

## MINUTES

### American Mathematical Society Committee on Meetings and Conferences (CoMC)

*Saturday, March 8, 2014  
Hilton Chicago O'Hare Airport Hotel*

*Members present:* Richard Durrett, Graham J. Leuschke, (chair), Anna L. Mazzucato, Donald E. McClure, Kailash C. Misra, Nataša Pavlović, Vicki A. Powers, Carla D. Savage, David A. Vogán, Jr.

*Members absent:* Illya Hicks, Robert J. McCann, Karen Vogtmann.

*Permanent invited guests present:* Georgia Benkart, AMS Associate Secretary; Brian D. Boe, AMS Associate Secretary; Ellen J. Maycock, AMS Associate Executive Director for Meetings and Professional Services; Penny Pina, AMS Director of Meetings and Conferences; Steven H. Weintraub, AMS Associate Secretary

*Permanent invited guests absent (conferenced in):* Michel L. Lapidus, AMS Associate Secretary

*Staff present:* Robin Hagan Aguiar, Recording Secretary

*Invited guest:* Robert L. Bryant, President-elect

#### I. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

- A. **Welcome and Introduction.** The chair welcomed the new members of CoMC: Richard Durrett, Illya V. Hicks, and Karen Vogtmann.
- B. **Membership.** For the convenience of the committee, a list of committee members, guests and staff, including contact information, was included in attachment #1.
- C. **Minutes.** The minutes of the March 23, 2013 CoMC meeting, held at the Hilton Chicago O'Hare Hotel, included in attachment #2, were formally approved.
- D. **Committee Charge.** The charge to the CoMC, the guide for committee work, was included in attachment #3. Maycock requested the members review the Conflict of Interest Policy for AMS Officers and Committee Members, which was also included in attachment #3.

#### II. BACKGROUND

- A. **Roles of the Secretariat, CoMC and the Meetings and Conferences Department.** Maycock gave an introduction to CoMC from Thomas Fiske to the present and the role CoMC serves along with its relationship with the AMS Secretariat. Savage gave an overview of the roles of each of the Associate Secretaries and their roles in the National

and Sectional meetings as well as a synopsis of the Erdős & Einstein Lectures. The committee offered a number of names to be considered for future Einstein and Erdős Lectures. She asked the committee to give her suggestions either during the CoMC meeting or by email. CoMC agreed that this request for names be added to future CoMC agendas for discussion. CoMC also suggested that a list of past lecturers be included in the agenda to help with suggestions. Pina provided a description of the Joint Mathematics Meetings (JMM) and the role of the Meetings and Conferences Department (MCD). McClure discussed the AMS' relationship with the Mathematical Association of America (MAA).

- B. History of policy decisions made by CoMC.** Maycock reported on some decisions made by CoMC that have impacted the Society as it moves into the future

### III. REPORTS

- A. Secretariat.** Savage gave an oral report on the Secretariat's meeting on Friday night, March 7, 2014. She reviewed the upcoming Joint International Meetings, as well as the speakers for the 2014 Einstein and Erdős Lectures. The location for these lectures in 2015 has been decided, but the speakers have not been invited. She gave a brief overview of other items discussed at the Seretariat meeting which were to be discussed later in this CoMC agenda.
- B. Baltimore Focus Group.** Powers chaired the 2014 Focus Group held in Baltimore, Maryland. The notes from the Focus Group, held in Baltimore, Maryland, were included in attachment #4. Powers indicated the participants were particularly interested in:
1. informing graduate students of funding for Sectional Meetings;
  2. paper and resume writing sessions;
  3. a help desk for graduate students.
  4. A CoMC member requested that the Directors of Graduate Studies (DGS) Focus Group be scheduled closer to and after the Graduate School Fair.
  5. It was also suggested that whoever signs up for the Graduate School Fair should receive an invitation to the DGS Focus Group.

Pina indicated that 909 undergraduate students and 950 graduate students attended the Baltimore 2014 meeting. This (33.5%) was the largest percentage of students in the scientific registrants for JMM history.

CoMC members were also asked if they thought it was worthwhile to continue with the Focus Group breakfast. There were a number of suggestions for getting additional feedback from JMM participants, but the committee agreed to discontinue the Focus Group in its current form at the JMM.

- C. Baltimore Questionnaire.**

The results of the participant survey from the January 2014 JMM, held in Baltimore, Maryland, were in attachment #5. The full set of responses from participants at the 2014 JMM can be found at the web site:

[https://www.surveymonkey.com/sr.aspx?sm=bdG27kYiO\\_2brA1qtfWgvebqxiFa\\_2fEt\\_2bN1nDpoxsNLadY\\_3d](https://www.surveymonkey.com/sr.aspx?sm=bdG27kYiO_2brA1qtfWgvebqxiFa_2fEt_2bN1nDpoxsNLadY_3d)

Pina reported on the essay responses and highlighted some of the complaints and suggestions. There were a number of responses about the need for better wireless; the program booklet not being searchable; more undergraduate activity at Sectional Meetings and the JMM be held earlier in January. Most respondents to the survey were satisfied overall with the meetings. CoMC suggested that a searchable PDF of the program would help until we have a better option. The program should be available on line. Maycock indicated that the Joint Meetings Committee (JMC), which governs the JMM, is interested in revising the participant survey sent to JMM participants. CoMC would like to add questions to the survey. It was agreed that it would be appropriate for members of CoMC to participate in the revision even if by email.

