



MAXIMA: News and Highlights from the Department of Mathematical Sciences

The University of Texas at El Paso <http://www.math.utep.edu> <http://facebook.com/utep.math> FALL 2014

In This Issue...

- Drs. Wagler and Lim Win Teaching Awards
- UTEP Again in Top Quarter on Putnam
- Faculty Organize Conferences
- In Memoriam
- Student News
- Alumni News
- Inflection Points

From the Chair

The Department continues to grow, with the last five years yielding nearly 350 peer-reviewed publications and \$23 million in grants. Our faculty continue to receive prestigious awards in teaching, scholarship, and grantsmanship. Our faculty have also been very active in leadership and service to the discipline, and in Spring 2015 the SUNmarC conference will be held at UTEP. In addition, during 2013, UTEP was ranked #1 by *Diverse* magazine for Mathematics and Statistics degrees conferred to Hispanic students both for undergraduate and masters degrees.

I am also delighted to welcome Assistant Professor in Mathematics Dr. Natasha Sharma (a hire which will support the Department's Applied Math research program and the Computational Science PhD program that is directed in the Department), Administrative Assistant Sylvia Gonzalez, as well as the following new lecturers (most of whom are UTEP alumni): part-timers Valeria Aguirre, Jorge Alonso, Sathya Amarasekera, Ruben Carrizales, Andrew Dynneson, Louise Guthrie, Jaime Lepe, Jeremy Ramirez, John Sneed, Thomas Taylor, Julio Urenda, Eduardo Urquidi, and Leobardo Valera.

Most of all, I thank Alumni, Friends and Faculty for last year's generous contributions. On page 3, you will find a list of scholarship funds benefiting our students, and our Excellence Fund supports student travel to meetings and other items not covered by our budget. We are always looking to promote talent at UTEP and this is your opportunity to help. If you would like more information about donating to the department, please contact Audrey Price at aprice@utep.edu, 915-747-8533.

- Dr. Christina Mariani

DRS. WAGLER AND LIM WIN TEACHING AWARDS

Dr. Amy Wagler, whose teaching was featured in last year's *MAXIMA*, became the fifth member of the Department in six years to win a prestigious *UT System Regents' Outstanding Teaching Award*. This highly competitive award entails rigorous multi-level review of a 150-page dossier of evidence.



Dr. Amy Wagler

At the 2014 meeting of the Southwestern Section of the Mathematical Association of America, Dr. Kien Lim was announced the winner of the section's *Award for Distinguished College or University Teaching of Mathematics*, the department's third winner of this award since 2010.



Dr. Kien Lim

At the end of the 2014 *Sun Conference*, the peer-reviewed Harry J. Meeuwse Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Award was announced to be a tie among three of the nine submitted papers: one winner was a paper by Dr. Lim and another was a paper co-authored by Dr. Wagler.

UTEP AGAIN IN TOP QUARTER ON NATIONAL PUTNAM COMPETITION!

For the second year in a row, UTEP's undergraduate team ranked in the top quarter on the William Lowell Putnam Mathematical Competition. Coached by Dr. Amine Khamisi, the 2013 team (Manuel Dosal, Bryan Felix, Irving Martinez, and Luis Ponce) placed 131st out of the 557 institutions. Credit should be given to the Departmental Student Competitions Committee: Dr. A. Khamisi (Chair) and Drs. Moschopoulos, Sewell and Yi. The Putnam Competition is a challenging six-hour 12-question exam for undergraduates administered by the Mathematical Association of America each December's first Saturday.

FACULTY ORGANIZE CONFERENCES

Department faculty have been extremely active in organizing recent and upcoming conferences in mathematics or mathematics education.

Dr. Larry Lesser organized the [11th International Sun Conference on Teaching and Learning](#), held March 5-7, 2014. Outside keynoter Dr. Art Benjamin (a noted TED speaker, mathemagician, and recent SUnMaRC keynoter) appealed across disciplinary lines and yielded a standing ovation.

Dr. Christina Mariani co-organized the [5th annual Modeling High Frequency Data in Finance Conference](#), sponsored by NSF, ASA, IAFE, and IMU, and held October 2013 at Stevens Institute of Technology, Hoboken.

Dr. Kien Lim co-coordinated the Fall 2014 Teachers Teaching Teachers Workshop "Fostering Mathematical Thinking" held with EPCC on September 20, 2014, with a focus on the teaching of mathematics courses for pre-service elementary and middle school teachers.

