities when deciding on the location of a Sectional Meeting.
3. **Invited Talks.** The subcommittee would like to reiterate what was said in the last report on sectional meetings (from 2008): *“It is important that people giving invited lectures be chosen not only for their mathematical talent, but also for their expository skills.”*
4. **Booklet.** We recommend that the AMS update the on-line schedule of the Sectional Meetings with the most recent changes of the program, and consider discontinuing the (costly) printed booklet.
5. **Publicize funding available for graduate students more.** The AMS should publicize more the availability of graduate student support.

During this discussion, CoMC passed the following motion:

***CoMC strongly encourages Special Session organizers at Sectional Meetings to include one 45-minute expository talk aimed at graduate students and non-specialists.***

- ***Report on AMS Travel Grants.*** The AMS now administers several travel grants programs on a regular basis. These include a program of travel grants awarded to graduate students in order to attend the Joint Mathematics Meetings and Sectional Meetings, and the AMS-Simons Travel Grants program for early career mathematicians. The National Science Foundation has recently awarded two grants to the AMS to fund travel to international conferences. In 2013, the AMS administered a travel grants program to fund

invited speakers and early career mathematicians in order to attend the inaugural Mathematical Congress of the Americas, held in Guanajuato, Mexico, on August 5 – 9, 2013. In 2014, the AMS will administer a travel grants program to fund invited speakers and early career mathematicians in order to attend the International Congress of Mathematicians, August 13 - 21, 2014, to be held in Seoul, Korea.

- **Report on MRC program.** The Mathematics Research Community (MRC) program, funded by NSF, is a program run by the AMS to support young mathematicians as they begin their research careers. The program is now in its seventh year. The NSF grant that supports this program has recently been renewed (supporting programs that will begin in summers 2014, 2015 and 2016). The conferences in summer 2014 will be:

***Cluster Algebras***, June 8 – 14, 2014

**Michael Gekhtman** (University of Notre Dame)  
**Mark Gross** (University of California, San Diego)  
**Gregg Musiker** (University of Minnesota)  
**David Speyer** (University of Michigan)  
**Gordana Todorov** (Northeastern University)

***Algebraic and Geometric Methods in Applied Discrete Mathematics***,

June 15 – 21, 2014

**Carina Curto** (University of Nebraska-Lincoln)  
**Jesus A. De Loera** (University of California, Davis)  
**Christine Heitsch** (Georgia Institute of Technology)  
**Michael Orrison** (Harvey Mudd College)  
**Francis Edward Su** (Harvey Mudd College).

***Mathematics of Quantum Phases of Matter and Quantum Information***,

June 24-30, 2014

**Siu-Hung Ng** (Iowa State University)  
**Eric C. Rowell** (Texas A&M University)  
**Zhenghan Wang** (Microsoft Station Q and U.C. Santa Barbara).

***Network Science***, June 24-30, 2014

**Mason Porter** (University of Oxford)  
**Aaron Clauset** (University of Colorado, Boulder)  
**David Kempe** (University of Southern California)

- **Update date on Council actions.** The members of CoMC were informed about the actions that had been taken on the recommendations made at the 2013 CoMC meeting by the Council during its April 2013 meeting.

**Old Business**

- **AMS Community Network.** CoMC first discussed the possibility of having AMS Activity Groups at its meeting in March 2011. Over the next three years, the initial idea evolved into a program of online communities. The AMS has now launched the AMS Community Network, which will host AMS Activity Groups, Community Forums and private groups such as AMS committees. Currently, there are several Community Forums, including one for directors of undergraduate studies, one for directors of graduate studies and one for directors of summer math camps. CoMC members agreed to participate in a private group to be established in order to handle CoMC committee business.
- **Policy on a Welcoming Environment.** The AMS-ASA-AWM-IMS-MAA-NCTM-SIAM Committee on Women in the Mathematical Sciences (JCW) proposed in early 2013 a “welcoming environment policy” and suggested to participating societies that they discuss adoption of such a policy. The objective of such a policy is to encourage members of a society to ensure that all feel welcome at events of all types, including meetings and conferences. CoProf discussed the proposed policy at its meeting in September 2013 and recommended formation of a subcommittee with representatives from CoProf, CoMC and the Committee on Women in Mathematics (CoWiM). The members of the subcommittee are Don McClure (CoProf), Anna Mazzucato (CoMC), and Carol Wood (CoWiM). The subcommittee presented a draft of a proposal, which was viewed positively by committee members. The draft of the policy will also be reviewed by the Committee on the Profession (CoProf), and will be vetted by the AMS attorney.

