

2008 Award for an Exemplary Program or Achievement in a Mathematics Department

The Award for an Exemplary Program or Achievement in a Mathematics Department was established by the AMS Council in 2004 and was given for the first time in 2006. The purpose is to recognize a department that has distinguished itself by undertaking an unusual or particularly effective program of value to the mathematics community, internally or in relation to the rest of society. Departments of mathematical sciences in North America that offer at least a bachelor's degree in mathematical sciences are eligible. The award carries a cash prize of US\$1,200 and is given annually.

The award is presented by the AMS Council acting on the recommendation of a selection committee. For the 2008 award, the members of the selection committee were: Steven A. Bleiler, Joel B. Brawley, Karl Knight (chair), Donal B. O'Shea, and Roger A. Wiegand.

The previous recipients of the award are Harvey Mudd College (2006) and the University of California, Los Angeles (2007).

The recipient of the 2008 Award for an Exemplary Program or Achievement in a Mathematics Department is the THE MATHEMATICS DEPARTMENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA. What follows is the selection committee's citation.

Citation

The American Mathematical Society (AMS) presents its third annual Award for an Exemplary Program or Achievement in a Mathematics Department to the University of Iowa. The Mathematics Department at the University of Iowa is a national leader in recruiting and developing underrepresented U.S. minority doctoral students in mathematics. The department has accomplished this by devising a model for recruiting and developing U.S. minority doctoral students that could be used at other institutions.

The department's long-term commitment to graduate education in mathematics for students from underrepresented minority groups began in 1995 and has continued with support from several Department of Education grants. African American,

Latina/o, and Native American U.S. citizens or permanent residents accounted for 20–25 percent of the department's graduate student population over the six-year period ending in 2005. This is an especially impressive percentage, given Iowa's demographics, and is currently among the highest at U.S. majority institutions.

The department's recruitment effort is supported by a carefully designed program that includes an intensive summer institute, weekly help sessions, and intensive faculty and peer mentoring. The program is open to majority students as well and, as often happens with well-designed programs developed for particular groups, has raised the level of educational achievement for all students. It has also made an impressive difference on a national level. The three minority students that received their Ph.D.'s in the department in 2002–2003 represented roughly 10 percent of the math doctorates awarded nationally to U.S. minority students during that year.

Members of the University of Iowa's Mathematics Department have willingly shared their methods with other departments at invited talks and conferences, including a session at a national AMS meeting and at a conference at NSF [National Science Foundation]. Furthermore, the department has established partnerships with other institutions in the United States and abroad that support the goal of increasing minority participation in mathematics. For example, the University of Iowa Mathematics Department has worked with the Department of Mathematics at Florida A&M University to build a partnership called the Alliance for the Production of African American Ph.D.'s in the Mathematical Sciences, supported by a US\$1.8 million NSF grant, with the goal of providing a seamless transition for graduates of Alliance undergraduate institutions who wish to study at majority Ph.D. institutions.

The mathematics community is fortunate to have the University of Iowa present such an outstanding example of an exemplary program in a mathematics department.