

In 1991 the Mathematical Association of America instituted Awards for Distinguished College or University Teaching of Mathematics in order to honor college or university teachers who have been widely recognized as extraordinarily successful, and whose teaching effectiveness has been shown to have had influence beyond their own institutions.

Citation

Dr. Sarita Nemani

The New Jersey Section of the Mathematical Association of America is pleased to present its 2013 sectional award for Distinguished College or University Teaching of Mathematics to Dr. Sarita Nemani.



Dr. Sarita Nemani received her B.S. in mathematics from Wilson College, University of Bombay, India, in 1992 and her Ph.D. from University of New Brunswick, Canada, in 2001, and has been a faculty member at Georgian Court University since 2007. She was an NJ-NExT Fellow in 2007 – 2008 and in that capacity was responsible for organizing a workshop on “Teaching Methods” in the fall of 2008. For MAA-NJ, Dr. Nemani has organized and presided over the Graduate Students Contributed Paper sessions, served as a judge for the GSUMC Student Poster sessions, served on the GSUMC Competition Committee, and has been Door Prize Coordinator for the New Jersey section since 2011. She has served as a judge for The Greater Metropolitan New York Math Fair. At Georgian Court University she has been a co-moderator of the Math Club and of the Eta Chapter of Pi Mu Epsilon since 2007.

Dr. Nemani’s course evaluations have all been overwhelmingly positive. She is able to work with all levels of students, both individually and collectively, and helps them make outstanding progress. She discovers a student’s strengths and weaknesses and tailors her teaching to meet each one’s needs. Dr. Nemani is constantly looking for ways to improve her teaching. For instance, students in every one of her courses are expected to fill out weekly surveys that include questions about the most and least liked parts of that week’s classes, the points which the students believe to be the most important, those that are the most unclear, and any suggestions for improvement.

Dr. Nemani has an incredible work ethic and seeks to get her students to truly understand mathematical concepts at any cost to her in time and effort. Her office becomes a club house for students in the more difficult courses. Students frequently line up on the benches across from the department offices waiting for her to return, confident that she will provide whatever they need to understand. She is adept at using analogies, creative activities, and well-crafted demonstration problems. When unable to drive to campus on the weekend, Dr. Nemani has even met up with her students at a library near her home so that she could still offer that extra bit of help! She also established a research program that includes undergraduate students. For the last two years she has mentored math majors that have received the New Jersey Space Grant student academic scholarship. The students presented their findings at the annual meeting in May at Rutgers University.

Dr. Nemani has served, from 2010 through 2012, as both director and instructor for “Girls In Science and Technology,” a week-long program to give predominately minority girls in lower income schools the opportunity to participate in applied activities in science and mathematics designed to inspire confidence and a joy of learning. The goal is to get them first to commit to finish high school and then to continue on to college. Students start coming when they are in middle school and are encouraged to return each summer. Dr. Nemani has done a remarkable job managing the program, tracking students as they progress through the program, and connecting with teachers and administrators in the local school districts. She recruits and supports the teaching assistants and oversees the curriculum. As

the director of GIST, Dr. Nemani has positively influenced the career paths of many disadvantaged girls.

Professor Margaret Canzonier of the Department of Computer Science and Mathematics, Georgian Court University, nominated Dr. Sarita Nemani for this Distinguished Teaching Award.

Response from Professor Nemani

I am both proud and humbled to be recognized by the New Jersey Section of the Mathematical Association of America as a distinguished teacher of mathematics. My first and best teacher was (and still is) my mother who taught me many skills like being a good listener, taking care of others, and working with dedication.

I have been very fortunate to have had excellent teachers throughout my student life. Each and every day, I see their reflection in my teaching. Professor Thekedatta (Wilson College) always made sure that students learned the current topic before he moved on to the next one. This taught me to be more patient and to have interaction with the class. I learned from Professor Khandeparkar (Wilson College) to write systematically in mathematics. It was her teaching that made me realize mathematics itself is a language. If it is used properly then any difficult proof becomes clear and fun. Dr Kumaresan (University of Bombay) taught me not to be afraid of trying new and different methods. I was so influenced by a book written by Dr Limaye (Indian Institute of Technology, Mumbai) that I wanted to work with him, and was fortunate to get a chance to learn under his guidance. Dr Kulkarni (Indian Institute of Technology, Mumbai) would spend many hours helping students in her office. There I learned the importance of the extra help provided by instructors. Dr Garey (University of New Brunswick, Canada) influenced me with his guidance and energy for Math. I feel very fortunate to have the opportunity to learn from Professor Canzonier (Georgian Court University) about how to care for students.

Any effective teaching and learning can take place only with teamwork between students and teacher. Students teach me how to teach everyday by providing quality feedback and by participating in class. I would like to thank my colleagues and

students at GCU for providing me the platform to learn and teach new methods and to allow me to be a companion on their learning journey. I would also like to thank the MAA for letting me be a part of NJ-NExT. This experience helped me understand the role of an educator. Most of all, I want to thank my parents, my husband Sankar and my son Karthik. This award is an honor, and I will try to be worthy of it.

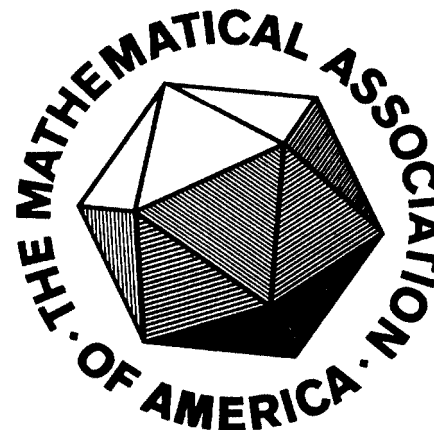
RECIPIENTS OF MAA-NJ DISTINGUISHED TEACHING AWARD

Sr. M. Stephanie Sloyan, Georgian Court College	1992
Eileen Polani, St. Peter's College	1993
Richard Bronson, Fairleigh Dickinson University	1994
Siegfred Haenisch, The College of New Jersey	1995
Andrew Demetropoulos, Montclair State University	1996
Roger Pinkham, Stevens Institute of Technology	1997
Virginia Lee, Brookdale Community College	1998
Amy Cohen, Rutgers University-New Brunswick	1999
Janet H. Caldwell, Rowan University	2000
Evan Maletsky, Montclair State University	2002
Stephen J. Greenfield, Rutgers University-New Brunswick	2003
Arthur Schwartz, Mercer County Community College	2004
Bonnie Gold, Monmouth University	2006
Bruce G. Bukiet, New Jersey Institute of Technology	2008
Thomas Osler, Rowan University	2009
Robert L. Wilson, Rutgers University	2010
Brian P. Hopkins, St. Peter's College	2011
Diana M. Thomas, Montclair State University	2012

MEMBERS OF THE SELECTION COMMITTEE

Carol Avelsgaard, Middlesex County College
Bruce G. Bukiet, New Jersey Institute of Technology
Bonnie Gold, Monmouth University
Tom Osler, Rowan University
Robert Wilson, Rutgers University

MATHEMATICAL ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA NEW JERSEY SECTION



**Award for Distinguished College or
University Teaching of Mathematics**

Spring Meeting

**Saturday, April 13, 2013
Felician College
Lodi, New Jersey**