

# Spring 2026 Meeting

## of MAA-NJ

held in conjunction with

## MATYCNJ



MATHEMATICAL ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

# MAA



and

## Garden State Undergraduate Mathematics Conference



## Ramapo College of New Jersey

**Saturday, March 28, 2026**

# Schedule:

Most events take place in the Pavilion. Afternoon Contributed Papers and Student Presentations are in ASB (Business School). The morning student competition (NJUMC) takes place in the Adler Center.

[The [GSUMC schedule](#) is on page 4.]

## MAP

8:30 – 9:15	<b>Registration and Coffee.</b> Pavilion Lobby
9:00 – 1:30	<b><u>Book Exhibits.</u></b> Pavilion Lobby
9:15 – 9:30	<b>Welcome.</b> <i>Dr. Lawrence D’Antonio, Professor of Mathematics.</i> Pavilion Lecture Hall
9:30 – 10:20	<b><u>Using Data Science to Promote Genocide Resilience to Policymakers.</u></b> <i>Victor Piercey.</i> Pavilion Lecture Hall
10:20 – 11:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <b>MATYCNJ Business Meeting.</b> Pavilion Lecture Hall</li><li>● <b>Refreshments.</b> Pavilion Lobby</li></ul>
11:00 – 11:50	<b><u>Corequisites That Actually Work: Practical Fixes for Persistent Pain Points in Gateway Math.</u></b> <i>Kathleen Almy.</i> Pavilion Lecture Hall

12:00 – 1:30	<b>Lunch.</b> Pavilion Cafeteria <b><u><a href="#">Lunch Discussion Tables.</a></u></b>
1:00 – 2:00	<b>Student Poster Session.</b> Pavilion Lecture Hall
2:00 – 3:15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>General Contributed Papers:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b><u><a href="#">Session 1.</a></u></b> ASB - Room 225</li> <li>○ <b><u><a href="#">Session 2.</a></u></b> ASB - Room 226</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Student Talks.</b> ASB - Rooms 219, 220</li> </ul>
3:15 – 3:45	<b>Intermission and Refreshments.</b> Pavilion Lobby (Silent auction bidding ends at 3:30)
3:45 – 4:35	<b><u><a href="#">Exploring Irrational Numbers with Continued Fractions.</a></u></b> <i>Kariane Calta.</i> Pavilion Lecture Hall
4:35 – 5:00	<b>Prizes and Awards.</b> GSUMC awards, door prizes and silent auction winners (must be present to win). Pavilion Lecture Hall
5:30	<b>Dinner Honoring Speakers.</b> <u><a href="#">Mason Jar,</a></u> 219 Ramapo Valley Road, Mahwah, NJ 07430

**[Code of Conduct](#)**

# GSUMC Schedule:

Events take place in the Adler Center, the Pavilion, and ASB (the Business School). [MAP](#)

8:30 – 9:15	<b>Competition Team Check-In, Student Check-in, and Breakfast.</b> Adler Center South Lobby
9:20 – 9:30	<b>Announcements.</b> Adler Center, Room 108
9:30 – 10:30	<b>NJ Undergraduate Math Competition; Individual Part.</b> Adler Center, Room 108
10:30 – 12:00	<b>NJ Undergraduate Math Competition; Team Part.</b> rooms to be announced
12:00 – 1:00	<b>Lunch.</b> Adler Center South Lobby (floor 1 and floor 0)
1:00 – 2:00	<b>Student Poster Session.</b> Pavilion Lecture Hall
2:00 – 3:15	<b>Student Talks.</b> ASB - Rooms 219 and 220
3:15 – 3:45	<b>Intermission and Refreshments.</b> Pavilion Lobby (Silent auction bidding ends at 3:30)
3:45 – 4:35	<b><u><a href="#">Exploring Irrational Numbers with Continued Fractions.</a></u></b> <i>Kariane Calta.</i> Pavilion Lecture Hall
4:35 – 5:00	<b>Prizes and Awards.</b> GSUMC awards, door prizes and silent auction winners (must be present to win). Pavilion Lecture Hall

## Additional program content

- [Future Meetings](#)
- [Call](#) for Contributed Papers, Topics for Special Sessions, and Lunch Table Discussion Topics for the Fall 2026 MAA-NJ Meeting
- [Carol Crawford Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching](#)
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# Using Data Science to Promote Genocide Resilience to Policymakers

Victor Piercey

Ferris State University

Social scientists use data science algorithms to forecast and predict genocide. For example, the “Early Warning Project” uses a modified logistic regression to identify at-risk countries that are put on a watch-list. We propose to use data science to invite policymakers to strengthen their resilience to genocide. We proceed from the assumption that policymakers act in their self-interest. To that end, given an at-risk country or region, we seek to find previous genocide events that data suggests have similar profiles (which we call “nearest neighbors”) and use data-storytelling to tell a story about the impact of the event on those nearest neighbors. In this talk, we will share our progress toward such a program.

