

# Award for Impact on the Teaching and Learning of Mathematics



The Award for Impact on the Teaching and Learning of Mathematics was established by the AMS Committee on Education (COE) in 2013. The endowment fund that supports the award was established in 2012 by a contribution from Kenneth I. and Mary Lou Gross in honor of their daughters Laura and Karen. The award is given annually to a mathematician (or group of mathematicians) who has made significant contributions of lasting value to mathematics education.



Ulrica Wilson

## Citation

### Ulrica Wilson

Dr. Ulrica Wilson, Associate Professor of Mathematics at Morehouse College, has led many initiatives on the teaching and learning of mathematics for many different segments of the mathematics community. She has done so with an unwavering commitment to equity and mentorship.

Dr. Wilson has been key to Morehouse Mathematics' successes and to its recognition by the AMS as the 2016 recipient of its Mathematics Programs that Make a Difference honor. She has worked with research teams of first-year students. She uses set theory to introduce early mathematics students to proof-based coursework. Through these and other efforts, she establishes relationships with her students early on, helping them grow and find opportunities. The college celebrated her impact with the 2017 Vulcan Teaching Excellence Award.

Dr. Wilson improves the education of Morehouse students in her administrative and service capacities as well. She is the founding director of the James King Jr. Initiative for Student and Faculty Engagement, which initiates and supports extensive efforts that improve students' mathematical experience. One example of this is the Communicating by Thinking Effectively in and About Mathematics program,

which develops abilities of older students to communicate mathematics to freshmen, in turn strengthening the success of general education mathematics. Dr. Wilson is also director of the RISE to Excellence program. Starting at the sophomore year, this program accepts math and science students and provides them scholarship support, promotes research experience, and develops them professionally through individual mentoring and program workshops.

Dr. Wilson has played a long-term integral role within the Enhancing Diversity in Graduate Education (EDGE) Program, a program that prepares a cohort of new PhD students, all women, to succeed in their graduate programs. Starting first as a graduate student mentor, Dr. Wilson returned to the program as an algebra instructor, then Co-Director, and now Vice President of the Sylvia Bozeman and Rhonda Hughes EDGE Foundation, which received a 2015 Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics and Engineering Mentoring (PAESMEM). Throughout her more than 20-year involvement with EDGE, Dr. Wilson has mentored dozens of young women mathematicians. Dr. Wilson's mentorship has empowered early career teachers to recognize their role and ownership in their mathematical community, and to excel in their work as educators.

Dr. Wilson has served as vice president of the National Association of Mathematicians (NAM). Dr. Wilson deserves considerable credit for securing funding for the continuation of NAM's Undergraduate MathFest, which annually attracts mathematics majors, mostly Black, at all levels to inform them about and inspire them to consider graduate study and careers in the mathematical sciences.

She is a 2019 Fellow of the Association of Women in Mathematics (AWM), and serves on the AWM Scientific Advisory Committee.

At the Institute for Computational and Experimental Research in Mathematics (ICERM), Dr. Wilson has helped increase faculty involvement in student research broadly. She has been the PI on numerous grants for Research Experiences for Undergraduate Faculty, for workshops equipping mathematics faculty to conduct undergraduate research at their own institutions across the country. At ICERM Dr. Wilson also coordinates diversity initiatives and co-chairs the Mathematical Sciences Initiatives Diversity Committee. For example, she is a member of a small organizing committee for Girls Get Math at ICERM, a summer program for high school students.

Dr. Wilson was co-organizer for the 2018 Infinite Possibilities Conference and two-time co-organizer of the Blackwell-Tapia Conference.

In recognition of her many contributions impacting nearly every segment of the mathematics community, from K-12 students to mathematics faculty, and her steadfast commitment to equity and excellence in mathematics teaching, the AMS awards Ulrica Wilson the 2023 Award for Impact on the Teaching and Learning of Mathematics.

### Biographical Note

**Ulrica Wilson** was born in Massachusetts while her father was in graduate school and raised in Birmingham, AL. She is an alumna of Spelman College and it was the mathematics faculty and her classmates at Spelman who informed her choice to pursue mathematics and increase opportunities for women in mathematics. Undaunted by a roadblock or two herself at several critical stages of her career, Ulrica is committed to breaking down barriers that obstruct diverse paths to careers and opportunities in the mathematical sciences. Since the recent loss of her father, who was a Geography professor, she's had the pleasure of hearing from many of his former students and colleagues and now more than ever she recognizes the impact that teaching and learning can have long past the initial professor-student or mentor-mentee interaction.

### Response from Ulrica Wilson

Thanks to AMS for recognizing efforts that impact teaching and learning as part of the overall mission to advance mathematics. I am honored to receive this prize. Inspired by many of my own mentors, including Etta Falconer, I am proud to say that throughout my career, I've had the support of Morehouse College, EDGE, and ICERM to create and contribute to programs that respond to specific needs that arise in the mathematics community. I have the privilege to work at an institution dedicated to educating black men—a population often overlooked and discounted. At Morehouse, I see firsthand the impact that such programs have on my current and past students.

I am also thankful for the environment I entered in 2007 when I joined the Morehouse College faculty. Because of a dean that strongly supported my ideas and initiatives, a chair that was creative and unwavering in his commitment, and peers that fueled my motivation, I've been able to design a broad array of opportunities that expand pathways for those that are regularly underrepresented in our community. Lastly, I am immensely grateful for the community of EDGERS that have become both colleagues and friends in the past 15 years. I've learned so much from working with you all.

### Credits

Photo of Ulrica Wilson is courtesy of Mikki Harris.