

## PNW MAA Spring Meeting: Linfield University

*2026 PNW Sectional MAA Meeting  
 Linfield University  
 April 17-18, 2026*

Abstract submission information and registration are available on the conference webpage. The registration deadline is April 3 (a late fee will be assessed after this date). More information is available at the conference webpage: <https://mphitchman.com/pnwmaa2026>

This meeting's plenary speakers are:



**Steve Butler**

**Steve Butler**  
 Steve Butler is an award-winning teacher. He has given talks at numerous venues ranging from the AMS-MAA address at Mathfest 2021 to the Iowa State Fair and almost everything in between Steve particularly enjoys working with young researchers. He regularly participates in the Iowa State REU and maintains a listing of REU sites for students ([mathreuprgrams.org](http://mathreuprgrams.org)); he is also a lead organizer of the Graduate Research Workshop in Combinatorics (GRWC). Steve's mathematics was heavily influenced by his mentors, Fan Chung and Ron Graham. His mathematical research includes spectral graph theory, shuffling, juggling, origami, tiling, Apollonian circle packings, parking functions, and more. In 2015, he became the 512th mathematician to have an Erdős number of 1. Steve Butler has



**Lisa Marano**

been at Iowa State University since 2011 where he is a Morrill Professor and the Barbara J Janson Professor of Mathematics. More information about him can be found online ([stevebutler.org](http://stevebutler.org)).

Dr. Butler will give two talks: *Every Game I'm Shufflin', Shufflin'*. Shuffling is a well-known aspect of gameplay to help make the decks "sufficiently random" to make the game interesting. Shuffling is also a source of mathematical exploration where shuffles are thought of as permutations of the cards. In this talk, we will take some tools of mathematics, modular arithmetic, and binary numbers, and show how we can apply these to shuffling, and in particular, some simple-to-learn mathematically-based card tricks, which will be performed live. Along the way, we will also learn why we



**Pamela E. Harris**

should never work with jokers.

*Juggling Counts.* Mathematics is a language which can help us describe and explore patterns. One source of patterns that mathematicians have been exploring comes from juggling (the tossing of objects, usually balls or clubs). In this talk we will look at multiple ways to describe juggling patterns that allow us to find new juggling patterns, and to count how many possible patterns exist. We can compare answers to various problems to give a combinatorial proof of Worptitzky's identity. We will also look at a few juggling-based problems that mathematics has not yet succeeded in answering.

**Pamela E. Harris**  
 Dr. Pamela E. Harris is a Mexican-American mathematician and serves as Associate Professor of Mathemat-

ics at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. She received her BS from Marquette University and MS and Ph.D. in mathematics from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Dr. Pamela E. Harris's research is in algebraic combinatorics and she is the author of over 70 peer-reviewed research articles in internationally recognized journals. She is a Fellow of the American Mathematical Society and of the Association for Women in Mathematics. Dr. Harris is also an award-winning mathematical educator, receiving the 2022 MAA's Haimo Award for Excellence in Mathematical Education, the 2020 MAA Northwest Section Award for Distinguished Teaching, the 2019 MAA Alder Award for Distinguished Teaching by a Beginning Mathematics Faculty Member, and the 2019 Council on Undergraduate Research Mathematics and Computer Sciences Division Early Career Faculty Mentor Award. She is the President and co-founder of Lathisms: Latinxs and Hispanics in the Mathematical Sciences, cohosts the podcast *Mathematically Uncensored*, and is a coauthor of the books *Asked And Answered: Dialogues On Advocating For Students of Color in Mathematics, Practices, and Policies: Advocating for Students of Color in Mathematics* and *Read and Rectify: Advocacy Stories from Student of Color in Mathematics*.

