2007 Annual Report to the Council
Committee on the Profession

The Committee on the Profession (CoProf) held its annual meeting on September 8-9, 2007, at the AMS Headquarters in Providence, RI. Highlights of that meeting are provided below. In addition, CoProf sponsored a panel at the Joint Mathematics Meetings in New Orleans, on January 4, 2007, entitled **Katrina and Its Aftermath: Institutional Survival in New Orleans Since the Storm.** The panel, moderated by CoProf chair Jim Hoste, included **Kenneth W. Holladay**, University of New Orleans, **Morris Kalka**, Tulane University, **Vlajko L. Kocic**, Xavier University of Louisiana, and **Katarzyna Saxton**, Loyola University New Orleans. The panelists discussed the impact of the hurricane on New Orleans mathematics departments, described their current situation, and presented plans for the future.

Committee on the Profession
Highlights of Meeting
September 8-9, 2007
AMS Headquarters, Providence, RI

The meeting began with a number of information items and reports. The committee was informed about what had occurred concerning several items from the previous year's agenda: the AMS Fellows program, the Young Scholars program, the AMS Public Service Award and the AMS statement on the employment of young mathematicians. Committee members then heard reports on some activities of the AMS: Membership, the annual Department Chairs Workshop held at the Joint Mathematics Meetings, the new Mathematics Research Communities program, the Working Group on Preparation for Technical Careers, and the Task Force on the First Year College Mathematics Experience. The remainder of the meeting involved items on which CoProf took action, the results of which are described below.

CoProf endorsed several motions and statements that will be broughtt to Council for action.

- **Job advertisement policy**: Some advertisements (from institutions outside the United States) that have been submitted for posting on the EIMS web site do not comply with the legal requirements for job ads in the United States. Additionally, most of the ads posted on the EIMS site do not conform to the AMS policy, approved by Council in 1971 and stated in the EIMS booklet and on the web site. A CoProf subcommittee has written a new AMS policy for job advertisements, which is included as a separate agenda item. Note that the website mentioned in the policy has not yet been constructed. It will be maintained by AMS staff members, and periodically reviewed by CoProf.

- **Committee charges**: At its spring 2007 meeting, some members of the Committee on Committees remarked that the charges to several committee charges were rather unclear and might be out of date. For the AMS Library Committee charge, CoProf

will appoint a subcommittee to revise the charge. CoProf decided not to revise the charge of the AMS-ASA-IMS-MAA-SIAM Data Committee. CoProf rephrased the charge of the Young Scholars Awards Committee, and will bring that to the Council. The revised charge is :

> "The AMS and its members provide funds to support mathematics programs for talented students at the high school level. The committee considers proposals from such programs and decides which to fund. In present form, it should award grants in the range of $7,500-$15,000 per grant, of which at least 50% of each grant is to be earmarked for tuition scholarships for students."

- **Nominations for Exemplary Program Prize**: The Selection Committee for the Exemplary Program Prize is concerned about a dramatic decline in the number of nominations received. Since institution of the award, there were fourteen nominations in 2005, seven in 2006 and two in 2007. The Secretary recommended, and CoProf approved, the following statement: "Nominations received by September 15 will be considered for the award presented the following spring; the non-winning nominations will automatically be reconsidered, without further updating, for the award to be presented over the next two years."

In addition, CoProf took action on several issues related to the committee's charge.

- **2007 Culture Statement**: The Committee on the Profession has been making a series of statements that highlight ways in which the traditions of mathematics differ from those in other disciplines, especially other sciences and engineering. This year, CoProf discussed a statement concerning postdoctoral positions. The final version, included at the end of this report, was approved by email vote following the CoProf meeting, and will be posted at the AMS web site, at http://www.ams.org/employment/CultureStatements.html. The committee has chosen levels of grant funding as a topic for next year's statement.

