2006 Award for an Exemplary Program or Achievement in a Mathematics Department

The 2006 Award for an Exemplary Program or Achievement in a Mathematics Department was presented at the 112th Annual Meeting of the AMS in San Antonio in January 2006.

This award, established by the AMS Council in 2004, 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 to be given annually.

The award is presented by the AMS Council acting on the recommendation of a selection committee. For the 2006 award, the members of the selection committee were: Sheldon Axler (chair), Joel V. Brawley, James H. Curry, Karl Knight, and Donal B. O'Shea.

The recipient of the 2006 Award for an Exemplary Program or Achievement in a Mathematics Department is the MATHEMATICS DEPARTMENT AT HARVEY MUDD COLLEGE.

Citation

The first Award for an Exemplary Program or Achievement in a Mathematics Department is presented to Harvey Mudd College in Claremont, California. The Mathematics Department at Harvey Mudd College excels in numerous dimensions. Its exciting programs have led to a doubling of the number of math majors over the last decade. Currently more than one out of every six graduating seniors at Harvey Mudd College majors in mathematics or in new joint majors of mathematics with computer science or mathematical biology. Furthermore, about 60 percent of these math majors continue their education at the graduate level.

The Harvey Mudd College Mathematics Clinic has served as a trailblazer and a model for other programs for more than thirty years. This innovative program connects teams of math majors with real-world problems, giving students a terrific research experience as well as a glimpse at possible future careers. Undergraduate research is a theme throughout the mathematics program at Harvey Mudd College, as exemplified by the over twenty papers published in the last three years by Harvey Mudd College mathematics faculty with student co-authors.

The Harvey Mudd College Mathematics Department promotes the pleasures of mathematics to nonmajors so well that many nonmajors participate in the weekly Putnam Seminar on problem solving, leading to an unusually large number of Harvey Mudd students taking the Putnam Exam each year. The Putnam Seminar's work has produced consistently outstanding performances in the Putnam Exam, with Harvey Mudd ranking in the top ten nationwide in 2001, 2002, and 2003 (and just missing in 2004 with an eleventh-place finish). Amazingly, Harvey Mudd mathematics students have won nineteen NSF [National Science Foundation] fellowships over the last six years.

The Harvey Mudd College Mathematics Department also devotes serious effort toward outreach to low-income and underrepresented minority communities. This work includes programs aimed at stimulating interest in mathematics and science in a local high school in a low-income area. The department also runs a workshop in Jamaica for Jamaican high school mathematics teachers, focusing on creative methods for teaching mathematics.

The mathematics community is fortunate to have Harvey Mudd College present such an outstanding example of an exemplary program in a mathematics department.