MSCS Mess

Department of Mathematics, Statistics and Computer Science
St. Olaf College
Northfield, MN 55057

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This Week's Colloquium

Title:	The Edge of the Universe
Speaker:	Deanna Haunsperger and Steve Kennedy
Time:	1:30 pm Tuesday, September 19 (treats at 1:15)
Place:	SC 182

Stand-up comedy, square-wheeled bicycles, and space-filling curves---what do these have in common? All have been featured in the recent past in Math Horizons, the MAA student magazine. The speakers have just finished editing a volume of Math Horizons' greatest hits and will share some of their favorites. In addition to explaining how a square-wheeled bicycle works and showing you a truly great card trick, they will tell you the real story of Indiana's attempt to legislate a value for π, what's in the world's oldest surviving math book, and why November 30, 1999 is so special.

The speakers were born and raised in Boston, Massachusetts and Kellogg, Iowa. After undergraduate degrees from Boston University and Simpson College, they separately made their ways to graduate study in mathematics at Northwestern University. A few years later, now happy possessors of two Northwestern PhDs and two Illinois cats, they made their way, together, to teaching positions at the University of Delaware. After a year or two they moved to Northfield, Minnesota and began teaching at a small Lutheran college there. In time, children replaced the cats and they moved from St. Olaf to Carleton. They edited Math Horizons from 1999 to 2003 and since 1995 they have co-directed the Carleton Summer Math Program for Women.

Welcome New Professors!

The math department welcomes two new professors this semester: Professor Josh Laison from Colorado College and Professor Katie Ziegler-Graham from Johns Hopkins University. In addition, Professor Steve McKelvey has returned from sabbatical at Humboldt State. Look for upcoming spotlights on these new professors.

CIR Opening Banquet

The CIR (Center for Interdisciplinary Research) Opening Banquet was held in Valhalla on Monday (9/11) evening. Fellows met their faculty mentors and learned about the research problem they would be working on this year. Professors Cole, Hayaki, and Judge were among collaborating faculty mentors present. Information about the weekly Seminar Series was provided, as were the expectations and responsibilities for Fellows. The series includes research and communication training as well as information about the statistics

profession. The program is funded by a grant from NSF (NSF Enhancing the Mathematical Workforce in the 21st Century:MCTP (Grant No. #0354308)).

If you have questions or an interest in the CIR, see Professor Julie Legler.

Jokes for Geeks

Remember the honor code… A math student is pestered by a classmate who wants to copy his homework assignment. The student hesitates, not only because he thinks it's wrong, but also because he doesn't want to be sanctioned for aiding and abetting. His classmate calms him down: "Nobody will be able to trace my homework to you: I'll be changing the names of all the constants and variables: *a* to *b*, *x* to *y*, and so on." Not quite convinced, but eager to be left alone, the student hands his completed assignment to the classmate for copying. After the deadline, the student asks: "Did you *really* change the names of *all* the variables?" "Sure!" the classmate replies. "When you called a function *f*, I called it *g*; when you called a variable *x*, I renamed it to *y*; and when you were writing about the log of $x+1$, I called it the timber of $x+1$..."

Q:Why do you rarely find mathematicians spending time at the beach?

A: Because they have sine and cosine to get a tan and don't need the sun!

Problem of the Week (POW)

A rectangular chocolate bar is marked with vertical and horizontal lines into m x n squares, m wide and n long. You want to break it into individual squares. At each step, you pick up a piece of the bar and break it along one of the lines. Show that every breaking method requires the same number of breaks.

Submit all solutions before next Monday (9/25) to Josh Laison in person, by e-mail (laison@stolaf.edu), or by carrier pigeon. The first correct solution gets a prize; all correct solutions get fame and glory.

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