

A WORD FROM...

Catherine A. Roberts, Executive Director of the AMS



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Courtesy of Billy Durvin.

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February 1st each year is significant on the AMS calendar. On this day, we welcome dozens (and dozens) of new volunteers who have agreed to serve our society across nearly a hundred committees.¹ Their willingness to contribute to advancing research and building our profession is what makes the AMS, well, the AMS.

This is essential and central work. Our volunteers serve as journal editors and leaders in governance. They serve on award selection committees and policy committees addressing publications, meetings, education, science policy, and the profession. These committee volunteers are joined by thousands of others who serve as journal reviewers, blog editors, MathSciNet[®] reviewers, authors, donors, and supporters. The AMS exists because of the collective contributions of all of its members. I am especially grateful on February 1st when I am reminded of the scale of the AMS operation. And, before I forget, please consider nominating² yourself or a colleague to serve on AMS committees! We would love for you to join us.

Given that this is Women's History Month, today I want to give special thanks to three remarkable women whose AMS terms ended on February 1, 2021.

Carla D. Savage

On February 1st, Carla completed eight years as AMS secretary. In the years since our society was formed in 1888, Carla was only our tenth secretary and the first woman.

A few words about this position, since it's hard to tell from the title "secretary" what this is all about. The Office of the Secretary is the primary point of contact between the AMS and its members. The secretary implements scientific policies of the society, oversees the scientific program at AMS conferences, manages our nearly 100 committees, oversees all AMS prizes and awards, and coordinates our AMS elections. Carla serves as the institutional memory for the AMS, which is such an important role. She was instrumental in onboarding me, and has certainly played the same role for countless others.

There are so many things I could thank Carla for. Given that this issue is celebrating women's history, let's focus there. We all recognize that we have further to go before women reach parity in mathematics. Behind-the-scenes efforts by Carla have had a significant impact on this shared goal. Since 1988, the *Notices* has been publishing an annual summary showing the relative numbers of men and women in categories such as invited hour addresses at AMS meetings, speakers at Special Sessions at AMS meetings, and the number of female members of editorial boards of AMS journals. Along with serious and thoughtful efforts by many members of the mathematics community serving the AMS, Carla has helped make the AMS more inclusive. We have seen broader participation of women in many aspects of the society's governance and leadership during her term.

More recently, the Council's new Prize Oversight Committee is at work to develop and implement an approach to recruit larger, more diverse pools of nominees. I am optimistic that the efforts Carla nudged along in the background to improve the participation of women at the AMS will contribute to this work. I look forward to helping the AMS welcome increased participation from all underrepresented mathematicians. I hope our efforts to include

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¹<https://www.ams.org/gov-committees>

²<https://www.ams.org/committee-nominate>

more racially diverse mathematicians, as well as more early-career mathematicians, career teaching faculty, and those working in business, industry, and government will become something to celebrate.

Jane M. Hawkins

Jane had served a full decade as AMS treasurer when she stepped aside February 1st. She was also the first woman to serve in this role. The treasurer is responsible for long-term financial management and auditing oversight of our society. She ensures that AMS assets, which all belong to our members, are invested in a manner consistent with our mission.

In her role, Jane worked very closely with the chief financial officer overseeing our budget, finances, annual audit, and investments. She served as chair of our Investment Committee, during which time the AMS endowment grew substantially. Her expert and careful stewardship means our society can continue to advance its mission, even during the current uncertain economic times.

Jane also has been deeply involved with the AMS Office of Government Relations, supporting the work of its director and thinking carefully about how we can best support our mathematics research community through policy advocacy. Jane and I share an appreciation for how our community's voice is strengthened when more mathematicians become members of the AMS. She has been a true advocate for all mathematicians.

Jill C. Pipher

On February 1st, Jill became AMS past-president. Jill was the third woman to be elected AMS president (following Julia Robinson and Cathleen Synge Morawetz). I see Jill's fingerprints everywhere, and here are just a few examples.

Recently, our AMS Council added a new policy committee³ on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. This would not have happened without the goodwill and energy of dozens of people, but Jill was the catalyst. She asked what it would take to establish a permanent and high-level diversity committee at the AMS. She led the effort and navigated the conversations to make it happen.

During a 2020 Council conversation about how the AMS should engage with the racial reckoning happening in the United States, Jill helped establish the Council's Task Force⁴ on Understanding and Documenting the Historical Role of the AMS in Racial Discrimination. This is one part of an Action Plan⁵ designed by the AMS in summer 2020. She understands the value of learning about our history as we seek real change for our mathematics community.

In her position as AMS president, Jill made hundreds of appointments to committees and helped set ballots for elected positions, in consultation with our nominating committees. Even though I was fortunate to be in the rooms when much of this progress happened, I still do not know how Jill managed to accomplish so much in two years. She donated hours of time and talent to the AMS, and on behalf of all of us, I extend my gratitude. Her impact on our profession will be felt for a long, long time.

In closing, I have highlighted three remarkable women whom I have had the special privilege of working with at the AMS. I want to thank them for their incredible service. The AMS is stronger because of their dedication to our mathematics community.



³<https://www.ams.org/coedi-home>

⁴<https://www.ams.org/understanding-ams-history>

⁵<https://www.ams.org/messageofsupport>