

Mary P. Dolciani Award

The Mary P. Dolciani Award recognizes a pure or applied mathematician who is making a distinguished contribution to the mathematical education of K–16 students in the United States or Canada. The award is named for Mary P. Dolciani Halloran (1923–1985), a gifted mathematician, educator, and author, who devoted her life to developing excellence in mathematics education. A leading author in the field of mathematical textbooks at the college and secondary school levels, she published under her professional name Dr. Mary P. Dolciani. This award is made possible by a gift from the Mary P. Dolciani Halloran Foundation.

John Ewing

Math for America

John Ewing graduated with a BS in mathematics from St. Lawrence University in 1966 and a MS and PhD from Brown University in 1971. During a distinguished 50-year career, he has made important contributions to mathematics and mathematics education, first as a professor of mathematics at Indiana University, then as Executive Director of the American Mathematical Society, and currently as President of Math for America (now MfA).

John joined the department of mathematics at Indiana University as an assistant professor after a two-year postdoctoral appointment as a John Wesley Young Research Instructor at Dartmouth College. During a 22-year career at Indiana, he was promoted to professor and served two terms as chair of the department of mathematics. During this part of his career, he published 38 research papers with an emphasis in algebraic topology.

John served as Editor-in-Chief of the *Mathematical Intelligencer* (1980–1986) and Editor-in-Chief of the *American Mathematical Monthly* (1992–1996) and was a member of several other editorial boards. He was the first MAA George Pólya Lecturer in 1991–92 and later served for three years as chair of the George Pólya Lecture Committee. John also was the co-author of one book and editor/co-editor for three others. During this period, John received the MAA Lester R. Ford Award for Expository Writing, the MAA George Pólya Prize for Expository Writing and an honorary doctorate from St. Lawrence University. More recently, in 2013–14 he received the Horace Mann medal from Brown University.

From 1995 to 2008, John served as Executive Director of the AMS. He is widely credited for his leadership and his expertise as a publisher. While Executive Director of the AMS, John edited the publication, *Towards Excellence: Leading A Doctoral Mathematics Department in the 21st Century*. During this period, John authored a number of professional articles including “Mathematics: A Century Ago – A Century from Now” which was published in the Notices of the AMS in 1996 and “Paul Halmos: In his Own Words” which appeared in the *Notices* in 2007.

In 2008, John was named the President of Math for America (now MfA), a position he still holds. Under his leadership, MfA has grown from a fellowship program that supported slightly fewer than 200 mathematics teachers to a one-of-a-kind professional organization that supports over 1000 math and science teachers in New York City. MfA is now a fellowship-driven community where teachers are supported, celebrated and treated as professionals. Each semester, MfA teachers are able to choose from over 400 professional development workshops, most led by other MfA teachers, to enhance their knowledge of mathematics, science and teaching.

The success of MfA has led to other programs modeled on MfA in Los Angeles, Berkeley, Boston, San Diego and Washington, DC. In 2013, New York State launched the New York State Master Teacher Program in partnership with MfA. Currently the New York State program supports another 800 math and science teachers who share a passion for their own STEM learning. A New Jersey STEM Innovation

Fellows program is now in its second year and the 2020 Democratic platform advocates for the creation of a “national science corps of outstanding STEM teachers serving in their schools and communities.”

Going beyond his leadership of MfA, John truly believes that teachers are professionals and that we can best advance K–12 math and science education by advocating for and supporting our best math and science teachers, just as we honor our best mathematicians, instead of focusing attention on the poorest teachers. He rejects the idea that teachers need to be “fixed” and has used his standing as a mathematician and educational leader to passionately advocate for teachers as practitioners of their disciplines and experts of their craft.

To publicly advocate for teachers, John has tirelessly and eloquently focused his writing in recent years on communicating with citizens broadly through the popular media. Between 2015 and 2017 he was a regular contributor to the *Huffington Post* and more recently has regularly published in *Forbes*. For example, in 2017 his article “We are Absolutely Not Losing at Everything and Teachers are to Thank” appeared in *Education Week Teacher* and “Where are the teachers?” appeared in *Forbes* in 2020.

Over the past 12 years, John has had a tremendous impact on math teachers and math teaching. As one teacher wrote, “His leadership of Math for America alone is a tremendous accomplishment . . . (but) it’s his tireless and passionate advocacy in public and academic arenas that is perhaps most meaningful to us as teachers.”

For his career as a research mathematician, a writer and editor, a leader in the mathematics profession, and most importantly for his impact on mathematics teachers and teaching, John Ewing is an outstanding selection for the 2021 Mary P. Dolciani Award.

Response

I am honored and genuinely humbled to receive this award. Previous recipients had spectacular achievements in mathematics education. I was merely lucky. Lucky to have learned calculus from a brilliant and exquisitely talented high school teacher, Mr. Latino. He changed my life. He influenced every class I taught for more than a quarter century, and so changed the lives of many thousands more. When I went to the AMS, I was lucky to have colleagues— Bus Jaco, Sam Rankin, and especially Jim Lewis—who had already made education respectable in a research-focused society. I learned from them. I came to understand that vibrant education is essential to vibrant mathematics. And by very great fortune, I moved to MfA near the end of my career, where I discovered that schools have many, many Mr. Latinos—mathematically savvy teachers who are expert at their craft and dedicated to their students. They deserve our admiration, our gratitude, and our respect. They change lives every day, mine among them.

I was extraordinarily lucky in one more way . . . when I met my wife Janice more than 60 years ago. It turns out she actually likes being around mathematicians (go figure). For the past six decades we’ve been partners in each of our lives. Whatever I’ve accomplished, we’ve accomplished together.

Biographical Sketch

John Ewing has served as president of Math for America (MfA) since 2009. Before joining MfA, he was Executive Director of the American Mathematical Society (1995–2008) and previously professor of mathematics at Indiana University (1973–1995). Ewing received his BS from St. Lawrence University and PhD from Brown University. In addition to his research, he has been active in mathematical exposition, both as writer and editor, and has written extensively on scholarly publishing and more recently on education. Among other awards, he is a Fellow of both the AAAS and the AMS, was awarded an honorary degree from St. Lawrence University, received the MAA’s Gung-Hu Award for distinguished public service, and was presented the 2013–14 Horace Mann medal from Brown University. He and his wife Janice live in Yonkers, just north of New York City.