**Victor Piercey** holds a JD from Columbia Law School and a Ph.D in Mathematics from the University of Arizona. He is a Professor of Mathematics as well as the Director of the Honors Program at Ferris State University. He is passionate about combining his legal and mathematical experience to both provide students with unexpected mathematical applications as well as promoting social justice. His teaching includes quantitative reasoning and actuarial science. His scholarship includes the scholarship of teaching and learning, ethics in mathematics, and genocide prevention.



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# **Corequisites That Actually Work: Practical Fixes for Persistent Pain Points in Gateway Math**

Kathleen Almy

Almy Education

Many colleges have adopted corequisite support to move more students into college-level gateway math, yet results are often uneven. Faculty see recurring issues: misalignment between the gateway course and support, unclear pacing and purpose, inconsistent expectations across sections, and “support” that turns into a second course students do not fully use.

This session focuses on practical, faculty-centered fixes that improve consistency and outcomes without adding more work. Drawing on implementation experience across institutions, we will share ready-to-use techniques that allow for flexibility but provide a functional and effective structure for corequisite support.

**Kathleen Almy** is the CEO and founder of Almy Education, guiding colleges nationwide to math success at scale. She is the former Illinois Director for Transitional Math where she led the implementation of transitional math courses across the state.



Prior to her administrative work, she was a mathematics professor with 20 years of experience in high school and college classrooms. Her degrees include a B.S. in Mathematics Education from Southern Illinois University, an M.S. in Pure Mathematics from Northern Illinois University, and a doctorate of education in higher education leadership at Northern Illinois University.

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# Exploring Irrational Numbers with Continued Fractions

Kariane Calta

Vassar College

Any irrational number can be approximated by a sequence of rational numbers by truncating its decimal expansion. Continued fractions are an ancient and powerful tool that not only provides the best possible rational approximations but also reveals properties of numbers hidden by their decimal representations. For example, a number is a quadratic irrational if and only if its continued fraction expansion is periodic. In this talk, I will introduce continued fractions, provide a geometric interpretation, and explore connections to dynamical systems. We will also see why the golden ratio is the “most irrational” number of all.

**Kariane Calta** is an Associate Professor of Mathematics at Vassar College. She earned her BA from Williams College and her PhD from the University of Chicago. Her research interests include billiards, translation surfaces, and continued fractions. More recently, she has studied the game of Quads and its connections to finite geometry. Since 2017, she has also taught with Bard's Prison Initiative.



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# Contributed Paper Sessions

**Organizer:** Kathy Turrisi, Centenary University

## **Session 1: ASB - Room 225**

**Moderator:** Sheila Tabanli, Rutgers University

### **2:00–2:18: Using AI to Build Question Banks for Formative Assessment in the LMS.**

Dr. Grace Cook, Bloomfield College of Montclair State University

### **2:20–2:38: Integrating Productive Struggle Through Open-ended Tasks in Calculus II.**

Dr. Kara Teehan, Monmouth University

### **2:40–2:58: Retention Without Remediation: Bridging Learning Science and Gateway Mathematics.**

Dr. Sheila Tabanli, Rutgers University

Abstracts are on the next page.

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## Session 1: ASB - Room 225

### **2:00–2:18: Using AI to Build Question Banks for Formative Assessment in the LMS.**

Dr. Grace Cook, Bloomfield College of Montclair State University

**Abstract:** Formative assessment refers to assessment practices in which students have frequent, low-stakes opportunities to practice concepts, receive feedback, and identify misconceptions while learning is still in progress. Learning management systems (LMSs) include tools that can help instructors incorporate these types of assessments into their courses.

In our first-year Precalculus course at Bloomfield College of Montclair State University, we use bi-weekly online multiple-choice quizzes to provide regular opportunities for practice and feedback. To discourage answer sharing and allow questions to be reused across semesters, these assessments rely on large question banks. However, developing and maintaining large pools of well-designed questions can be time-consuming for instructors.

