

2017 Award for an Exemplary Program or Achievement in a Mathematics Department



Participants in the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Mathematics Bootcamp.

The DEPARTMENT OF MATHEMATICS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN is the recipient of the 2017 Award for an Exemplary Program or Achievement in a Mathematics Department.

Citation

The American Mathematical Society is pleased to recognize the Department of Mathematics at the University of Illinois with the 2017 Award for Exemplary Program or Achievement in a Mathematics Department. The efforts in expanding mathematics through various programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels and improving the representation of women and underrepresented minorities in the Department of Mathematics at the University of Illinois have been exemplary.

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The Mathematics Department at Illinois has created a successful internship program for their graduate students. The program includes a “computational mathematics boot camp” that trains students in computational skills and in the ways of thinking that arise in applied and interdisciplinary work. Then the program places students in private sector internships, in government labs, and in scientific labs across the university. Also, the department has a strong record of forming innovative programs to improve the mathematics education of undergraduate students. A recurring theme is to get students actively doing mathematics. They have implemented a Merit Program for Emerging Scholars, based on Uri Treisman’s model, that focuses on helping underrepresented and first-generation college students succeed in mathematics. This model is founded on building learning communities among students and through intensive, collaborative, active-learning discussion sections. In addition, the Mathematics Department at Illinois has implemented active learning on a large scale reaching more than 8,000 students each year across their calculus and linear algebra courses. Finally, the Department has created the Illinois Geometry Lab that provides a community for undergraduate research. In the Illinois Geometry Lab, students work in small groups on semester-long research projects mentored by graduate students and faculty.

Further, the Department has made conscious and consistent efforts to increase the representation of women and minorities in their graduate program. The percentage of women in the PhD program has increased from 28 percent ten years ago to 38 percent today (with sixty-two women now in the program), and the percentage of US underrepresented minority students has risen from 4 percent to 22 percent of all US students in the last six years. The Department has an active Association for Women in Mathematics chapter with outreach, social, and academic activities. In addition, faculty members attend SACNAS and Field of Dreams as part of their effort to recruit graduate students from underrepresented minority groups.

FROM THE AMS SECRETARY

We are happy to present the AMS Award for Exemplary Program or Achievement in a Mathematics Department to the Department of Mathematics at the University of Illinois for the many ways in which it has supported and expanded mathematics through varied innovative programs and improved the representation of women and underrepresented minorities.

About the Award

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. Through the generous support of an anonymous donor, the award carries a cash prize of US\$5,000.

The award is presented by the AMS Council acting on the recommendation of a selection committee. For the 2017 award, the members of the selection committee were: Michael Dorff (chair), Erica Flapan, Eric Grinberg, Rhonda Hughes, and Cesar Silva.

The previous recipients of the award are Harvey Mudd College (2006); University of California, Los Angeles (2007); University of Iowa (2008); University of Nebraska, Lincoln (2009); North Carolina State University (2010); University of Arizona (2011); Bryn Mawr College (2012); University of Texas at Arlington (2013); Williams College (2014); Iowa State University (2015); and California State University at Northridge (2016).

—Exemplary Program Award Selection Committee

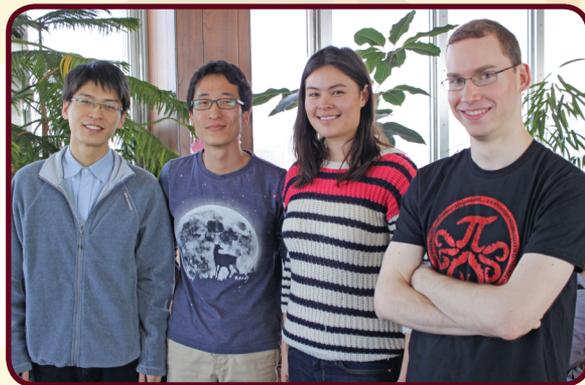
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