



CITATION

FEBRUARY 26, 2011

In keeping with the resolve of the Mathematical Association of America to take substantive action each year to honor extraordinarily successful teaching at all post-secondary levels, the Northern California, Nevada, and Hawaii Section of the Association is pleased to identify

JOSEPH CONRAD

as the recipient of its sectional

AWARD FOR DISTINGUISHED COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY TEACHING OF MATHEMATICS

AS TEACHER, ROLE-MODEL, AND COLLEAGUE, JOE STANDS OUT AMONG his peers. He exerts a powerful influence on his students and his co-workers, urging them to strive for great things while showing by example how it can be done. (Most of this citation, including that sentence, is quoted directly from students' and colleagues' testimonials.)

Joseph Conrad studied at the University of Maryland and Pennsylvania State University, earning the doctorate in 1988 with a dissertation on C^* algebras, certain sets of functions used to analyze solutions of differential equations—problems formulated in terms of calculus. He joined the MAA during that time, and soon was recognized as a distinguished beginning teacher.





In 1994, Dr. Conrad applied to Solano Community College in Vallejo. His late-afternoon interview woke up a committee that was fatigued after a long day. Their decision was easy; he began teaching there that Fall.

Early on he recognized the need to modify his classroom presentations from teacher-centered approaches to ones more attuned to student interaction. Since then he has continually experimented until he is satisfied that his changes do contribute positively. He explains, "My favorite moment in teaching is when I look at a student and see the light bulb go on..." Joe understands the need for mathematics instruction that is alive and dynamic. He challenges students to expand their horizon of thinking, to develop an appreciation for mathematics as a subject in itself, to see the beauty in mathematics, and to understand its importance as it relates to other disciplines. He has been particularly effective in guiding student activities and choosing assessment techniques. Dr. Conrad has a gift for motivating students to study a difficult subject. His kind and open manner lets students know they can approach him at any time. A recent study confirmed what many already knew—Joe Conrad's students were well prepared for subsequent courses in algebra and calculus and more likely to take them. He has thus recruited students to study our discipline seriously, and at least one has eventually completed doctoral study in science.

A major part of Prof. Conrad's career has been devoted to helping colleagues follow in his footsteps. For example, he serves informally as departmental software expert, and more formally as problem editor for the California Mathematics Council newsletter. At Solano, Joe volunteers as a mentor to part-time instructors, providing guidance on general practices that help make their first days of class less stressful. He is so admired by other faculty members that his entrance into a departmental debate often steers the conversation toward resolution. Recently, Dr. Conrad provided several months' emergency service as interim dean, keeping his division running smoothly while not alienating his colleagues. Offered the permanent position, he declined, with the words, "My passions lie elsewhere."

Joe's colleagues express joy that he will remain a direct inspiration to both students and colleagues. A current student explains, "What enables Dr. Conrad to perform his job as well as he does is his sincere concern for his students' well-being, and his natural gift for teaching."

We are proud to present this year's Section Award for Distinguished College or University Teaching of Mathematics to an extraordinarily effective, inspiring teacher, Dr. Joseph Conrad.