This presentation will share experiences using ChatGPT to generate and refine quiz question banks and create formatted files for LMS upload. Although examples will focus on Canvas, the approach can be applied using other AI tools and learning management systems.

Participants will leave with practical ideas for using AI to efficiently develop and maintain question banks that support formative assessment in their courses.

## **2:20–2:38: Integrating Productive Struggle Through Open-ended Tasks in Calculus II.**

Dr. Kara Teehan, Monmouth University

**Abstract:** Productive struggle is effortful learning that empowers students to attempt solving new math problems using logic and prior knowledge before being explicitly taught a procedure. This presentation will highlight the researcher's work in Calculus II using open-ended tasks designed to promote engagement and learning through productive struggle. Students can learn to value struggle as an expected and natural

part of learning (Carter 2008, p. 136). The researcher will share the results of the study, examples of tasks, and discuss how to design tasks and implement this teaching tactic in the undergraduate math classroom.

## **2:40–2:58: Retention Without Remediation: Bridging Learning Science and Gateway Mathematics.**

Dr. Sheila Tabanli, Rutgers University

**Abstract:** High DFW rates in gateway mathematics courses remain a persistent barrier to student retention. This talk presents outcomes from Math 125, a learner-centered interdisciplinary course designed to address the novice–expert perception gap and strengthen students’ self-regulated learning. Implementation was associated with measurable reductions in DFW rates in concurrent gateway courses.

The instructional design underlying this work is formalized through the RR2PG (Reducing Research To Practice Gap) instructional framework, which translates principles from cognitive science into

structured teaching practices without altering curricular rigor.

Participants will leave with evidence-based instructional strategies for improving gateway mathematics outcomes.

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# Contributed Paper Sessions

**Organizer:** Kathy Turrisi, Centenary University

## **Session 2:** ASB - Room 226

**Moderator:** Chengwen Wang, Essex County College & Rutgers University

### **2:00–2:18: Supplemental Instruction for Developmental Mathematics Courses.**

Dr. Katarzyna Kowal, Ramapo College of New Jersey

### **2:20–2:38: Navigating Knot Space in Protein Folding: Topological Constraints and Feasible Knot Types.**

Dr. Vakul Raghavan, Rutgers University

Dr. Chengwen Wang, Essex County College & Rutgers University

### **2:40–2:58: Accessibility Tools in LaTeX.**

Dr. Sarah Cotter Blanset, New Jersey Institute of Technology

Abstracts are on the next page.

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## **Session 2: ASB - Room 226**

### **2:00–2:18: Supplemental Instruction for Developmental Mathematics Courses.**

Dr. Katarzyna Kowal, Ramapo College of New Jersey

**Abstract:** In this paper the author describes her work of implementing and supervising with up to date progress of Supplemental Instruction program for Developmental Mathematics Courses she developed at her institution. Moreover, this paper will discuss some mathematics placement practices at her institution. The practices involve implementing effective equitable placement for all students entering the college: they encompass developmental math courses, general education math courses, and entry level courses for mathematics and science majors. The author will also describe her work of being an Implementation Leader for Title III Federal Funding Grant for improving education for low income and first-generation students at Ramapo College. The implementation involves placing Supplemental Instruction (SI) leaders into Developmental Mathematics Courses. Due to SAT test being no longer

required for admission to this college or to some other colleges and due to a few other factors, a large drop is observed in student preparation level in mathematics, and a rise in the number of students in developmental mathematics courses is observed. Evaluation strategies will be discussed.

## **2:20–2:38: Navigating Knot Space in Protein Folding: Topological Constraints and Feasible Knot Types.**

Dr. Vakul Raghavan, Rutgers University

Dr. Chengwen Wang, Essex County College & Rutgers University

**Abstract:** The classification of knot types realizable under the geometric constraints of polypeptide chain embeddings remains largely unexplored, despite the well-developed tabulation of prime knots by classical invariants and the growing interest in designing proteins with prescribed topological types. We introduce a knot-theoretic feasibility framework that stratifies tabulated prime knots through a constrained

realizability function  $R$ , a variant of the ropelength functional incorporating backbone curvature bounds. This framework is compiled for all prime knot types up to eight crossings and records auxiliary invariants including Seifert genus, braid index, and bridge number.

