

# Reflections on the AMS Committee on Education

*Tara S. Holm*

It has been a great pleasure to serve on the Council of the AMS for the past four years. As part of my service, I have chaired the Committee on Education (CoE) for the last three years. The opportunity to do so has transformed my career. It gave me the chance to learn about compelling initiatives in undergraduate mathematics education and to engage with policy leaders at the AMS and in Washington, DC. It also opened the door to working with TPSE Math (Transforming Post-Secondary Education in Mathematics, [tpsemath.org](http://tpsemath.org)).

The CoE has three main activities. We organize a workshop in Washington, DC each October where mathematics department leaders join the CoE to hear about innovations and studies taking place around the world and to discuss how the AMS can best support its members in these endeavors. We run a panel at the Joint Mathematics Meetings. At the 2015 JMM, our panel asked, “What is a Mathematics PhD?” Finally, we confer the Award for Impact on the Teaching and Learning of Mathematics, generously endowed by Ken Gross (University of Vermont), former member of the CoE.

I have just co-organized my last workshop as the CoE Chair. It took place in Washington, DC October 29–31, 2015. During my tenure, I have steered the CoE towards a renewed focus on undergraduate education. This year, presentations included inspiring accounts of efforts to increase the diversity of mathematically trained students; discussions of the value and practicality of internships for undergraduate and graduate student career preparation; and reports from the American Statistical

Association, the Mathematical Association of America, and the National Science Foundation about their efforts (and funding opportunities) for work in this arena.

A full report is

available on the CoE webpage ([www.ams.org/about-us/governance/committees/coe-home](http://www.ams.org/about-us/governance/committees/coe-home)).

From time to time, the CoE is called on for other reasons. The now-infamous report *Engage to Excel*, issued in 2012 by PCAST (President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology), was published while I was CoE Chair. I worked with then-President Eric Friedlander and a small group of mathematicians to prepare the AMS response ([www.ams.org/policy/govnews/pcast-statement](http://www.ams.org/policy/govnews/pcast-statement); published in the “Opinion” column of the October 2012 *Notices*). Our committee also had the chance to weigh in at early planning stages and to strongly endorse the new AMS Department of Education and Diversity.

There is renewed public attention to higher education in the technologies and sciences, and mathematics—at the heart of STEM—is often at the center of such discussions. I believe change is coming in higher education, particularly to our discipline. I have met chairs and department leaders from around the country who are involved in effective and exciting innovations in undergraduate education tailored to local needs. I have a renewed optimism that our mathematical sciences community will work together to ensure that we manage the change coherently without prescribing uniformity.



Photo courtesy of Melissa Totman.

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## From the AMS Secretary

AMS members elect five new representatives to the Council each year, for three-year terms. Each Council member serves on one of five policy committees of the AMS: Education; Meetings and Conferences; the Profession; Publications; or Science Policy. The AMS has nearly 100 more committees, including joint committees with other professional societies. Aside from Council representatives, members serve at the request of the President of the AMS.

You may volunteer to serve on an AMS committee or nominate your colleagues at the AMS webpage ([www.ams.org/committee-nominate](http://www.ams.org/committee-nominate)). I encourage you to do so! It is rewarding to work for the AMS, to make suggestions about what the Society can do to serve its members, and to see the hardworking AMS staff sort through the ideas and carry out the best and most feasible ones.

If you have not done so, check out the AMS Blog *On Teaching and Learning Mathematics* ([blogs.ams.org/matheducation](http://blogs.ams.org/matheducation)).

Douglas Mupasiri will assume leadership of the Committee on Education on February 1, 2016. Please join me in wishing him and the committee a productive year.



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**Douglas Mupasiri**



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