

Awards and Prizes

Henry L. Alder Awards

The Henry L. Alder Award for Distinguished Teaching by a Beginning College or University Mathematics Faculty Member was established in January 2003 to honor beginning college or university faculty whose teaching has been extraordinarily successful and whose effectiveness in teaching undergraduate mathematics is shown to have influence beyond their own classrooms. An awardee must have taught full time in a mathematical science in the United States or Canada for at least two, but not more than seven, years since receiving the PhD. Henry Alder was MAA President in 1977 and 1978 and served as MAA Secretary from 1960 to 1974.

Vinodh Kumar Chellamuthu

Utah Tech University

What Dr. Vinodh Chellamuthu has accomplished in the six years since he earned his PhD at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette is astounding. As a professor at Utah Tech University in Utah, an open enrollment university, he has helped to increase the number of majors in the math department by 30% by designing and implementing a B.S. in Applied and Computational Mathematics degree with emphases in Data Analytics, Actuarial Science, and Scientific Computing.

In the classroom, Dr. Chellamuthu inspires students by teaching project-based courses where they solve real problems from business, industry, and government agencies. But his teaching isn't confined to the classroom. Dr. Chellamuthu has mentored over 50 students to participate in national and worldwide mathematical modeling competitions. He has also demonstrated a commitment to providing students with undergraduate research opportunities, having already mentored more than 40 students in doing original research which has led to over 80 student conference and poster presentations. His students' accomplishments include seven JMM poster prize winners, a MathFest paper prize winner, and a prestigious entry in the Posters on the Hill event hosted by the Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR), where students present their research to members of Congress and other policymakers.

To support student research and scholarships, Dr. Chellamuthu has obtained grant funding from the Center for Undergraduate Research in Mathematics (CURM), the Preparation for Industrial Careers in Mathematics (PIC Math) program, the National Research Experience for Undergraduates Program (NRE-UP), and the NSF-funded S-STEM program as co-PI. He has also earned funding from the MAA's Tensor Women & Mathematics to support the Dixie Tensor Scholar mentoring program for women math majors and Dolciani Mathematics Enrichment programs for math outreach efforts. Dr. Chellamuthu has demonstrated tremendous leadership in establishing Utah Tech University STEM outreach programs like Dixie Tensor Scholar program, Red Rock Math Circle and the MAGIC summer program.

In addition to serving as a councilor in the Math & CS Division of CUR to uphold the general enterprise of undergraduate research (a high-impact teaching practice), Dr. Chellamuthu is actively involved in the American Mathematical Association of Two-Year Colleges (AMATYC). He was recently appointed the coordinator for the AMATYC Student Research League (SRL) for students from two-year colleges. He is also an AMATYC Project SLOPE Research Fellow engaging in the scholarship of teaching and learning, and he's an AMATYC Project ACCESS Fellow as he works to continually improve his teaching.

For these reasons and many more, we enthusiastically recommend that Dr. Vinodh Chellamuthu receive the Alder Award.

Response

I am deeply honored and humbled to receive the Alder Award. I am even more honored to join past Alder Award recipients whose work has inspired and profoundly admired me in my journey as an educator. This award wouldn't be possible without my mentors, who generously gave their time to my professional development and supported me throughout all my endeavors. They demonstrated to me the role of a "true" educator and showed me how to thrive and contribute to society as an educator. My sincerest thanks to each and every one of them! This award reflects my students' hard work and perseverance, who took up challenges in their learning process and traveled along with me in their creative endeavors. Thanks to all my students. They are the engine of innovation and source of inspiration for my everyday activities. I am grateful for all the opportunities MAA has given me throughout the journey. Through the MAA, I get to know and work with some phenomenal colleagues with whom I have a chance to serve and impact the mathematical community beyond my classrooms. This award motivates me to continue working harder in creating opportunities and reaching out to students at all levels both within and outside of my home institution. I thank my mother, who was forbidden to go to college but courageously instilled the importance of education in me from a very young age and unconditionally believed in me in every aspect of my life. Last but certainly not least, I thank my wife and best friend Buna for her love, encouragement, and support (both mathematically and emotionally) in everything I do.

Biographical Sketch

Dr. Vinodh Chellamuthu is an associate professor of mathematics at Utah Tech University in St. George, Utah. He received his MS in applied mathematics from Tulane University and PhD in mathematics from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. He is firmly committed to promoting quality education for future scientists by creating opportunity channels for career development through research as a high-impact teaching pedagogy. He has mentored several undergraduate research projects coming directly from business, industry, and government agencies. His work with students has been supported by MAA's PIC Math and NREUP grants and funding from the Center for Undergraduate Research in Mathematics. In recognition of his success as a teacher-mentor, Dr. Chellamuthu has received the Early Career Mentoring Award from CUR, the Distinguished Teaching Award from the MAA's Intermountain Section, and the Distinguished Teaching Award from Utah Tech University. Dr. Chellamuthu currently serves as a councilor on the Council on Undergraduate Research, Vice-Chair of Programs for BIG SIGMAA, Program Coordinator for UR SIGMAA, and Chair for the MAA Intermountain Section.