Dr. Harris will speak on: *Multiplex juggling sequences and Kostant's partition function*. Multiplex juggling sequences are generalizations of juggling sequences (describing throws of balls at discrete heights) that specify an initial and terminal configuration of balls and allow for multiple balls at any particular discrete height. Kostant's partition function is a vector function that counts the number of ways one can express a vector as a nonnegative integer linear combination of a fixed set of vectors. What do these two families of combinatorial objects have in common? Attend this talk to find out!

#### Lisa Marano

Lisa Marano is a Professor of Mathematics at West Chester University of Pennsylvania whose work spans teaching, leadership, and curriculum design in the mathematical sciences. She founded the university's Actuarial Science and Mathematical Finance programs and previously served as Associate Dean and Interim Dean of the College of the Sciences and Mathematics. A long-time leader in the Mathematical Association of America, she served for eight years on its Board of Directors as Chair of the Council on Sections. Her scholarly interests intersect probability, statistics, and mathematical finance,

and she is currently focused on improving student learning through Standards-Based Grading in discrete mathematics.

Dr. Marano's talk will be: *Mathematics and Community Engagement*. First-year seminars, learning communities, service-learning courses, undergraduate research projects, and capstone experiences are among a list of high-impact educational practices compiled by George Kuh (2008), which measurably influence students' success in areas such as student engagement and retention. It is recommended that all college students participate in at least two of these HIPs to deepen their approaches to learning, as well as to increase the transference of knowledge (Gonyea, Kinzie, Kuh, & Laird, 2008). In Mathematics, if a student participates in service-learning, it is typically in the form of tutoring, in conjunction with a school or with an after-school program, or modeling work or statistical analysis for non-profits. Today, I will discuss a number of service-learning projects developed for mathematics courses that do not involve these traditional opportunities. I will also describe my current research project which has a potential impact on my community and yours.

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### Please consider volunteering a few hours to support the PNW section:

1. **Be a Special Sessions Organizer** If you would like to propose a special session, please email the current program organizer, Brandy Wiegers (bwiegers@collegeofidaho.edu) by February 16 with the title, a short abstract, and prospective speakers (if known). *If you think you might want to run a session but aren't sure because you haven't tried it before, please still reach out to Brandy; she can help you find someone to co-organize.*
2. **Serve as a contributed paper or student paper organizer** For this, you don't have to recruit speakers; you just need to help organize the session into a sensible order and keep time on the day of the session.
3. **Join the PNW Program Committee.** This could be a multi-year commitment, working with local organizers to help decide on the final session program, including recruiting colleagues and friends to organize special sessions.

Right now, acting in our local spheres is one of the ways we can contribute to the greater world. Please join us at the section meeting to make small impacts and help keep the world a brighter place. If this inspires you, consider organizing a session on mathematical joy or a session on how to advocate for education locally and nationally.

More details coming soon. We look forward to seeing you in Oregon in 2026! Please join us for math, community, and joy!

## In This Issue...

- Spring Meeting: Linfield University
- NExT news
- Editor's Note
- PIMUC
- The Great Puzzle Hunt

## NExT News: Spring Meeting

by MEGAN BUZBY

The Section NExT portion of our section meeting is Friday, April 17, 2026. The deadline for submission of abstracts for presentations, panels, or discussions is Sunday, March 1. Please send submissions to Brandy Wieggers (bwieggers@collegeofidaho.edu). Details about the program will be forthcoming on the Section NExT listserv. Looking forward to seeing you in Oregon!

## A note from the editor

by KATE KEARNEY

If you have any major changes in your department or University, I'd love to highlight them in an upcoming "University Spotlight" column. Anyone from your department achieve a major accomplishment recently? Let's celebrate them! Please email me (kearney@gonzaga.edu) with any contributions or other section news. We're still hunting for the next newsletter editor. Please be in touch if you're interested.

