

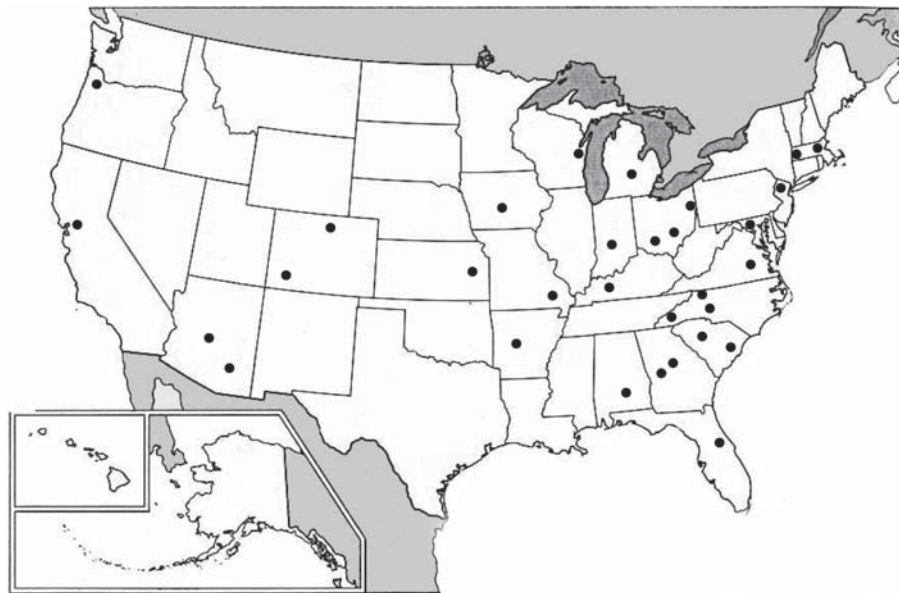
The MAA-NSF Undergraduate Student Conferences Program

By Doug Faires

Most readers of FOCUS have experienced the rush to finish preparing a talk prior to a meeting, and the feeling of accomplishment that comes with a successful presentation. Sharing the results of our work with our peers is an essential part of an academic career, and we seek opportunities to do so through participation at regional and national meetings. Our students, on the other hand, have few chances to make formal presentations, and may at first be hesitant to stand up in front of their classmates and share their own work. Those of us who have guided students through their first public presentations have seen the corresponding growth in mathematical maturity. We believe it is an important part of our major's undergraduate experience.

In the spring of 2002, the MAA was awarded the National Science Foundation grant DMS-0241090 to support conferences in mathematics that had the aim of encouraging presentations on mathematical subjects by undergraduates. The primary objective of the grant was to give undergraduate students an opportunity to see how exciting our discipline is by providing a nurturing environment in which to present and listen to a broad range of talks on mathematical subjects. The expectation is that this experience will encourage more students to continue their education in mathematics at the graduate level. The awards were expected to be quite modest, in the range of \$1000 to \$4000, and were open to both new endeavors and to established conferences that wanted to attempt to expand their programs but were limited because of funding parameters.

The first call for proposals was announced in March of 2003 with a deadline date of June 1, 2003. These proposals were for the academic year 2003–2004. A committee consisting of Colin Adams, Doug Faires, Joe Gallian, and Dan Schaal reviewed the 11 proposals that were received and awarded a total of \$21,000 to 10 institutions. In total, the



Map of the United States with locations of supported undergraduate conferences marked by dots.

grants were expected to fund conferences in which there would be a total of 260 undergraduate speakers and 965 undergraduate attendees from approximately 160 institutions. The institutions receiving the initial grants were Arizona State University, Colorado State University-Pueblo, University of Dayton, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Rose-Hulman Institute, Rowan University (for the MAA New Jersey Section) St. Norbert College, Western Kentucky University, and Youngstown State University.