Dr. Behzad Djafari-Rouhani is organizing the upcoming [SUnMaRC conference](#) February 27-March 1, 2015 at UTEP.

[Back to Contents](#)

In Memoriam

Mr. Jack Schoessler passed away at age 66 on January 17, 2014. He was a Mathematics and Physics Instructor for 30 years at UTEP and at EPCC after earning his Master's Degree at UTEP. He served in the United States Army for two years as a First Lieutenant and then in the United States Army Reserve for 20 years as a Lieutenant Colonel.

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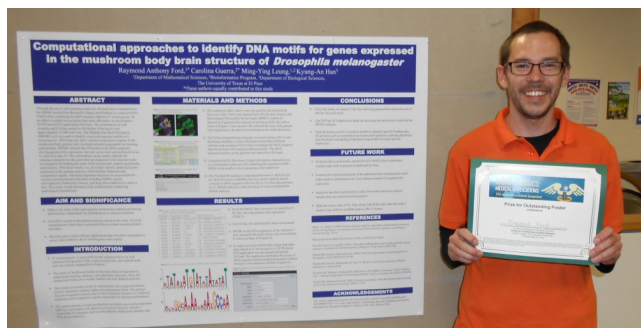
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STUDENT NEWS



UTEP's 2013 undergraduate team placed 131st out of 555 institutions on the William Lowell Putnam Mathematical Competition. *From left to right, Manuel Dosal, Luis Ponce, Irving Martinez; not shown, Bryan Felix.*



Statistics major (and UPBiT student) **Raymond Ford** presented a poster that won the Best Poster award in the Basic Research category at the 2014 International Symposium on Bioinformatics: Medical Applications. The poster addressed bioinformatics and computational approaches to identify DNA motifs for genes expressed in the mushroom body of *Drosophila melanogaster* (photo by Andrea Wurm).

Dr. Behzad Rouhani brought eight students to the 2014 SUnMaRC conference at Mesa (AZ) Community College: **Eric Chaidez, Jonathan Fernandez, Alexander Knaust, Rogelio Long, Matthew Melendez, Marisol Montes, Erik Parra** and **Paula Reichert**. UTEP's delegation placed third (out of eight institutions) in a mathematics contest at the conference and three students (Knaust, Melendez, and Reichert) gave presentations.

Departmental awards for academic and research excellence went to the following students this year: In Fall 2013, **Isla Andrea Porras** (undergraduate) and **Jeremy Ramirez** (M.A.T. graduate student); in Spring 2014, **Sara Yazdi** (undergraduate), **Jeremy Sneed** (M.A.T. graduate student), **Daniel Vazquez** (mathematics graduate student), and **Chalani Wijayasinghe** (statistics graduate student).

[Back to Contents](#)



ALUMNI NEWS



Harriet B. May (B.S., Mathematics, 1971; UTEP Distinguished Alumni Award recipient in 2007), president emerita of El Paso credit union GECU, was inducted into the Cooperative Hall of Fame by the U.S. Cooperative Community in May at the National Press Club in Washington, DC. May (along with fellow math graduates, and previous Gold Nuggets, **Evelyn Bell** and **Enrique Gomez**) was celebrated at the special Centennial Homecoming this year.

[Back to Contents](#)

Alumni Data Update Form Department of Mathematical Sciences

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INFLECTION POINTS



(see www.math.utep.edu for other faculty accomplishments too numerous to list!)

Dr. Art Duval is a contributing editor to a new blog from the American Mathematical Society, On Teaching and Learning Mathematics: <http://blogs.ams.org/matheducation>. The blog addresses varied topics on teaching and learning mathematics at all grade levels.

Dr. Larry Lesser won the bronze medal prize in a juried contest sponsored by the American Statistical Association, gave a Centennial Open House Lecture on the lottery, and

since January 1 has been directing UTEP's Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning.

Dr. Peter Moschopoulos is PI of the \$724,000 Statistics Consulting Lab Core facility of the 2014-19 BBRC grant.

Dr. Behzad Rouhani was promoted to Full Professor.

Dr. Emil Schwab was appointed Interim Associate Dean for Research in the College of Science.

Dr. Piotr Wojciechowski was promoted to Full Professor.

[Back to Contents](#)

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