1039-57-47   **Jesse Johnson*** (`jessee.johnson@yale.edu`), Department of Mathematics, Yale University, P.O. Box 208283, New Haven, CT 06520. *Bounding the stable genera of Heegaard splittings from below.* Preliminary report.

I will discuss a method of bounding from below the number of stabilizations needed to turn a given Heegaard splitting of a closed 3-manifold into a Heegaard splitting for which there is an isotopy that interchanges the handlebodies. This is a combinatorial version of the proof of a similar theorem recently announced by Hass, Thompson and Thurston. The combinatorial treatment of the proof leads to better control of the genus bound in terms of the Hempel distance. (Received February 28, 2008)