We show that the boundary separating biologically realized and unrealized knot types aligns with level sets of  $R$  under a worm-like chain model. Moreover, the empirical frequency distribution of realized knot types decays with genus, consistent with a topological complexity penalty on geometrically accessible embeddings.

Using braid representations, we further construct a directed transition graph  $G$  on the set of knot types whose edges correspond to coherent band surgeries weighted by braid group distance. We show that the subgraph induced by realized knot types concentrates among knots of braid index three, thereby recovering the empirically observed dominance of twist knots as a consequence of the combinatorial structure of  $G$  rather than a purely geometric coincidence.

Finally, we identify a family of knot types that satisfy all realizability constraints imposed by  $R$  yet remain absent from currently known protein structures, and we derive necessary conditions on knot writhe that partition knot space into distinct functional design strata. These results establish a principled topological framework for navigating knot space under geometric and mechanical constraints and raise precise questions concerning the structure of  $G$  and the geometry of the realizability boundary, with direct implications for computational protein design.

## **2:40–2:58: Accessibility Tools in LaTeX.**

Dr. Sarah Cotter Blanset, New Jersey Institute of Technology

**Abstract:** Inspired by increasing public awareness of accessibility concerns, and further motivated by new regulations under the Americans with Disabilities Act, a number of projects have developed tools designed to improve the accessibility of documents produced

by LaTeX. As a result, a variety of excellent resources are now available, some updated as recently as this month. We give an overview of the challenges of integrating accessibility into PDFs; look at tools published in recent years by groups such as the LaTeX Tagging Project; and discuss ongoing experimental work such as the ltx-talk class.

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# Lunch Discussion Tables

**Organizer:** Kathy Turrisi, Centenary University

1. **Using mathematics to help communities and promote justice.** Led by Victor Piercey, Ferris State University.
2. **Is your school using corequisites for gateway math courses? How have they been working (or not)? What is your biggest challenge with them?** Led by Kathleen Almy, CEO & Founder, Almy Education.
3. **What is your favorite theorem or topic to teach?** Led by Kariane Calta, Vassar College.
4. **Modernizing Teaching & Learning Across Grades 11 – 14.** Led by Ralph Pantozzi, NCTM Representative to the MAA
5. **Using AI for Teaching and Learning.** Led by Sheila Tabanli, Rutgers University, and Kathy Turrisi, Centenary University.
6. **VITAL (Visiting, Adjunct, TA, Adjunct, and Lecturer) Faculty Concerns,** led by Grace Cook, Bloomfield College of Montclair State University.

We look forward to a set of lively and interesting discussions!

## Dinner Honoring the Invited Speakers

Following the meeting, we will honor the invited speakers at dinner at [Mason Jar](#), 219 Ramapo Valley Road, Mahwah, NJ 07430.

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# Book Sales at the Meeting

There will be display copies of MAA books at the meeting which may be ordered from the AMS at a 25% discount using a coupon code available at the meeting. You can order them by calling (800) 321-4267 or via the [website](#). The discount will be available until May 31, 2026.

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# Acknowledgments

We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to Ramapo College for hosting the Spring Meeting. We truly appreciate the time and effort you devoted to its planning and execution. A special thank you to the Ramapo Mathematics Convening Group for their invaluable contributions in organizing and supporting the meeting. Additionally, we would like to express our appreciation to Dean Bennie Chan and Provost Michael Middleton for their generous support in making this meeting possible. A special thanks goes to the Ramapo Foundation for their help in supporting the meeting. Lastly, we want to extend our heartfelt thanks to all the students who assisted with the meeting events. Their enthusiasm and hard work played a vital role in the event's success, and we are grateful for their contributions.

We thank Princeton University Press for their generous donations for silent auction and door prizes.

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# Future Meetings

**MathFest.** The 2026 MathFest will be in Boston, MA, August 5-8, 2026.

**MATYCNJ.** Please visit the [MATYCNJ website](#) for information about the Fall 2026 MATYCNJ conference at Brookdale Community College on Friday, October 31.

