



Michigan Section Mathematical Association of America NEWSLETTER

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FALL 2025

This and older issues of the *Newsletter* can be found at sections.maa.org/michigan/newsletters

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Nominate an outstanding instructor for the Michigan Section-MAA 2026 Distinguished Teaching Award. Nominations are due January 31, 2026.

Join the MAA!

The MAA is a professional society whose mission is to advance the mathematical sciences, especially at the collegiate level. MAA members include high school teachers, college professors, undergraduate and graduate students, pure and applied mathematicians, statisticians, computer scientists, and many others in academia, government, business, and industry. As a member, you will enjoy registration discounts at national meetings, electronic subscriptions to all MAA journals and magazines, automatic enrollment in your local MAA section, and access to employment services and exclusive online resources. To become a member, or to learn more about what the MAA can offer you, visit <maa.org>.

Reports from the Executive Board

Chair's Report

Jonathan Oaks (Macomb CC) <oaksj@macomb.edu>

Hi everyone,

I hope your fall semester is going well so far. At each of our department meetings, my Associate Dean likes to start with a “getting to know you” question. This month she asked us to share our favorite Halloween or fall tradition. I told the group that when I was a kid, we used to have a real coffin with a skeleton on our front porch. To this day, I still don’t know where my parents got the coffin, and honestly, I’ve decided it’s probably best not to ask.

There’s always so much happening across our section and around Michigan. The MichMATYC Conference took place October 10–11 at Southwestern Michigan College, and I know several of our members were in attendance, including our very own **Victor Piercey**. Victor’s term as our section’s Congress Representative will conclude this coming July, and I’d like to thank him for his excellent service and for always representing our section so well.

I also want to take a moment to thank **Michael**

Pemberton, who recently stepped down as our Two-Year College Vice Chair. During his time in this role, Mike brought in outstanding speakers for our Section Meetings, represented the section at MichMATYC, and strengthened our connection with Michigan’s two-year colleges. Although he’ll be greatly missed, we remain committed to engaging more with our two-year college colleagues. If you know faculty who might enjoy being part of our section, please let me know, and I’d be happy to reach out with a personal invitation.

Before I close, I wanted to share something that’s been surprisingly helpful in my own work lately. Like many of you, I’ve been experimenting with AI tools to streamline some of the behind-the-scenes parts of teaching. One that’s made a real difference for me is MassiveMark AI Powered Document Creator <bibcit.com/en/massivemark>, which makes it easy to copy math equations, tables, and code directly into DOCX, HTML, or PDF files without losing formatting.

Enjoy the rest of your semester, and I hope you find a few moments this fall to appreciate the changing leaves and a warm cup of cider.

–Jon

Section Meeting Announcement

Ricardo Alfaro (UM-AA) <ralfaro@umich.edu>

Program Director

The 2026 Annual Meeting of the MAA–Michigan Section will take place at the beautiful campus of Saginaw Valley State University on March 27–28. We have confirmed the following Plenary Speakers:

- **Steve Butler** from Iowa State University, Polya Speaker.
- **Cindy Wyles** from California State University–Channel Islands, MAA Secretary.

The committee is in the process of setting up the list of invited speakers, and an official call for abstracts will be sent in the beginning of January. The local committee at SVSU is also building the official website with all the pertinent information.

Please reserve the date and plan on bringing your students. We are planning on some special activities for them!

Hope to see you at the end of March,

–Ricardo Alfaro

Four-Year-College Vice-Chair's Report

David Murphy (Hillsdale C) <dmurphy@hillsdale.edu>

My role as the section's Four-Year Vice Chair is to create and establish "programs, outreach, and community building of section members." Here are some of the programming ideas already in the works.

- **Reviving Michigan Section NExT program.**

It has been over 10 years since we last had an active Section NExT program. In a new incarnation, we want to make a program that is not just for new faculty, recognizing that we all need to keep learning new innovations in teaching and research. The objectives for such a program would include improved networking and mentoring across the section, and offering a setting for exploring new teaching practices and research topics.

