

Hay Award for Contributions to Mathematics Education

The Executive Committee of the Association for Women in Mathematics (AWM) established the annual Louise Hay Award for Contributions to Mathematics Education. The purpose of this award is to recognize outstanding achievements in any area of mathematics education, to be interpreted in the broadest possible sense. While Louise Hay was widely recognized for her contributions to mathematical logic and for her strong leadership as head of the Department of Mathematics, Statistics, and Computer Science at the University of Illinois at Chicago, her devotion to students and her lifelong commitment to nurturing the talent of young women and men secure her reputation as a consummate educator. The annual presentation of this award is intended to highlight the importance of mathematics education and to evoke the memory of all that Hay exemplified as a teacher, scholar, administrator, and human being.

At the Joint Mathematics Meetings in San Francisco in January 1995, the 1995 Hay Award

was presented to ETTA Z. FALCONER of Spelman College.

The citation for the award said: "We can measure the impact of an educator and mathematical leader by the excellence and morale of her colleagues and by the number of her students who have undertaken successful careers in mathematics and in fields requiring mathematics. We can also recognize the intangible qualities that inspire and support both students and colleagues. Dr. Etta Z. Falconer of Spelman College embodies all of these qualities. Her many years of service in promoting mathematics at Spelman College and her efforts to enhance the movement of minorities and women into scientific careers through many forums in the mathematics and science commu-

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"Professor Falconer has promoted and led a cadre of colleagues to develop one of the most productive science programs at a liberal arts college in the United States, where some 38 percent of the students are majors in mathematics,



Etta Falconer

computer science, chemistry, biology, physics, and dual engineering degrees. In her twenty-five years at Spelman College, she has served as chairperson of the Mathematics Department (1972–82), chair of the Natural Sciences Division (1975–90), and currently serves as associate provost for the Science Programs and Policy. She has instituted program after program to strengthen the infrastructure, upgrade the curriculum, and provide the necessary support, including mentoring and undergraduate research experiences, to prepare students to be successful in graduate school. Among her efforts is the NASA Women in Science Program, conceived in 1987, for the purpose of directing high-ability students toward doctoral programs...Yet, in spite of the demands on her time, she has always insisted on teaching mathematics courses because of her desire to stay in touch with students, continuing to personally advise and mentor over one hundred students who major in the natural sciences, physics, or are in the NASA Undergraduate Science Research Program, NASA Women in Science Engineering Program, or the College Honors Program.

“Professor Falconer is a dedicated citizen of the professional mathematics community. For the American Mathematical Society she organized meetings of representatives of book publishers to solicit help in removing gender barriers; in the American Association for the

Advancement of Science, she served on the Committee on Opportunities in Science during 1979–82; and she is a founder of the National Association of Mathematicians, an organization which promotes concerns of black students and mathematicians, and the Atlanta Minority Women in Science Network.

“Bringing her profound wisdom, vision, and vast experience to all her roles as mentor, organizer, project developer, teacher, writer, and role model, Dr. Etta Z. Falconer is a tremendous resource to the students and faculty in mathematics and science at Spelman College, in the local and national mathematics community, and in the broader scientific community.”

In response to receiving the award, Professor Falconer said, “I am deeply honored to receive the fifth annual Louise Hay Award for Contributions to Mathematics Education from the Association for Women in Mathematics. It was such an unexpected pleasure to learn of my selection.

“There are several persons who have had a tremendous impact upon my professional life. Dr. Lee Lorch inspired me to study mathematics and helped to mold me as a person because of his belief in the dignity of all people. He remains my mentor to this day. One of the first black women to earn the Ph.D. in mathematics, Dr. Evelyn Boyd Granville taught me during my college days and became my first career role model. Finally, Dr. Trevor Evans, my dissertation advisor, fostered my growth in the area of algebra.

“It was with the highest aspirations that I began my career in the field of mathematics, teaching at a small junior college in Mississippi. I later joined Spelman College, where I was able to crystallize my desire to change the prevailing pattern of limited access and limited success for African American women in mathematics.

“I have devoted my entire life to increasing the number of highly qualified African Americans in mathematics and mathematics-related careers. High expectations, the building of self-confidence, and the creation of a nurturing environment have been essential components for the success of these students. They have fully justified my beliefs. Perhaps the most rewarding moments have come when younger faculty have undertaken the same goal and have surpassed my efforts, reaching out to the broader community to help minorities and women achieve in mathematics.

“AWM has been responsible for a great deal of positive change within the mathematics community, and my membership has been very gratifying. I extend my warmest thanks to AWM for this wonderful award.”