
For Your Information

News from MSRI

MSRI Receives Major Gift

James H. Simons, mathematician, philanthropist, and one of the world's most successful hedge fund managers, announced in May 2007 a US\$10 million gift from the Simons Foundation to the Mathematical Sciences Research Institute (MSRI), the largest single cash pledge in the institute's twenty-five-year history. The new funding is also the largest gift of endowment made to a U.S.-based institute dedicated to mathematics.

The monies will create a US\$5 million endowed chair, the "Eisenbud Professorship", named for David Eisenbud, director of MSRI, to support distinguished visiting professors at MSRI. The gift comes as Eisenbud nears the end of his term as MSRI director (from July 1997 to July 2007) and as MSRI prepares to celebrate its twenty-fifth anniversary in the late fall/winter 2007–08. "I'm particularly honored and gratified that Jim Simons has chosen to place a professorship in my name as part of his phenomenal generosity toward mathematics and MSRI," commented Eisenbud. An additional US\$5 million will start a new campaign for an MSRI endowment by matching funds (1:1) raised for the institute's permanent endowment. "The institutions that do well over the long term, through good times and bad, are the ones that have substantial endowments. MSRI is of enormous importance to the mathematics community, so it gives me the greatest pleasure to see this first major step toward an endowment," stated Eisenbud.

MSRI's chair of the Board of Trustees, Charles Fefferman of Princeton University, remarked, "This wonderful gesture reflects Jim Simons's deep passion for mathematics. We hope this extraordinary gift will help bring forth at MSRI future breakthroughs of the stature of the Chern-Simons invariants. We are all deeply grateful."

Currently a trustee of MSRI, Simons has been a member of the institute's board since 1999 and is the founder of the New York City-based Math for America, a nonprofit organization with a mission to significantly improve math education in the nation's public schools. Together with his

wife, Marilyn, Simons manages the Simons Foundation, a charitable organization devoted to scientific research. The Simonses live in Manhattan.

Simons is president of Renaissance Technologies Corporation, a private investment firm dedicated to the use of mathematical methods. Renaissance presently has over US\$30 billion under management. Previously he was chairman of the mathematics department at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. Earlier in his career he was a cryptanalyst at the Institute of Defense Analyses in Princeton and taught mathematics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University.

Simons holds a B.S. in mathematics from MIT and a Ph.D. in mathematics from the University of California, Berkeley. His scientific research was in the area of geometry and topology. He received the AMS Veblen Prize in Geometry in 1975 for work that involved a recasting of the subject of area-minimizing multidimensional surfaces. A consequence was the settling of two classical questions, the Bernstein Conjecture and the Plateau Problem. Simons's most influential research involved the discovery and application of certain measurements, now called the Chern-Simons invariants, that have wide use, particularly in theoretical physics. The Chern-Simons invariants were a product of his collaboration with Shiing-Shen Chern, MSRI's cofounder and first director.

New MSRI Director Named

In May 2007, MSRI announced the appointment of Robert L. Bryant as director. Bryant's five-year term at MSRI is effective August 1, 2007. He currently holds the Juanita M. Kreps Chair in Mathematics at Duke University. He succeeds David Eisenbud, who has served as MSRI director since 1997 and is also a tenured professor on the faculty at UC Berkeley. In August 2007 Eisenbud will leave MSRI to become a full-time member of the UC Berkeley Department of Mathematics.

—From MSRI news releases