- **Supporting department colloquia by creating a list of speakers and talks.**

Do you have a great math colloquium lecture? Of course! We are looking to help departments find speakers by creating and maintaining a listing of members and colloquium talks they have to share. Please email me directly with your name, title(s) of lectures you have, and a travel radius (by distance or time).

For these initiatives, we are looking to our members for help. Please let me know of your interest in helping to make these ideas a reality so that the section's programs will grow and thrive. You can reach out to me at dmurphy@hillsdale.edu. I am eager to work with all of you to make our section one of the best in the MAA!

Secretary-Treasurer's Report

Don't Be Irrational, Support Your Section!

First, a huge thank you to everyone who contributed to the Michigan Section this past year. Your generosity keeps our math community connected, proving that when we work together, the sum is always greater than the parts. Through your efforts, we held a fantastic annual meeting at Lake Superior State University and were a *gold-level sponsor* of the Conversations Among Colleagues conference (run by the Michigan Association of Mathematics Teacher Educators). You really helped our tangent lines stay *above the curve!*

Now, let's crunch some numbers: Our financial picture remains very healthy at this time. However, we have 600+ members and only about 5% contribute voluntary dues. If you have the financial means, we'd love for you to integrate yourself into this set of critical points.

We can't offer you a tote bag or a mug, but for less than the cost of a pizza whose perimeter is fixed but

whose area is a maximum, you can experience the joy of knowing you've helped keep Michigan's math community continuous and differentiable.

Here's how to add your contribution to the equation:

Online PayPal to MichiganSectionDues@gmail.com (include your name, institution, mailing address, and email in the notes).

By check Make it payable to *Michigan Section MAA* and mail to:

Prof. Abe Edwards
Michigan State University
919 East Shaw Lane
East Lansing, MI 48825

Suggested voluntary dues:

- Individual: \$15
- Sustaining: \$30
- Small institution: \$40
- Large institution: \$70

To all those who supported the Michigan MAA in 2025—thank you for proving that generosity is exponential!

Section Elections Announcement

Amy Shell-Gellasch (UM-AA) <ashellg@umich.edu>

In the spring we will hold elections for Chair and Newsletter editors.

Please consider running, or nominating your closest math friend for these very rewarding positions. Please send nominations directly to Amy Shell-Gellasch at <ashellg@umich.edu>.

Our Section Needs Your Help!

If you are interested in serving our section on the executive committee or want to help out our mathematical community in other ways, please let us know! We are always looking for people to help out in large or small ways. If you have a little time to give or slightly more, please email [Jonathan Oaks <oaksj@macomb.edu>](mailto:Jonathan.Oaks@macomb.edu)

Campus News

Alpena CC

Dan Rothe <rothed@alpenacc.edu>

Alpena Community College is happy to begin a new fall semester. Upon the retirement of long time Math Faculty member **Mike Kelley**, we are pleased to announce the hiring of **Sarah Burt** as new full time faculty. We begin the semester up 4% in contact hours and again last year had the high graduation rate of all Michigan Community Colleges. Dual enrollment/early college is now about half of our student count. We have an increased number of online and remote delivery classes. **Dan Rothe** is now the department chair.

Over 80 educators from across Northeast Michigan came together in August for the Huron Shores Ed Tech Conference, hosted at Alpena Community College. The day-long event offered teachers, instructional staff, and administrators hands-on professional development focused on the integration of technology in the classroom.

The conference was a collaboration between **Ashlie O'Connor**, Instructional Technology and Data Specialist with AMAESD, **Meghan Cameron**, Instructor of Mathematics at Alpena Community College, **Heather Kowalski**, REMC's Regional Director, and **Laura Percival**, MiSTEM Director.

The conference featured a keynote address from **Mark Lyons** of Saginaw ISD, followed by breakout sessions offering over 20 unique presentations. Topics ranged from artificial intelligence in education and STEM in literacy to practical classroom tools like Canva, Google Workspace, and interactive whiteboards.

