

# The Almagest

The bi-weekly newsletter of the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science. Your trusted source for news.

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Alma College  
Alma, MI 48801

## Math Colloquium on TUESDAY, Feb 11<sup>th</sup>

This talk will introduce students and faculty to bell ringing—English change ringing, to be more precise—as an application of abstract algebra. **Dr. Michelle Intermont**, Professor of Mathematics at Kalamazoo College, will be our guest speaker for this talk. We will discuss the mathematics behind change ringing, and we'll hear some, too. She will also describe a problem faced by those who compose bell methods for which algebra has the solution. Please make time in your schedule to hear this talk.



### “The Sound of Algebra”

Presenter: **Dr. Michelle Intermont**

Date: **Tuesday, February 11<sup>th</sup>**

Time: 4:00

Place: SAC 113

*Refreshments at 3:50*

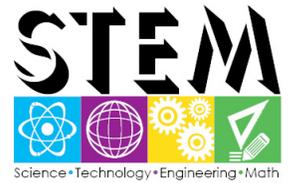
## Seniors—Remember the MFAT

**February 11:** MFAT test – 1<sup>st</sup> opportunity.

**February 12:** MFAT test – 2<sup>nd</sup> opportunity.

## From STEM to STEM

Science, Technology, Engineering and Math, better known as STEM, has gained considerable attention in the past decade as schools grapple with how to attract more students to these fields and better prepare STEM students for careers. There is, however, little consensus on just how this can be accomplished, but a project from the University of Houston College of Education Urban Talent Research Institute suggests a method that supports what liberal arts colleges and students have done all along: incorporating art.



What does exploring art have to do with hard sciences like chemistry and biology or logical fields such as mathematics? University of Houston College of Education Ph.D. student Jay Young argues that allowing STEM students to add art and become STEM students fosters a skill often overlooked in traditional education: creativity.

Young argues that integrating science and art helps STEM students to look at the world in new ways and find more creative solutions to problems. Teaching students to be creative shapes students who can do more than simply apply rules and formulas the way they were taught, but who can find new solutions to familiar problems and use familiar tools to solve new problems: skills that will be invaluable in life beyond the classroom.

Young's research continues to support the benefits of blending the seemingly unrelated fields of math and art, but, as liberal arts students, surely we can already attest to that.

To read the full article visit: <http://bit.ly/1av8WGg>

*Katie Krauss*

## Want a Letter of Recommendation?

At this time of the year many students ask professors to write letters of recommendation. If you're planning to do this, here are a few helpful suggestions.

1. Ask professors who know you well academically. They will be most able to identify your strengths and weaknesses, to compare your abilities to those of your peers, and to defend your natural ability despite that low grade you may have received in a course.
2. Make an appointment with each professor to discuss your application. Simply leaving a note or sending an e-mail is a bit impolite and somewhat risky—they may not be read.
3. Provide your professors with a short and informal résumé. This may include a summary of your grades, goals, honors or awards, math related activities (*e.g.* R.E.U.'s), and any relevant work experience.
4. Give your professors ample time to write the letter. I like to have at least *two weeks* to complete the task. And don't forget to provide them the name and address of the person to whom the letter is being sent.

## New from the Math Club

The Math Club meets **EVERY WEDNESDAY at 9:15 pm** in the Wright Hall lobby. At their next meeting new officers will be elected. The nominations so far are:

President: **Jacob Blazejewski**

Vice President: **Krystle Reiss**

Treasurer: **Hannah Austin**

Secretary: **Christine Wiersma**

Student Congress Rep: **Shelly Scribner**

Lots of other decisions will be made at the next meeting.

*Everyone is invited!*

## Solution to Previous Problem

A set of consecutive positive integers beginning with 1 is written on a blackboard. One

number is erased. The average (arithmetic mean) of the remaining numbers is  $35\frac{7}{17}$ . What number was erased?

$$1, 2, 3, 4, 5, \dots, x-1, x, x+1, \dots, n$$

There were **NO SOLUTIONS** submitted for this problem. So, I'll pose it again, and I'll give a **\$4.00** reward to the first student who submits a correct *written* solution to the problem.

## Puzzle of the Bi-week

Here's an interesting problem I found in last week's *Parade* magazine.

### Which of the following does not belong?

- (a) large green square
- (b) large red circle
- (c) large green circle
- (d) small green circle

Submit a written justification for your answer.

A prize of **\$2.00** will be awarded to the **FIRST** student who submits a correct solution to Prof. Sipka.

Student assistant:	Katie Krauss
Faculty advisor:	Tim Sipka
Distribution:	Deb Smith

*If you would like to submit an announcement or a short article, please send it via e-mail to Tim Sipka (sipka@alma.edu).*