**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

**Ban on Hotel Room Interviews**

In 2012, the four of us had a common experience: we were finishing our PhDs and attended the Joint Mathematics Meetings in Boston. Eager to find employment, we applied to many jobs and even secured a few interviews. Unfortunately, some of our interviews took place in hotel rooms near the convention center. We went to these interviews—uncomfortable with them being held in such places, but we needed jobs. In some cases, we called a trusted confidante beforehand to explain where we were going, instructing that, if they did not hear back from us within a predetermined amount of time, they needed to contact the police. Several of us considered cancelling our hotel room interviews in the moments before they began. Pacing back and forth in the hallway outside of the hotel room, we contemplated just leaving, telling ourselves that we would write an apology email afterwards to explain that we were too uncomfortable with the circumstances. It should be noted that we never considered reneging on any of our other JMM interviews that year.

No interview should require this level of safety measures, nor stress, especially when the conference provides an employment center. Of course, many departments will counter that the JMM Employment Center rates are outside of their budgets; a hotel room is much more affordable. We understand that many institutions are working under significant financial constraints. At the same time, the safety, and emotional well-being, of all parties involved should be a high priority. How can hiring committees take interviews seriously when they are happening in a hotel room, often times with a bed in plain sight? How can interviewees focus on describing their research and teaching when they are on high alert and stressed beyond what is normal in such circumstances?

Many might read this letter and think that these events took place in a different era. After all, the AMS Council states that “the use of personal hotel rooms is particularly discouraged” and the MAA Board of Governors states that “[t]he MAA strongly discourages the use of personal hotel sleeping rooms as the site for professional interviews of prospective employees. This practice is intimidating for some job-seekers, particularly those who find the situation uncomfortable and possibly unsafe.” Yet we know of job candidates who had interviews in hotel rooms as recently as at the 2019 JMM in Baltimore.

This practice needs to change, and it needs to change now. Departments should not be allowed to hold interviews outside of public spaces. If the Employment Center is unaffordable, we encourage interviewers to consider making use of the networking tables in the convention center, or identifying nearby public spaces that suit their needs. Please note that bars, while public spaces, are also a poor choice as they may make some job candidates feel uncomfortable. Everyone registered for the conference should be sent a message reminding them that hotel room meetings or interviews are forbidden, and provided with a way to report these invitations. We look forward to a response from our professional societies, mirroring that of The American Economics Association, regarding 1. possible implementations of a ban, 2. public statements against such practices, and 3. policy changes with actionable repercussions that would prevent, or at least minimize, this terrible practice.

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**Response to Hanna Bennett’s review of the state of IBL**

Hanna Bennett’s article, “Inquiry Based Learning” in the August 2019 issue of the Notices, is a good review of the subject except for one thing. In the second paragraph of the

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1AMS Statements on interviewing at the JMM: https://bit.ly/2kwpv0d  
https://on.wsj.com/2kxe1y8
“Some History” section, she mentions, “…Moore’s history of racism, sexism, and anti-Semitism.” The first of these three, regrettably, is correct, but possibly is understandable (not forgivable) given when and where he grew up, as he was born in 1882. Dr. Moore expressed his low opinion of the intelligence of black persons in the last class I ever took with him before receiving my doctorate; he never changed his opinion on this matter. However, the next two do not follow from the first, and should never be mentioned in connection with R. L. Moore.

I am Dr. Moore’s last PhD student and was in every class of his except for two. I had calculus under a then-graduate student, David Cook, because I began calculus in the spring semester. That course caused me to change my graduate major from microbiology to mathematics and begin studying with the then “third-floor” mathematics department. I missed the final course in the sequence, numbered 690, because I received my PhD before I took that class. I never saw any evidence of anti-Semitism in any of the classes that I took. Regarding sexism, I was not the only woman student in the classes I took with Dr. Moore, and I never saw any evidence of any form of misogyny. If anything, Dr. Moore seemed to strongly encourage all of his women students.

One thing I would like to add to the article is the reason that Dr. Moore did not want his students to collaborate, as this may be misunderstood as an arbitrary preference. My understanding is that he didn’t want students either collaborating or going to the library to look something up, because he was fascinated with the mind of each of his students. When a student went to the blackboard to present a proof, Dr. Moore wanted to know that he was seeing that student’s work and no one else’s.

Sometimes Dr. Moore or one of the other students would ask a student at the blackboard a question about his presentation, and if the student couldn’t explain his reasoning then that would be the end of the presentation. But in my recollection this type of situation was always handled respectfully. And I don’t remember any instance of a student succeeding where a previous one failed, bragging about his success. I think we all understood that everyone presenting deserved respect for doing so, even if they made a mistake. In fact, when a previously struggling student did make a successful presentation, I was thrilled and I think most of the class was equally enthusiastic about their progress, clapping or handing out compliments.

Under Dr. Moore, I learned how to think critically, not just about mathematics but about everything, and that ability has served me well for the rest of my life.

—Nell Stevenson Kroeger, nee Nell Elizabeth Stevenson

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