Calvin C

John Ferdinands <john.ferdinands@calvin.edu>

Joyce Chew joined the Department this fall. She recently completed a PhD in mathematics at UCLA.

Lake Superior SU

Joni J. Lindsey <jlindsey1@lssu.edu>

LSSU had hosted their annual Math Modeling Day on October 8, where local middle schools and high schools competed to solve some complex problems. This year's competition was themed around solutions to shipping iron ore throughout the Great Lakes region if one of the Soo Locks happened to fail. Each team came up with unique solutions and justified their work with impressive calculations. LSSU will host schools again this upcoming spring for the Pi Day Math Competition.

Additionally, two of LSSU's recent graduates, **Andrew Soma** and **Aaron Nachazel**, have been accepted to graduate school starting this Fall. Both were positioned as teaching assistants, and both received additional scholarships. Andrew is working on his PhD in Mathematics at North Carolina State University. Aaron is working on his PhD in Math Education at University of Montana. Also, Aaron was just published in the AX journal Alethia for his undergraduate research on the self-efficacy and prioritization of students taking calculus for business and life-science.



NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS

One of the top biostatistics programs is doing a world of good through cutting-edge research in all areas of applied and theoretical biostatistics, including big data computing, longitudinal data, missing data, survival analysis, clinical trial design, and statistical genetics.

Numerous student funding opportunities are available, including training grants and research assistantships. Degrees include master's programs in Biostatistics and Health Data Science, and a PhD program in Biostatistics. Graduates are favored across a variety of employers including universities, governmental agencies, pharmaceutical companies and (bio)tech companies.

APPLY TODAY!
sph.umich.edu/biostat



Oakland U

JD Nir <jdnir@oakland.edu>

Sana Jahedi and **Joey Zou** joined the department as assistant professors. Dr. Jahedi earned her PhD from the University of New Brunswick in Canada and joins us from the University of Maryland, College Park. Sana's research focus is in mathematical biology and applied mathematics. Dr. Zou received his PhD from Stanford University and joins us from Northwestern University. Joey works in microlocal analysis and inverse problems.

Kevin Andrews and **Theophilus Ogunnyemi** retired from the department in August 2025.

Beginning in Fall 2025, **Yongjin Lu** is the new department chairperson.

Dr. Jun Hu was promoted to associate professor with tenure.

Professors **Tamas Horvath** and **Ravindra Khattree** are on sabbatical during the Fall 2025 semester.

In the summer of 2025, the department ran the OU Math Corps, an outreach program for Pontiac middle and high school students, and will run it again in the summer of 2026.

In the summer of 2025, the department ran the Oakland University Summer Mathematics Institute. The viability of the 2026 OUSMI is currently being evaluated. Please contact the Director, Professor **Eddie Cheng** for further information.



WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
College of Arts and Sciences
Department of Mathematics

Mathematics PhD
Mathematics MA
Applied Mathematics MS
Mathematics Education PhD
Mathematics Education MA

The Department of Mathematics offers five close-knit graduate programs in Kalamazoo, a welcoming mid-sized city in beautiful southwest Michigan. Students in mathematics education deepen their understanding of mathematics and its teaching and learning, combining theory and practice to enhance classroom effectiveness; to develop leadership in curriculum, instruction, and evaluation; and to prepare for faculty roles in higher education. Students in mathematics and applied mathematics broaden and strengthen their mathematical expertise through coursework, seminars, and research, gaining preparation for further study and careers in academia, industry, and government. Across all programs, students benefit from collaboration and shared expertise within a supportive scholarly community.

Currently all supported graduate students receive a tuition waiver. TA stipends range from \$14,751 to \$17,671. Although applications are considered on a rolling basis, applicants seeking financial support should submit their applications before February 15 to be considered for support starting the following fall.

Information: Steve Culver at math-info@wmich.edu or 269-387-4517 or visit <https://wmich.edu/math>
Application: <https://wmich.edu/grad/apply>

Saginaw Valley SU

William Vautaw <wvautaw@SVSU.edu>

SVSU welcomes two new faculty members: **Kohl James**, PhD, from Texas Tech, 2025, Numerical solutions to nonlinear PDEs; **Christopher St. Clair**, PhD, from Michigan State, 2024, Low dimensional topology.