The CoMC passed the following motion (with eight committee members approving and one member opposing):

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

#### **D. 2014 Annual Review – Sectional Meetings.**

Each year, CoMC reviews a specific area that falls within its charge. This year, a subcommittee has reviewed the AMS Sectional Meetings. This topic was last considered in 2008. The members of the annual review subcommittee were: De Carli, Misra and Powers (chair). 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 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 increase publicity of the availability of graduate student support.

The full report of the subcommittee was attached in attachment #6. During the discussion, the following motion was made and passed:

*CoMC strongly encourages organizers of Special Sessions to include one 45-minute expository talk aimed at graduate students and nonspecialists in their sessions.*

CoMC thanked the subcommittee for its work.

#### **E. Report on AMS Travel Grants.**

Maycock reported on the several travel grants programs that the AMS now administers 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 one-time 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, another travel grants program will be administered to fund invited speakers and early career mathematicians to attend the International Congress of Mathematicians, to be held in Seoul, Korea, on August 13 - 21, 2014. This has been done every four years since 1992.

The AMS-Simons Travel Grants program has been very successful as well. Each recipient must have a mentor, who approves the trips that are proposed by the recipient. Graduate students in their final year can apply for \$500 in funding to be used for travel expenses in order to attend the Joint Mathematics Meetings. Graduate students at any level can apply for a \$250 grant to help defray costs in order to travel to a Sectional Meeting. The target is to fund 50 students for the Spring Sectional Meetings, 50 for the Fall Sectional Meetings, and 100 for the JMM. Those funded must provide proof that they had registered and attended the meetings. Maycock reported that the funding for the AMS-Simons Travel Grants program has been renewed by the Simons Foundation.

A report from the Director of the Membership and Programs Department on the AMS travel grants programs was included in attachment #7.

#### **F. Report on the MRC program.**

Maycock reported on the Mathematics Research Community (MRC) program, funded by NSF. The program is run by the AMS to support young mathematicians as they begin their research careers at a one week conference in Snowbird, Utah; attendance at the

Joint Mathematics Meetings following their summer conference and the opportunity for funds to collaborate. Last July, NSF awarded another 3-year grant to the AMS to continue with the the MRC program, now in its seventh year. A report on the MRC program was included in attachment #8. Maycock further reported that the 2014 MRCs are set for June 2014; the topics for 2015 were still being considered and the 2016 Call for Proposals had gone out.

#### **G. Report on 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 launched the AMS Community Network, which will host AMS Activity Groups, Community Forums and private groups such as AMS committees. Attachment #9 included a report on the status of this new program. CoMC agreed to be the first AMS committee to use the Community Network Forum. Maycock will begin the discussion with questions should be on the JMM Survey.

### **IV. OLD BUSINESS**

#### **A. Update on Council actions.**

The AMS Council has met twice since CoMC met in March 2013, on April 20, 2013 and January 14, 2014, Savage reported on the following actions taken by the Council.

##### **1. Handicap accessible venues.**

The following statement was approved by CoMC at its March 2013 meeting and then vetted by the AMS attorney. Savage reported it was then approved by the Council:

*It is the goal of the AMS to ensure that its conferences are accessible to all, regardless of disability. AMS shall strive, unless it is not practicable, to choose venues that are fully accessible to the physically handicapped.*

Savage reported that the Secretariat at its meeting on Friday, March 7, 2014 agreed to provide this handicap accessibility statement to the hosts of future Sectional Meetings.

##### **2. Short Course Subcommittee Charge.**

Savage and Maycock reported that at the request of the chair of the Short Course Subcommittee, CoMC discussed updating and changing its charge. At its April 2013 meeting, the Council voted to update the charge but not with all the changes recommended by CoMC. The new Charge to the Short Course Subcommittee is:

*This subcommittee of the standing AMS Program Committee for National Meetings is charged with the generation and sponsorship of short courses on fields of application of mathematics, directed to mathematicians seeking*

*professional development and continuing education. The short courses will be held in conjunction with the Annual Joint Mathematics Meetings. It is expected that the proceedings of such short courses will be published in the series PROCEEDINGS OF SYMPOSIA IN APPLIED MATHEMATICS.*

**3. AWM-AMS Noether Lecture.**

Savage reported the Association for Women in Mathematics had proposed the AWM Noether Lecture become the AWM-AMS Noether Lecture. CoMC endorsed the proposal from AWM and recommended it to the Council and the Council at its April 2013 meeting approved the proposal. The first AWM-AMS Noether Lecture will be held at the 2015 Joint Mathematics Meetings in San Antonio, Texas.