- **Programs that Make a Difference**: In January 2005, Council endorsed CoProf's recommendation to recognize two programs each year that: (1) aim to bring more persons from underrepresented minority backgrounds into some portion of the pipeline beginning at the undergraduate level and leading to an advanced degree in mathematics, or retain them in the pipeline; (2) have achieved documentable success in doing so; and (3) are replicable models. The two programs that were chosen by the subcommittee and endorsed by the CoProf will be featured in an upcoming issue of the *Notices* and will be presented on a web site linked to the AMS home page. Please note that although the directors of the programs have been notified, the news will be embargoed until the *Notices* issue has been published. Bob Daverman will issue a call for nominations by March 1, in order to generate candidates for next year's recognition.

- **Advisory statement concerning interviewing at the JMM**: Recently, MAA officers received an email from an MAA member, expressing concern that interviews for employment are sometimes held in hotel rooms or suites at the winter Joint Mathematics Meetings. This practice is now less common than it used to be since the introduction of the unscheduled interview tables in the Employment Center, but we know that it continues to happen. Although we are aware that this can cause uneasiness or anxiety for applicants (especially female applicants), we do not specifically caution either side about this practice. CoProf has appointed a subcommittee to work on a statement that the Joint Meetings Committee could use in JMM materials, alerting employers to practices that might put applicants in difficult or uncomfortable situations.

- **Department Chairs Workshop**: CoProf recommended that the chairs of four-year colleges receive specific invitations to the Department Chair's Workshop at the 2009 JMM, and that one of the organizers be from a four-year college.

- **Annual review**: This year, CoProf's annual review, conducted by a subcommittee, was on the topic of the Society's activities related to recognitions and awards. In addition, the committee as a whole discussed the finances of the prizes and awards. CoProf made several recommendations:

  1) That the AMS should endeavor to adjust the amount of its major research prizes to match (approximately) inflation, bearing in mind the constraints of the prize endowments. This should be done through periodic review by the Board of Trustees and the Council every five years.

  2) That travel money be included with the Morgan prize.

  3) That the recognition of Programs That Make a Difference and the Exemplary Program Award be included in the Prize Ceremony at the Joint Mathematics Meetings.

The Committee selected the Society's activities for professional ethics as the topic of the next year's annual review. This topic was reviewed last in 2002. CoProf will not have a panel at the upcoming Joint Mathematics Meeting in 2008.

The Committee on the Profession will hold its next meeting on September 13-14, 2008 at the Chicago O'Hare Hilton.

Ellen J. Maycock
Associate Executive Director
November 27, 2007

2007 Statement

The Culture of Research and Scholarship in Mathematics: Postdoctoral Positions

In Mathematics, as in other sciences, postdoctoral work is an important part of the training of young researchers, and is an essential part of the rich research life of many departments. A "postdoc" is a recent doctoral graduate, in a temporary position, whose main purpose is to engage in research training under the supervision of a faculty member, who in turn is expected to give individual attention to furthering the career of the postdoc. However, in contrast to most of the natural sciences, teaching plays a fundamental role in both the training and the funding of most postdocs in the mathematical sciences.

Since postdoctoral appointments in mathematics are not usually tied to either lab work or large projects, and are often supported through teaching rather than external grants, much of the funding for postdocs comes from individual universities. For example, in 2005 the AMS survey reported a total of 890 postdocs in the mathematical sciences (including statistics). However, only 31 of these were supported full-time through the prestigious NSF postdoctoral fellows program and another 339 received partial NSF support. This aspect of postdoctoral funding may partially explain the observation that postdocs in the mathematical sciences have both greater independence and greater responsibilities and are typically paid more than postdocs in other sciences, often at the same rate as a beginning tenure-track assistant professsor.

In the biological sciences, chemistry, and physics, the vast majority of new Ph.D.s who take academic appointments have a postdoctoral position. By contrast, in the mathematical sciences approximately one-half of new Ph.D.s who take academic appointments have a postdoc. In general, postdoctoral appointments in mathematics carry prestige; at the same time, the added responsibilities in terms of teaching mean that postdocs often cannot devote 100% of their effort to their research.

Postdocs bring a youthful vitality and fresh perspective that enhance the quality of research in mathematical sciences departments. While the tradition and nature of postdoctoral training in mathematics are well known within the discipline, the fact that most mathematical sciences postdocs require a significant teaching component is sometimes not well understood by other scholars whose research and training traditions differ.