Retirement Professor Garry Johns, SVSU faculty for 37 years, member of the MAA.

Award Grace McClurkin was awarded SVSU's Landee Award for Excellence in Teaching!

SW Mich SU

Robin Shipkosky <rshipkosky@swmich.edu>

SMC would like to share the addition of a new full time math faculty member, Dr. **Elliot LaForge**. Elliot has been an adjunct with SMC since 2016 and his impact at the college since that time has been very positive; he is currently the course director for our newly redesigned Contemporary Math Course here at the college, having worked with adjunct **Jon Sheppard** to do the re-design. A brief bio, written by Dr. LaForge himself, can be found below:

Dr. Elliot LaForge was born in Saint Joseph, Michigan where he stayed until graduating high school. He then moved to Grand Rapids and attended Grand Rapids Community College where he decided to pursue a career in mathematics. He transferred to Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo after finishing his associates. His teaching career began in his final year of undergrad as a teaching assistant. He then remained a graduate teaching assistant throughout the graduate program at WMU culminating in his doctorate degree being awarded in 2016. Near the end of his graduate program, he met **Megan LaForge** whom he married in 2021. After graduation he immediately jumped into teaching as an adjunct professor at both Southwestern Michigan College and Kalamazoo Valley Community College teaching a wide range of classes between both schools until finally accepting a full time faculty position at SMC in 2025.

UM-Flint

Mehrdad Simkani <simkani@umich.edu>

Daniel Coffield is promoted to Professor. **Shawil Daoud** and **James Wade** are promoted to Lecturer IV. Math Field Day will be held on March 6.

Western Mich U

Melinda E. Koelling <melinda.koelling@wmich.edu>

Here's some news from the Department of Mathematics at Western Michigan University. In April 2025, **John (Srdjan) Petrovic** retired.

We had two PhD students complete their programs in 2025: **Emma Jent** (Multiple Monochromatic Subgraphs in Edge-Colored Graphs) under the direction of **Ping Zhang** and **Hala Al Khalid** (Mathematical Modeling of Climate Risk in Banking: Optimizing Balance Sheets for a Sustainable Future) under the direction of **Jim Zhu** and **Pedro Judice**.

In addition, Applied Math Masters student **Ola Olaniyan** wrote a thesis (Estimating Climate Risk in Financial Markets) under the direction of Jim Zhu.

WMU hosted the 2025 Conversations Among Colleagues in March. Our WMU Presidential Scholar for Mathematics in 2024–2025 was **Ethan Freel**, a Teaching and Learning Mathematics major. In October 2025, we honored our distinguished alumnus **Danny Dunlavy** (MS, 2001) from Sandia National Laboratories. On November 8 2025, WMU is hosting a math carnival for K-8 students and their families. More details can be found at <wmich.edu/math/kalamazoo-math-carnival>

Michigan Section Awards

2026 Distinguished Service Award Nominations Due January 31, 2026

Amy Shell-Gellasch (Eastern Mich. U) <ashellge@emich.edu>

Nominations are being solicited for the MAA Michigan Section's 2026 Distinguished Service Award.

Nominations should include the nominee's service in their home department as well as service to the section, and any service performed for national mathematics organizations or for the promotion of mathematics in a local community.

The awards committee will accept nominations until January 31, 2026.

Please send nominations to Amy Shell-Gellasch <ashellge@emich.edu>. Please use "Michigan DSA Nomination" in the subject line.

Details on each award and the DTA nomination form can be found at <<http://sections.maa.org/michigan/awards.html>> The lists of previous winners can be found at <<http://sections.maa.org/michigan/history.html>>

2026 Distinguished Teaching Award Nominations Due January 31, 2026

Tibor Marcinek (Central Mich. U) <marci1t@cmich.edu>
Distinguished Teaching Award Committee Chair

Nominations for the Michigan Section's 2026 Distinguished Teaching Award are now being accepted, and must be received by January 31, 2026 to be considered. The Distinguished Teaching Award Committee strongly urges departments or individuals to nominate deserving faculty for this award. We recognize that there are many outstanding teachers in the section, but we can consider only those who are nominated.