**4. MRC Advisory Board.**

Savage reported that at its April 2013 meeting the AMS Council approved the recommendation by CoMC to include the AMS Secretary as an *ex-officio* member of the Advisory Board of the Mathematics Research Communities.

**B. Policy on a Welcoming Environment.**

McClure reported on the 2013 request by the AMS-ASA-AWM-IMS-MAA-NCTM-SIAM Committee on Women in the Mathematical Sciences (JCW) of 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 the formation of a subcommittee with representatives from CoProf, CoMC and the Committee on Women in Mathematics (CoWiM). The members of the subcommittee were Don McClure (CoProf), Anna Mazzucato (CoMC), and Carol Wood (CoWiM). The JCW recommendation and other background material was provided in attachment #10.

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.

McClure stated that he reviewed existing AMS policies, specifically the one on sexual harrassment which had been adopted in the mid-90’s and would need to be updated if we were to use it instead of a welcoming policy. McClure suggested that CoProf review the welcoming policy and also be asked if it wants to consider revising the existing policy. There is also the possibility of using one of the hotline companies. McClure will check with the attorney to determine if the hotline approach will work.

## V. NEW BUSINESS

### A. 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 the selection committee for this lecture 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 has proposed changing this to a three-year term. These measures were approved by the MAA Board of Governors in August 2013. CoMC approved the changes suggested by MAA and the Joint Meetings Committee, and has recommended to the Council that the committee to select the AMS-MAA-SIAM Porter Public Lecture be a standing joint committee.

### B. 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 Montréal in 2017.

The MCofA has formulated provisional statutes and appointed an interim Executive Committee included in attachment #11. 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 have 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. CoMC recommended to Council that the AMS join the Mathematical Council of the Americas.

**C. 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 typically poorly attended. After much discussion, it was moved and seconded to recommend the following policy to the AMS Council:

*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.*

Savage will investigate where the policy of four talks at a Sectional Meeting originated. It is advisable that the associate secretaries be allowed discretion to determine whether a particular Sectional Meeting should have three or four talks.

**D. Reviews of Selected Activities.**

The topics and dates of previous reviews were in attachment #12 to facilitate discussion on the appropriate 2014 topic for the annual review. The committee decided to review the Invited plenary, distinguished and Cosponsored lectures. There were two volunteers who agreed to serve: Richard Durrett and Nataša Pavlović. The Chair of CoMC will appoint one additional member as well as the Review Subcommittee chair.

**E. San Antonio Focus Group.**

As noted earlier, CoMC agreed that the current format of the Focus Group should be discontinued. Therefore, no CoMC Focus Group will be scheduled for the 2015 JMM to be held in San Antonio, Texas.

**F. Date and Location of Next CoMC Meeting.**

CoMC approved the date and location for the 2015 meeting at the AMS Headquarters in Providence, Rhode Island, on Saturday, March 21, 2015.

**VI. INFORMATION ITEMS**

*The following items were open for discussion:*

**G. 2013-2014 Einstein Lectures.**

The 2013 Einstein Lecture was held at Washington University in St Louis, Missouri, on October 19, 2013 with Jon Kleinberg as the Lecturer. The 2014 Einstein Lecture will be held during the Western Sectional Meeting on October 25-26, 2014, at San Francisco State University. James H. Simons will be the lecturer.

**H. 2013-2014 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 Lecture was held at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville on March 22, 2014 and the Lecturer was Maria Chudnovsky.

**I. International Meetings.**

1. Israel (June 16-19, 2014). Tel Aviv, Israel.
2. Portugal (June 10-13, 2015). Porto, Portugal.

Tentatively, Montréal (July 23 – 28, 2017) Mathematical Congress of the Americas. This is contingent on AMS Council approval for the AMS to join the Mathematical Council of the Americas.

Discussions are also underway with the Indian Mathematical Society and the Ramanujam Mathematical Society to hold a Joint International Meeting in India in 2016.

**J. AMS-NZMS Maclaurin Lectures.**

The Maclaurin Lectureship is a reciprocal exchange between the New Zealand Mathematical Society and American Mathematical Society. A New Zealand and a United States-based mathematician will tour each other's countries on alternate years, with the lecturers to be chosen by both societies.

The first AMS-NZMS Maclaurin Lecturer was Marston Conder, University of Auckland, and Co-Director of the New Zealand Institute of Mathematics and its Applications (NZIMA), who spoke at six institutions in addition to giving an Invited Address at the Eastern Sectional Meeting held in Chestnut Hill, MA, on April 6-7, 2013. The second Lecturer was Terence Tao, UCLA, who gave seven (7) lectures at six (6) institutions in New Zealand in August 2013. The third Lecturer will be James Sneyd, University of Auckland. He will give a lecture at the 2014 Fall Southeastern Sectional Meeting in Greensboro, NC. At the time of this CoMC meeting the rest of his visit had not been finalized.

**VII. Adjournment.**