## New Business

- **The AMS-MAA-SIAM Porter Public Lecture.** The AMS-MAA-SIAM Gerald and Judith Porter Public Lecture has been delivered each year at the Joint Mathematics Meetings since 2010. Currently the lecturer is selected by a standing committee of the MAA which consists of three MAA representatives and one representative each from the AMS and SIAM. The lecture series is supported by an MAA fund. The first five lecturers in the series were [with estimated attendance]:
  - 2010 Steven Strogatz (Cornell): "The calculus of friendship" [600]
  - 2011 Robert Lang (Origami): "From flapping birds to space telescopes: The mathematics of origami" [300]
  - 2012 Erik Demaine (MIT): "Geometric puzzles: Algorithms and complexity" [900+]
  - 2013 Kenneth Golden (University of Utah): "Mathematics and the melting polar ice caps" [1100]

- 2014 Eitan Grinspun (Columbia): "The mathematics behind Hollywood's visual effects" [1100]

The Joint Meetings Committee reviewed the series at its meeting in the summer of 2013 and supported continuing it. MAA has proposed that this committee become a standing joint committee of six with equal representation from all organizations. Additionally, the current charge specifies a two-year term, but the MAA proposes changing this to a three-year term. These measures were approved by the MAA Board of Governors in August 2013. CoMC approved these changes and recommends them to the Council.

- ***The Mathematical Council of the Americas and Invitation for AMS Participation.*** The Mathematical Council of Americas (MCofA) was created during the 2013 Mathematical Congress of the Americas (MCA) held in Guanajuata, Mexico in August 2013. Its purpose is to organize future MCAs and promote development and cooperation in mathematics among all mathematicians in the Americas. The plan is to organize a quadrennial MCA in rotating countries of the Americas, the second of which will be held in Montreal in 2017.

The MCofA has formulated provisional statutes and appointed an interim Executive Committee. Susan Friedlander is on the Executive Committee.

The American Mathematical Society has been invited to join the Mathematical Council of Americas. This requires a membership fee of \$1,000 annually for societies with more than a thousand members. This entitles the member society to three representatives on the Council.

As of January 1, 2014, the following Societies have joined: CMS, MAA, SBM (Brazil), SIAM, SBMAC (Brazil), AMM (Mexico), IMA (Argentina). The following Institutions have joined: CRM, CIMAT (Mexico), CMM (Chile), Fields Institute, IMA, IPAM, IM-INAM (Mexico), MBI, MSRI.

The AMS ECBT approved joining the MCofA at its November 2013 meeting. The Secretariat endorsed joining at its January 2014 meeting. At its 2014 meeting, CoMC approved the proposal to join the MCofA, and recommends this to the Council.

- ***The Number of Invited Addresses at AMS Sectional Meetings.*** At its March 2013 meeting, the Secretariat addressed concerns that at the Sectional Meetings, the Sunday afternoon address is poorly attended. After much discussion, it was moved and seconded to recommend the following policy to the appropriate AMS body:

***Sectional Meetings will have three to four plenary speakers, with three being the norm.***

This would not include the Einstein Lectures or the Erdős Lectures, which would be in addition to the three to four invited addresses.

CoMC endorsed the policy and recommends that the Council approve it.

**2015 CoMC Meeting.**

- The committee approved the suggested date of March 21, 2015 for its next meeting, to be held at AMS Headquarters in Providence, RI.
- For the 2015 meeting, the topic to be reviewed will be: Invited plenary, distinguished and joint lectures.

*Ellen Maycock  
Associate Executive Director  
March 24, 2014*