**AMATYC.** The 2026 AMATYC National Conference will be in Philadelphia, PA, November 19-22, 2026.

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# **Call for Contributed Papers, Topics for Special Sessions, and Lunch Table Discussion Topics for the Fall 2026 MAA-NJ Meeting**

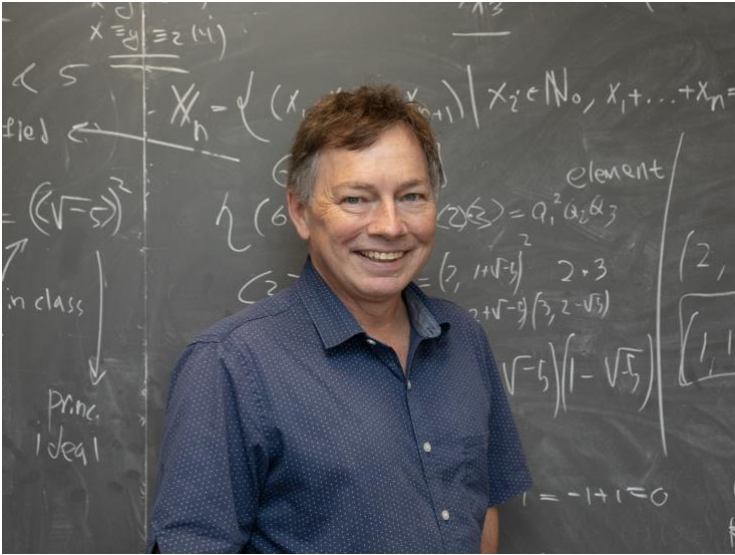
We are seeking abstracts for review for the General Contributed Paper Sessions. MAA Contributed Papers may focus on any aspect of mathematics. Examples include expository mathematics, connections within mathematics or between mathematics and other disciplines, the undergraduate mathematics curriculum, diversity, equity, inclusion in mathematics, social justice in the classroom, teaching, data analysis, or mathematical pedagogy. The CPS committee seeks and encourages proposals that will contribute toward a well-balanced and scholarly program that represents the MAA's mission. Please send the title and abstract to Kathy Turrisi, Executive Board Member and Chair of the CPS Committee, at: [Kathy.Turrisi@centenaryuniversity.edu](mailto:Kathy.Turrisi@centenaryuniversity.edu).

MAA members interested in proposing a Topic for a Special Session or are interested in leading a Lunch Table Discussion should submit their proposals to Kathy Turrisi at [Kathy.Turrisi@centenaryuniversity.edu](mailto:Kathy.Turrisi@centenaryuniversity.edu).

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# New Jersey Section's Carol Crawford Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching

## Dr. Thomas Hagedorn



The New Jersey Section of the Mathematical Association of America (MAA) is pleased to present its 2026 Carol Crawford Award for Excellence in

Undergraduate Teaching to Dr. Thomas Hagedorn of The College of New Jersey.

Dr. Thomas Hagedorn has been a cornerstone of the Department of Mathematics and Statistics at The College of New Jersey for nearly thirty years. A master educator, Dr. Hagedorn excels both in the traditional classroom and as a dedicated mentor for undergraduate research. His commitment to excellence has been recognized with the Departmental Teacher of the Year Award, reflecting his long-standing history of

integrating innovative pedagogies into his curriculum and his success with undergraduate students.

Peers and students alike point to Dr. Hagedorn's ability to create a student-centered environment where lectures are collaborative dialogues that build both confidence and enthusiasm. His mentorship extends far beyond the classroom; students commend him for guiding them toward internships and prestigious post-graduate programs. He is known for his generosity of time and a sincere care for his students' growth as an instructor, mentor, and academic advisor. By fostering a welcoming, collaborative culture, he challenges students to persevere through complex mathematical obstacles, often leading them to co-publish their findings and pursue advanced degrees.

Dr. Hagedorn has long been a champion of pedagogical innovation, consistently integrating new methodologies into his courses and sharing those insights with the broader academic community. An early adopter of digital learning tools, he served as a co-PI on a grant to implement WebWork in TCNJ's linear algebra courses. He has also utilized Perusall to

enhance critical reading and writing skills in his upper-level classes. Currently, as the Mathematics and Statistics Department's AI Faculty Partner Representative, he leads efforts to identify productive ways of incorporating artificial intelligence into instruction. Dr. Hagedorn's commitment to excellence is further evidenced by his history of presenting his classroom findings at departmental, institutional, and national levels.

Dr. Hagedorn's tenure at TCNJ is marked by his extensive work with undergraduate research, providing students with experiences that are often transformative. Under his guidance, many students have completed senior theses, earning departmental honors and setting the stage for further graduate study in mathematics. Beyond his own classroom, Dr. Hagedorn has disseminated his expertise to the broader mathematical community, notably serving as an editor for special issues of *PRIMUS* focused on undergraduate research mentorship. His leadership further extends to the national level, where he has organized sessions for MAA meetings and delivered

several invited presentations on the art of mentoring student researchers.

