

The Undergraduate Poster Session

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It has been just over ten years since my first student presented a poster at the Joint Mathematics Meetings. I remember him dressed in his West Point cadet uniform standing in a small room with thirteen other poster presenters. Over the past ten years, the growth of the session has been tremendous. This year was no exception. We had over 220 posters and close to 300 presenters from institutions all over the country. As the poster session grows, the need for professional mathematicians to judge the session also increases. Every year, Project NeXT fellows and judges from previous sessions continue to fill this need by volunteering their time and providing meaningful feedback to students on their work. Without their support, the session would not be the unique experience it has come to be.

The size of the session has required more structure and organization to make sure that the day runs smoothly. There were over 200 advisors and almost 250 mathematicians who served as judges. I wish to mention the specific advisors who volunteered to register students, monitor the ballrooms and enter scores this year: many thanks to Chad Westphal, Thierry Zell, Frank Morgan, Joyati Debnath, Narayan Debnath, Michele Intermont, Lester Caudill, Roger Thelwell, Kristin Camenga, Lisa Clark, and Sarah Day. Many other advisors and judges simply signed up on the day of the session after hearing from colleagues that help was needed. As in the past, Michael O'Leary from Towson State University



Musician Rob Schneider prepares his poster.

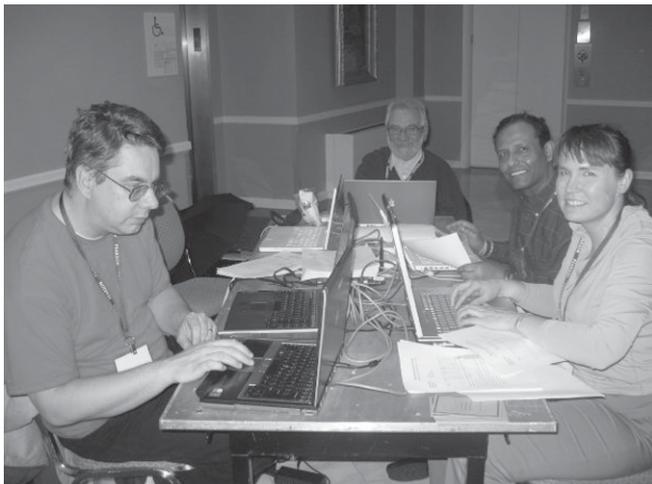


Madiha Aslam (Rockhurst University) explains her work to a judge.

developed an electronic scheme to enter scores quickly, Mario Martelli from Claremont Graduate University entered session scores, and Suzanne Lenhart from University of Tennessee, Knoxville organized the prizes for the session. I want to express a special thank you to our own Montclair State University students, Stewart Hegevoid, Andrew Huth, Christina Gratale and Leslie Chetyan, who spent the entire time at the session running numerous errands and helping students with poster setup. The support of our community to make the session a success is well appreciated.

This year's session had a unique element in that the students were able to meet electronically before the actual day of the session to organize social events and offer each other advice. Students helped each other prepare posters by providing L^AT_EX and design tips. Luis Suazo from University of Central Arkansas had been a poster session prize winner for three consecutive years and provided his perspective to future student participants in a short article which can be found on Facebook's "MAA Undergraduate Poster Session" group. Several students worked out in the morning by participating in running groups, some got together for a musical jam session, and a crowd even went swing dancing the evening before the session. At lunch the day after the event, the students remarked how the poster session really brought them together as a community.

There were 33 prize winners this year. The prize winning posters covered a wide breadth of topics, including mathematical pedagogy, voting theory, discrete math, mathematical biology, and number theory. The prizewinning poster



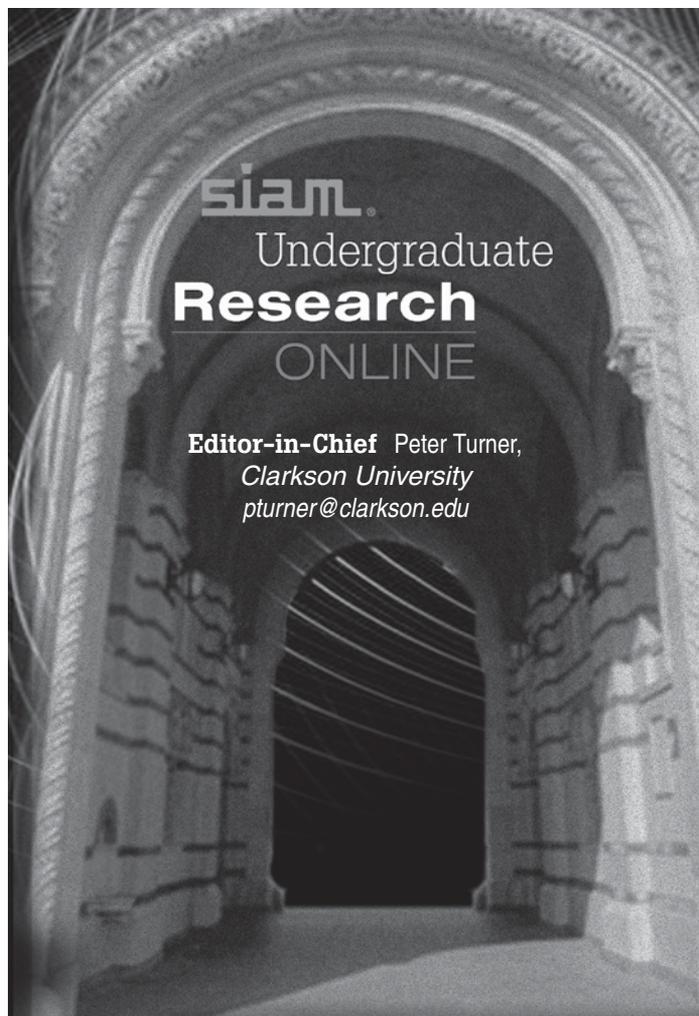
The judges enter scores into an interconnected database.



The MAA 2009 Undergraduate Poster Session Prize Winners.

presenters came from home institutions that ranged from small liberal art colleges to tier one research institutions. A list of prize winners can be found at <http://www.maa.org/students/undergrad/pastwinners.html>. The

poster session is the experience it is because of all of those involved; students, advisors, judges, volunteers, and the poster audience. I hope to see everyone back again at JMM 2010 in San Francisco! 🍷



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