

Gung and Hu Distinguished Service Award

The Yueh-Gin Gung and Dr. Charles Y. Hu Award for Distinguished Service to Mathematics is the most prestigious award for service offered by the MAA. The Gung and Hu Award is the endowed successor to the MAA's Award for Distinguished Service to Mathematics, first presented in 1962. It is to be made for service to mathematics that has been widely recognized as extraordinarily successful. The period of service may be long or short, and the award may be made on the basis of one or several activities. The contribution should be such as to influence the field of mathematics or mathematical education in a significant and positive way on a national scale.

Barbara Faires

The Gung and Hu Award Committee recommends Barbara Faires as the 2022 award recipient, recognizing her extensive service to mathematics for more than 40 years, during which time she worked in countless capacities for the benefit of the MAA in particular and the larger mathematical community in general. Barbara most notably served as MAA Secretary for eight years, not only assisting many presidents, but also shaping the Association itself, to strengthen it into a thriving and updated organization.

Barbara earned her undergraduate degree from East Carolina University, double majoring in mathematics and business. She earned her doctorate from Kent State University with a dissertation titled "On Grothendieck Spaces and Vector Measures."

Barbara began her service to the field of mathematics in the Allegheny Mountain Section of the MAA as the Coordinator of Student Programs in the late 1970s. She ran the first puzzle session at a section meeting with students. This session eventually evolved into the student problem-solving competition that remains as an exciting part of the meetings to this day. The Allegheny Mountain Section awarded her their Meritorious Service Award and their Distinguished Teaching Award. Faires was elected as Chair of the section, and later served as Governor. She merited high accolades at her college, Westminster College of Pennsylvania, as department chair, and eventually served as the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Barbara's influence in the MAA spanned decades, with her service at the national level highlighted by her term as the chair of the Committee on Sections and then as MAA Secretary. These two positions represent the heart of the MAA, since the work of the Association takes place in its sections and its committees. In particular, service as Secretary requires extraordinary interpersonal skills and anyone who knows Barbara will attest to her warm but firm ways. Barbara became the go-to person for the Executive Committee and the Board of Governors when looking for guidance in long-range strategic planning and for financial wisdom.

Barbara was a strong advocate for the good of the community in many capacities. Colleagues described her work on the Finance Committee as highly principled and insightful. She was thorough and persuasive and always prepared, ready to listen to any idea, but then scrutinize it with her analytical mind.

Barbara is a strong advocate of diversity and inclusion. In her quiet, but determined way, she has long worked to advocate inclusivity, fairness, and affirmation of differences in the MAA and in the profession. While serving on the Committee on Committees, with a task of populating over 100 MAA committees with volunteer professionals with well-suited expertise and life experiences, Barbara was sincerely and effectively devoted to the cause of diversification. She had a clear understanding of, and a passion for, a diversification policy as having advantages for everyone. Barbara's quiet influence behind the scenes played out as she educated committee chairs on how to avoid implicit biases. She actively ensured that hundreds of working volunteers of MAA would have a working knowledge of ways to make the profession more equitable, and thus, serving the best interests in the mathematics profession.

Barbara cares deeply about the relationship of the MAA with other math organizations and relationships within the Association. She has served as a representative on the Joint Policy Board for Mathematics and on the Conference Board of the Mathematical Sciences. She has assured that working relationships remain healthy between the various organizations. Within the MAA, Barbara developed many relationships, corresponding with section members from all over the country and remembering many facts about them. She often reached out to others to gather information or obtain help for members who were doing committee work or section work. Her encyclopedic knowledge of members ensured recommendations that would lead to balanced and diverse representations. Her personal touches have aided many members.

The committee is pleased to present Barbara Faires for your consideration for MAA's 2022 Yueh-Gin Gung and Dr. Charles Y. Hu Award for Distinguished Service to Mathematics.

Response

I am honored to receive the MAA Gung and Hu Award and want to express my gratitude to the Committee for their recommendation. In accepting this distinguished service to mathematics award, I represent many others who have contributed to our profession, especially through their work with the MAA. Serving as Secretary, I have had a front row seat to the tireless service of hundreds of mathematicians.

Sharing mathematical projects with Doug Faires made them much more fun and, of course, more productive. Our lives, as well as that of our daughter, Erika, were enriched by our many friends in the mathematical community. Doug planned our summer camping trips around the locations of AMS, MAA, and CMS meetings; in the early years, we looked forward to transferring from tent to dormitory and the John Neff bar. For us, mathematics = community. Thank you, Erika, for joining us in these mathematical adventures and for your support and flexibility.

None of this would have been possible without the support of my department chairs and deans at Westminster. I am indebted to those who gave me opportunities for service, including my colleagues at Westminster and in the Allegheny Mountain Section as well as MAA leaders we no longer see: Dick Anderson, Don Kreider, and Ron Graham. Thank you to the MAA staff, especially Calluna Euving and Susan Kennedy. Thank you to all my MAA friends I have made on this journey; I hope our diverse interests and goals continue to enrich our community.

Biographical Sketch

Barbara Faires earned her BS in mathematics and business at East Carolina University in her home state of North Carolina and her MS in mathematics at the University of South Carolina. It was there she met the mathematical force, Douglas Faires, who she married in 1969 and with whom she authored a calculus book. They moved to Youngstown, Ohio where Barbara taught part time at Youngstown State University. She earned her doctorate at Kent State University, working in Banach spaces and vector measures with Joe Diestel. Following a two-year appointment at Carnegie Mellon University, Barbara joined the faculty at Westminster College in 1976. She chaired the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science and served as Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the College, during which time she established the Westminster Faculty Forum where faculty members share their current research and scholarship. She coordinated the college's Diversity Symposium, taught in the first-year program, advised modeling teams, and, back in the spring of 1977, took a group of students to the Allegheny Mountain Section meeting to assist her in running a puzzle session for all students. It was at the 1980 version of this session that Barbara met Dick Anderson, MAA President, who appointed her to the Committee on Sections, leading to many wonderful years of involvement with the MAA. Barbara chaired the Committee on Sections as well as the Finance, Audit, and Budget Committees and served as First Vice President and, most recently, as Secretary from 2010 to 2018. Barbara lives in Boston, a short walk from daughter Erika (Matt) and grandchildren Kieran Douglas, Molly, and Fiona.