In addition to the efforts that Dr. Hagedorn has made to include new pedagogies into mathematics classes, he has also partnered with faculty in other departments to collaborate on interdisciplinary initiatives to benefit students. He has collaborated with a TCNJ Computer Science colleague to secure an NSF-funded grant that provided scholarships and ongoing mentorship for students who were math and computer science majors who were from disadvantaged backgrounds. This program resulted in significantly higher retention and graduation rates than students who were not in the program.

Dr. Thomas Hagedorn has made significant contributions to decades of students at The College of New Jersey, and also to the profession at large.

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Dr. Karen Clark, Associate Professor in the Department of Mathematics and Statistics at The College of New Jersey, nominated Dr. Hagedorn for this Excellence in Teaching Award.

## Response from Dr. Hagedorn

I am incredibly honored and humbled to receive the Carol Crawford Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching. I would like to thank my mathematics teachers who started me on my mathematics journey. My high school mathematics teacher Larry Devanney, a lifetime MAA member, was a skilled educator who encouraged me in mathematics and introduced me to the *American Mathematical Monthly*. My undergraduate and dissertation advisors, Nicholas Katz and Benedict Gross, further served as models of excellence in the classroom. I have sought to imbue my teaching with the same love of mathematics to inspire the next generation.

Teaching can be viewed as an individual activity, with the teacher a solo performer in the classroom. Instead, it is a highly collaborative endeavor and I have only been able to share the music of mathematics with the help of many others. I want to express my deepest gratitude to my colleagues in the Department of Mathematics and Statistics at The

College of New Jersey for their support. I have been fortunate to work in an environment that fosters and values high quality mathematics teaching. I would also like to thank my colleagues in the Mathematics Association of America and the MAA New Jersey section for their focus on quality undergraduate mathematics education. These meetings have been a source of countless teaching ideas that I have adopted.

Finally, I want to thank the wonderful students I have been privileged to educate. The joy of learning and curiosity they bring to the classroom are the reasons I have found such fulfillment in the classroom over the past thirty years.

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# Social Media Information

Check us out!

Email: [maanjsocialmedia@gmail.com](mailto:maanjsocialmedia@gmail.com)

Instagram: [instagram.com/maanewjersey](https://www.instagram.com/maanewjersey)

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# MAA-NJ Committees

**Service Award Committee:** Grace Cook, Bloomfield College of Montclair State University; Tom Hagedorn (chair), The College of New Jersey; Jonathan Weisbrod (ex-officio), Rowan College at Burlington County.

**Teaching Award Committee:** Aihua Li, Montclair State University; Dawn Nelson, Saint Peter's University; Reva Narasimhan, Kean University; Jonathan Weisbrod (ex-officio), Rowan College at Burlington County.

**Contributed Paper Committee:** Grace Cook, Bloomfield College of Montclair State University; Kathy Turrisi (chair), Centenary University.

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# **GSUMC Committees**

**Organizing Committee:** Lee Collins (co-director), Atlantic Cape Community College; Joseph Coyle (co-director), Monmouth University; Katarzyna Kowal (competition co-director); Ramapo College of NJ.

## **New Jersey Undergraduate Mathematics Competition**

**Organizing Committee:** Katarzyna Kowal (co-director), Ramapo College of NJ; Marek Slaby (co-director), Fairleigh Dickinson University at Florham Campus; Ken McMurdy, Ramapo College of NJ; David Molnar, Rutgers University at New Brunswick; Ken Monks, University of Scranton; Tom Leong, University of Scranton.

## **New Jersey Undergraduate Mathematics Competition**

**Proctors and Graders:** Tim Self, Caldwell U.; Patrick Sime, Caldwell U.; Brooke Orosz, Essex CC.; Emanuel Palsu-Andriescu, Monmouth U.; Jennifer Hoxworth, Rowen College SJ.; Toufik Khyat, Rider U.; Ruowen Liu, Rider U.; Robert Freeman, Rowan U.; Robert McCloskey, Rowan U.; Rade Robert Musulin, Rowan U.; Corey Stone, Rutgers U.; Ioanna Mavrea, Rutgers U.

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