One of the major goals of the grant was to encourage new conferences throughout the United States where students could have the opportunity to formally talk about mathematics, so a second round of proposals was solicited in August of 2003 to encourage new conferences in the spring of 2004. This resulted in the awarding of an additional 5 grants to conferences totaling \$11,900. These grants were awarded to conferences at Mount Holyoke (for the Hudson River Conference), Morehouse University, Boston University, Furman University, and Dordt College. These conferences ex-

pected to attract 190 undergraduate speakers and 500 undergraduate attendees from approximately 115 institutions.

The total funding for the first year to the grant was \$32,900 to support 15 conferences, at which nearly 1500 undergraduates were expected to attend and 450 undergraduates were expected to give presentations. It was expected that about 275 institutions would send students to one or more of the conferences.

The results from surveys received from the conferences indicated that these expectations were met in nearly each instance. In total there were approximately 1332 students from more than 230 institutions attending the conferences, of whom 463 were speakers.

During this second academic year of the three-year grant, the academic year 2004–2005, we are providing support to 27 conferences. Eleven of these were conferences that were supported in the initial year, and the remainder were new. We are now supporting 14 conferences that were not in existence before the NSF grant was awarded to the MAA.

You can obtain detailed information about the currently supported conferences by reviewing the reports from the first year of the grant at MAA Online: <http://www.maa.org/ugconf/report.html>. There have also been articles written about a number of the conferences and published this past year in FOCUS: Colorado State University at Pueblo in August-September, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in November, and Youngstown State University on page 12 of this issue. A review of these experiences should excite you with the possibilities.

We are hoping to expand the number of conferences for the final year of the grant. It is our goal to give every undergraduate an opportunity to attend and present a mathematical talk at a regional conference. The map shows the locations in the country that have conferences supported by the grant. If you are in an area that does not have a history of this type of activity, we encourage you to take the initiative and organize a conference in your area. Be prepared, however, to have a possible professional life-changing experience. You may find that your students are much better and more interested in mathematics than you thought they were.

The review deadline for conference proposals for the academic year 2005–2006 is May 1, 2005. Proposals may be considered later than this date if funds are available. The proposal process is quite simple and proposals for some of the currently funded conferences are available at <http://www.maa.org/ugconf/sample-proposals.html>. These proposals are provided only as guidelines; the review committee considers being innovative a positive trait. Simply keep in mind that the objective is to provide an opportunity for undergraduate students to give talks with mathematical content. The students need not be mathematics majors and the talks need not be on advanced or research subjects. However, all the talks should be accessible and interesting to the undergraduate audience.

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Undergraduate Student Conferences Institutions

Institution

University of Dayton
 University of Nebraska-Lincoln
 St. Norbert College
 Western Kentucky University
 Youngstown State University
 Arizona State University
 Colorado State University-Pueblo
 Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University
 Furman University
 Rutgers University
 Morehouse College
 Mount Holyoke (HRC)
 Dordt College
 Boston University
 Colorado School of Mines
 Central Michigan University
 Denison University
 Southeast Missouri State University
 University of Arizona
 Western Kentucky University
 Mary Washington College
 Mercer University
 Morehouse College
 Ramapo College of New Jersey
 University of Portland
 Hendrix College
 Hood College
 Williams College
 Appalachian State University
 Davidson College
 Cameron University
 Francis Marion University
 Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology
 Simpson College
 Sonoma State University
 South Dakota State University
 Troy University
 Western Carolina University

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Daubechies Interviewed Online

The National Academy of Science has created, in collaboration with Science Matters, Inc., a web site called *InterViews*, which contains “first-person accounts of the lives and work of members of the National Academy of Science.”

The hour-long interviews are conducted by Dorian Devins, a New York radio producer whose credits include a weekly sci-

ence radio program called *The Green Room*.

So far, the only mathematician to have been interviewed is Ingrid Daubechies of Princeton University, but new interviews are posted regularly. The *InterViews* site is located at <http://www7.national-academies.org/interviews/>.