### 2024 Pacific Inland Mathematics Undergraduate Conference

Saturday, May 2, 2026  
Whitman College

*Undergraduates throughout the Pacific Inland Region and beyond are invited to participate in the ninth annual Pacific Inland Mathematics Undergraduate Conference. PiMUC provides an annual undergraduate only opportunity to present research in mathematics, statistics, or math education. The Whitman College is hosting PiMUC 2026 on Saturday, May 2, 2026. Talks and posters accepted. Registration is open on the conference website.*

<https://sites.google.com/view/pimuc/home>

**Note: A previous edition of the newsletter incorrectly showed the date of the conference as April 2. The correct date is May 2, 2026.**



# WWU GREAT PUZZLE HUNT X

**FREE!** Food, Music, Prizes, and More  
April 18, 2026 - Red Square

Registration required by April 16

## GREATPUZZLEHUNT.COM

For disability accommodations please email [info@greatpuzzlehunt.com](mailto:info@greatpuzzlehunt.com) Western is an equal opportunity institution

## The Great Puzzle Hunt

by MILLIE JOHNSON

The 10th Annual WWU Great Puzzle Hunt will be held Saturday, April 18, 2026, 9:30 AM – 4:30 PM (PT)



The WWU Great Puzzle Hunt is a fun, full-day, team puzzle-solving event that is OPEN TO ALL, anywhere in the world! The event is hybrid with options to play in-person or virtually. Teams of up to 6 work virtually or travel on foot to various locations on WWU campus solving a total of four hour-long puzzles, gathering clues along the way to solve one final meta puzzle. The event is FREE, but donations are gratefully accepted, and registration is required. Registration

ends 11:59 pm April 16, 2026 or earlier if capacity is reached. Be a part of the fun!

You can also visit our website: <https://www.greatpuzzlehunt.com/>

There is a change, actually *an addition* this year.

- The **WWU Great Puzzle Hunt (GPH)** will run as always, available in-person and virtually, FREE, FUN, OPEN TO ANYONE, ANYWHERE.
- BUT this year, I have added an in-person ONLY puzzling event, the **WWU GPH Treasure Hunt**, FREE, FUN, OPEN TO IN-PERSON PLAYERS.

The Treasure Hunt is not timed and people can participate at their leisure.

We have adjusted registration and, in fact the entire website, so that people can choose either or both events.

- Link for all about the Great Puzzle Hunt: <https://www.greatpuzzlehunt.com/about-gph>
- Link for all about the Treasure Hunt: <https://www.greatpuzzlehunt.com/about-th>
- OR the usual url will take you to home page and direct you to either event: <https://www.greatpuzzlehunt.com/>

Both events are outdoors, free, and open to all. **The big differences:**

- Puzzle Hunt is one day, hybrid, food, music, prizes, costumes, fun crowd, 4 hour long puzzles and meta puzzle, requiring a versatile team to solve the diverse set of hands-on puzzles.
- Treasure Hunt is at your leisure, over a 3-day period, untimed, in-person, about 1.5-mile walking about WWU campus highlighting the sculpture collection, using compass and map orienteering, collecting clues that ultimately lead to a treasure chest hidden on campus.

# Ultimate Puzzler's Weekend!

## GreatPuzzleHunt.com



**Join WWU's 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Brain-Stretching Outdoor Puzzle Race!**

**Saturday, April 18, 2026**

**FREE! FUN!**  
**HYBRID EVENT**

**Food, Music, Prizes & More!**  
**COSTUMES ENCOURAGED.**  
Play on campus or from anywhere  
in the world.



**Follow Clues to Hidden Treasure on WWU Campus!**

**April 19, 20, 2026, but join the Great Puzzle Hunt for early access April 18.**

**FREE! FUN! Outdoor Adventure!**  
**IN-PERSON EVENT**

**Registered players gain access to the Official Treasure Hunt Map and Secret Starting Location.**



**Open to all! Registration Required**  
Awesome Gear available to support these events:  
<https://www.greatpuzzlehunt.com/gear>

For disability accommodations please email [info@greatpuzzlehunt.com](mailto:info@greatpuzzlehunt.com) Western is an equal opportunity institution.