

# Breakthrough at Rochester: Ph.D. Program Restored

On March 29, 1996, the University of Rochester issued the following press release about the reversal of its move to downsize its mathematics department. The original downsizing plan called for eliminating the Ph.D. program, cutting the faculty by half, and using adjuncts for teaching. Now the university administration has agreed, among other things, to retain the Ph.D. program in mathematics, and the mathematics department has pledged to redouble efforts to improve undergraduate teaching. Over the past few months, the Rochester Task Force of the AMS, chaired by Arthur Jaffe of Harvard University, has worked with the mathematics department and the administration at Rochester to achieve a compromise.

More information on Rochester can be found on e-MATH, <http://www.ams.org/committee/profession/rochester/rochester.html>.

—Allyn Jackson

## Rochester Enhancing Math Programs

The University of Rochester's mathematics department will implement a comprehensive proposal jointly developed by the administration and key faculty in the department, with input from leaders in other departments as well.

The mathematics faculty have agreed to a sweeping review of the courses the department

offers to undergraduates not majoring in mathematics and of the department's linkages with the research specialties of faculty in other departments.

The department also will develop a new Ph.D. program in mathematics. Last November the program was suspended, and the projected faculty size was slated for a significant reduction.

The new proposal is enabled in part by resources provided by the Department of Physics and Astronomy, which will contribute through future joint appointments with mathematics.

President Thomas H. Jackson said that the new arrangement, crafted in discussions among key faculty in the math department, other departments (notably Physics and Astronomy), and the administration, meets both the financial and instructional quality goals outlined in the "Renaissance Plan" for the college, announced last November.

The five-year plan strengthens and refocuses core programs in arts, sciences, and engineering. With the entire array of undergraduate programs retained, the plan calls for a smaller, more selective student body, new investments in campus facilities and residential life, and a renewed dedication to the core principles of the goals of the college, as exemplified in the college's new curriculum.

"I am happy to say that the Renaissance Plan led to a series of unprecedented conversations

between math faculty and the administration and between math faculty and their colleagues in other departments,” Jackson said. “That, in turn, led to the Department of Physics and Astronomy’s offer to promote linkages by joint appointments and a new dedication on the part of the mathematics faculty to strengthen undergraduate instruction and their ties to other departments, in concert with all of our other efforts.”

“The mathematics department fully supports this plan,” said Joseph Neisendorfer, department chair. “It provides both an opportunity and a challenge to the mathematics department. We are enthusiastic about the prospect of introducing some significant innovations which promise to diversify and enhance the undergraduate experience in mathematics. I am grateful that the administration has provided us with the opportunity to do this within the context of a graduate program of high quality.”

“This is an important development for the University,” added mathematics professor Douglas Ravenel. “I am glad to see it is renewing its commitment to mathematics, a subject lying at the heart of modern science. Excellence in math at all levels is a vital asset for any research university.”

The new proposal includes the following key developments:

- Faculty in the Department of Physics and Astronomy have agreed to two future joint appointments with the Department of Mathematics. This effectively provides funding for one additional position to the mathematics department, as well as promoting tangible linkages between these fields.
- Mathematics faculty have offered to develop a plan for a smaller, high-quality Ph.D. program, which they could operate with a reduced number of faculty. (The Renaissance Plan had called for the number of tenure-track mathematics faculty to decline from 21 to 10, with the ultimate addition of 4–5 non-tenure-track faculty to teach undergraduate mathematics courses for nonmath majors. Under the new proposal, the mathematics departmental size would be set at an ultimate target of 15 tenure-track faculty members, and there would be no hiring of non-tenure-track faculty for instructional purposes.) The new Ph.D. program is to be planned out during the next six months and would be available to doctoral students in the fall of 1997.
- Mathematics faculty have agreed to form a committee to work with other departments on improving the teaching of undergraduate mathematics, especially calculus, for nonmath majors.

- The mathematics department has elected a new chair, Douglas Ravenel, who is charged with implementing the instructional program and the renewed linkages with other departments.

“This is a solution that fully meets the goals of the Renaissance Plan—the bottom line, as before, is that we will increase the quality of our programs within our overall budget targets—and, obviously, it is a happier solution for the mathematics faculty,” Jackson said. “It will add luster to our undergraduate program and work to enhance intellectual cooperation across disciplines while implementing a Ph.D. program of distinction. I am pleased that their active cooperation—and that of the physics and astronomy department—now enables us to move forward in this direction.”

He said that Charles E. Phelps, university provost, and Richard N. Aslin, vice provost and dean of the college, have also endorsed the new proposal, as has the Executive Committee of the University’s board.