

AMS Committee on Meetings and Conferences

Highlights of 2017 Activities

The Committee on Meetings and Conferences (COMC) held its annual meeting on March 18, 2017, at the Hilton Chicago O'Hare Airport Hotel. Monica Nevins, chair, presided.

Actions taken by COMC include the following:

Child Care Grants. For the last few years, the AMS and MAA have offered reimbursement grants of US\$250 per family to help with the cost of child care for registered participants in the Joint Mathematics Meetings (JMM). The funds can be used for child care expenses from local resources at JMM or for any other form of child care (such as hiring a nanny at home, bringing a caregiver to the meeting, etc.). COMC discussed the possibility of offering child care grants for Sectional meetings, and it unanimously asked the AMS staff to look into this option. Accordingly, the Meetings and Conferences distributed a survey about child care needs at the Fall 2017 Sectional meetings, the results of which will be discussed at the next COMC meeting in March 2018.

2017 Annual Review – Mathematics Research Communities, Short Courses, and Summer Institutes. Rebecca Garcia, Monica Nevins (chair), and Alan Reid formed the subcommittee that carried out this review. The subcommittee divided its report into three sections, the first of which covered the Mathematics Research Communities (MRC). The subcommittee deemed the program very successful and noted that the participants felt that the working groups were the most valuable part of the summer conferences. The subcommittee also pointed to areas where improvements could be made, including generating more proposals and attracting a diverse set of participants and organizers. COMC discussed strategies for addressing these problems and voted to organize a panel at JMM 2018 about opportunities provided by collaborative research communities.

The second section of the report dealt with Short Courses. The subcommittee felt that they make a positive contribution to the mathematical community and noted a happy consistency between the instructions given to Short Course organizers and participants' comments about what features make a Short Course successful. Although some Short Courses draw a small number of registrants, those who do register are usually pleased with the event and sometimes cite its small size as one of its virtues. It was suggested that the manual for organizers include the possibility of utilizing "active learning" models. COMC also discussed the role that video recordings or webinars might play in the Short Courses but decided to defer any recommendations until after the Joint Meetings Committee's upcoming discussion of video recordings of invited addresses at JMM.

The third section of the report dealt with the Summer Research Institutes (SRI's) in Algebraic Geometry. These represent a sporadic extension of what had, until 1999, been a regular AMS program of annual SRI's. The topics were chosen by a selection committee, and the program was funded by an NSF grant to the AMS. After NSF support ended, the selection committee had no work to do, and the Council voted in January 2000 to dissolve it. Although the SRI program

no longer existed, the AMS, at the request of groups of algebraic geometers, subsequently applied for NSF funding for SRI's in that subject. As a result, the AMS conducted SRI's in Algebraic Geometry in 2005 and again in 2015. A total of 742 mathematicians from 32 countries attended the 2015 SRI in Algebraic Geometry in Salt Lake City, Utah.

The subcommittee expressed serious reservations about the paucity of women among the speakers at the 2015 SRI. COMC also asked whether it was appropriate for the AMS to sponsor SRI's in just this one field, and it wondered whether three-week conferences were as relevant now as they were when the SRI program last flourished in the 1990s. After this discussion, COMC unanimously passed a motion recommending to the Council that the SRI program be discontinued. Since the selection committee for the SRI's had already been dissolved, COMC is working with the Secretary's office to determine the precise wording of its recommendation to the Council.

COMC Panel at JMM 2018: As noted above COMC is sponsoring a panel about *Collaborative Research Communities in Mathematics*, scheduled at 2:00 – 3:30 p.m. on Wednesday, January 10, 2018. It was organized by Alan Reid and Irina Mitrea, and the panelists are: Sam Ballas, Florida State University; Ruth Charney, Brandeis University; Brian Conrey, American Institute of Mathematics; and Satayan Devados, University of San Diego.

Meetings and Conferences in Cooperation with the AMS. At its meeting in March 2016, COMC recommended to the Council that the program of “Meetings in cooperation with the AMS” be discontinued. It then passed an additional recommendation stating that, “In truly exceptional circumstances, the Secretariat may recommend to the Executive Committee that AMS participate in a meeting or conference in some form, with appropriate information about this possibility being posted on the AMS website.” In January 2017 the Council approved the first of these recommendations, thus ending the program of “Meetings in Cooperation with the AMS.” The Council rejected the second recommendation and left it to COMC to bring another proposal forward if, upon reconsideration, COMC so desired. COMC decided that it did not wish to do so.

Possible AMS Website for Information about Conferences. COMC discussed the idea of an ArXiv-like platform for conferences that would be hosted by the AMS, and it established a subcommittee comprising Pierre Albin (chair), Ivan Corwin, Niles Johnson, and Bryna Kra to study the idea further. They prepared a proposal which was circulated to COMC by email and will be discussed at its meeting in March 2018.

Prize Venues. An agreement between the AMS and the Mathematical Association of America limits the number of prizes that may be given at the Joint Prize Session at the Joint Mathematics Meetings. Since the AMS is in the process of creating new prizes, it may become necessary to award some prizes in venues other than the Joint Prize Session, and a joint subcommittee of CoProf and COMC was created to deliberate about the issue of prize venues. The members of that subcommittee were Richard Durrett and Christina Sormani from COMC and Alicia Dickenstein and Bryna Kra (Chair) from CoProf. COMC discussed the subcommittee's report and brainstormed about alternate venues for awarding prizes.

2018 Annual Review. As the topic of its next Annual Review, COMC chose the AMS scientific program at JMM. The review will be conducted by a subcommittee comprising Christina Sormani (chair), Wen-Ching Winnie Li, and John Lowengrub.

Review of von Neumann Symposium. At the request of staff, COMC also created a subcommittee to review the von Neumann Symposium, which last took place in 2016. Since it is scheduled to occur again in 2020, this seemed like an appropriate time for COMC to examine the program. The subcommittee has two members: Rebecca Garcia (chair) and Monica Nevins.

Other activities

COMC received and discussed several reports, including ones on JMM 2016, AMS Activity Groups, travel grants, and the 2016 von Neumann Symposium. In response to a request from a member of the mathematical community, COMC also discussed the way in which speakers for invited addresses at Sectional meetings are chosen. Within the constraints imposed by the way Sectional meetings are structured and organized, COMC discussed possible activities at Sectional meetings that might promote membership in AMS and diversity in the mathematical community.

2018 COMC Meeting. The next meeting of COMC will be held on March 24, 2018, at AMS Headquarters in Providence.

*T. Christine Stevens
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