The committee particularly welcomes nominations of individuals from groups (or types of institutions) that have historically been under-represented in mathematics or in the list of previous recipients of the award. Past recipients may be found at <sections.maa.org/michigan/history.html#award>. The person selected by the committee will be presented with the award in the spring at the annual meeting of the Michigan Section, and will also, pending submission of additional supporting material and membership in the MAA, become the Michigan Section nominee for the national MAA Deborah and Franklin Tepper Haimo Awards for Distinguished College or University Teaching of Mathematics.

Nomination Instructions Completed nominations must be received by January 31, 2026 to be considered for the 2026 Award. The [nomination form](#) is available

on the section's website as a Microsoft Word file.

Send an electronic copy of the completed form to [Tibor Marcinek](mailto:Tibor.Marcinek@cmich.edu) <marci1t@cmich.edu>; please use "Michigan DTA Nomination" as the subject.

Anyone may make a nomination (of someone else; self-nomination is not permitted), but nominations from chairs or MAA liaisons in departments of mathematical sciences are especially requested.

Eligibility for the Award To be considered for the award, a nominee must:

- Be a college or university teacher who currently teaches a mathematical science at least half-time during the academic year in a public or private college or university (from two-year college teaching through teaching at the PhD level) in Michigan. Those on approved leave (sabbatical or otherwise) during the academic year in which they are nominated qualify if they fulfilled the requirements in the previous year.
- Have at least seven years experience in teaching the mathematical sciences.
- Have had teaching effectiveness that can be documented.
- Have had influence in their teaching beyond their own institution.
- Foster curiosity and generate excitement about mathematics in their students.

Michigan Section—Mathematical Association of America

Committees and Appointments

Executive Committee

Chair ('26) Jonathan Oaks (Macomb CC)
 <oaksj@macomb.edu>

Vice Chair ('28) David Murphy (Hillsdale C)
 <dmurphy@hillsdale.edu>

Vice Chair ('27) Michael Pemberton (Lansing CC)
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Sec.-Treas. ('28) Richard "Abe" Edwards (MSU)
 <aedwards@msu.edu>

Past Chair ('26) Amy Shell-Gellasch (EMU)
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Congress Rep. ('26) Victor Piercey (Ferris State U)
 <piercev1@ferris.edu>

2026 Annual Meeting Program Committee

Chair Ricardo Alfaro (UM–Flint)
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Audit Committee

Member Dan Isaksen (Wayne State U)
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Member Michael Bolt (Calvin C)
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 <oaksj@macomb.edu>

Member ('26) Michael Pemberton (Lansing CC)
 <pembertm@lcc.edu>

Calendar of Events

Michigan Section–MAA Annual Meeting

2026: Saginaw Valley State University, March 27–28

MAA MathFest

2026: Boston, MA, August 5–8

[<maa.org/meetings/mathfest>](https://maa.org/meetings/mathfest)

2027: New Orleans, LA, August 4–7

2028: San Diego, CA, August 2–5

2029: Chicago, IL, August 8–11

AMATYC Annual Conference

2026: Philadelphia, PA, November 19–22

[<amatyc.org/page/Conferences>](https://amatyc.org/page/Conferences)

2027: Spokane, WA, November 11–14, 2027

2028: Phoenix, AZ, November 9–12

NCTM Annual Meeting & Exposition

2026: Denver, CO, October 28–31

[<nctm.org/annualmeeting/>](https://nctm.org/annualmeeting/)

AMS Joint Mathematics Meetings

2026: Washington, D.C., January 4–7

[<jointmathematicsmeetings.org/jmm>](https://jointmathematicsmeetings.org/jmm)

2027: Chicago, IL, January 12–15