

FOCUS

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Recommends Doubling Support

NRC Committee Finds State of Mathematical Research "Alarming"

In a dramatic presentation last January at the Joint Mathematics Meetings in Louisville, Kentucky, Edward E. David, Jr., former Science Advisor to the President of the United States and President of Exxon Research and Engineering, expressed astonishment and alarm at the state of affairs in mathematics research in the United States today and recommended doubling Federal support for mathematical research over the next few years.

For the past two-and-one-half years, the ad hoc Committee on Resources for the Mathematical Sciences of the National Research Council (NRC), of which David is Chairman, has been taking a close look at support levels for mathematics and has found "distortions and omissions in mathematics support of such a magnitude that it was difficult . . . to understand how they came about." The committee sees this situation "all the more astonishing given today's earnest, if somewhat quixotic, calls for 're-industrialization,' more technological innovation, and better education in science and mathematics."

In the view of the committee, the present state of affairs is a consequence of a flawed public perception that "mathematics voyages in such splendid isolation that society can afford not to pay passage in times of budget stringency" and of inadequate appreciation of the benefits that mathematics confers—"too few people recognize that the 'high technology' that is so celebrated today is essentially *mathematical* technology."

David issued an eloquent plea for unified action by the mathematical community to restore the correct perception of mathematics as an essential contributor to science and technology, stating, "It is not outsiders, but mathematicians themselves who are the key to renewing the vitality of mathematical research."

The Committee found that "while no field associated with science and engineering has advanced further, no major field has lost as large a fraction of its federal research support in the last decade and a half." The most recent figures indicate that while the level of support for other sciences *(continued on page 2)*

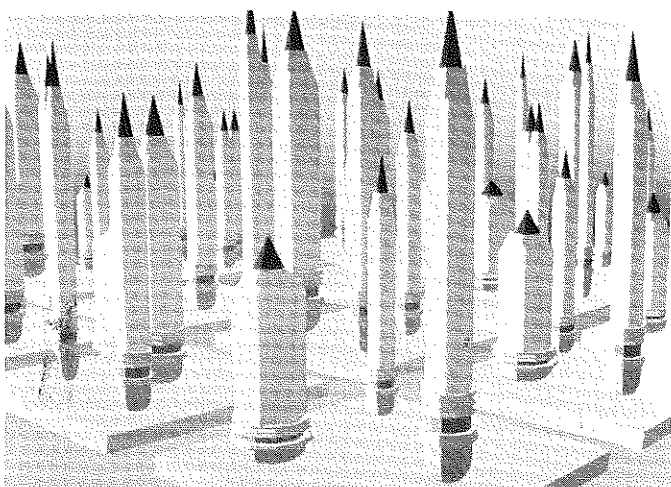
A Message from the Chairman of the Newsletter Editorial Committee

FOCUS is now three years old. These three years have been exciting ones for those of us who have served on the Newsletter Editorial Committee, as we have worked together to help make *FOCUS* an effective communication tool for the Association.

We feel that it is now time to review the many decisions that we have made over the past three years and to see if there are ways in which *FOCUS* could be made to serve the needs of the MAA community even better.

Won't you please take a few minutes to write to me with your suggestions and comments? I will share your thoughts with the committee and with the *FOCUS* Editor. I look forward to hearing from you.

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"Pencil City," a computer-generated graphic created by Cranston-Csuri Productions. Cranston-Csuri computer-generated graphics will be featured in the thirty half-hour television programs being produced by VisUMAP (Visual Mathematics Applications Project). See "VisUMAP Update" on page 6 of this issue.