

# 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

## Upcoming Mathematics Colloquia

Have you already figured out what you're going to do with your math major after you leave Alma College? If not, then you may find it helpful to attend our next math colloquium on **Tuesday, January 26<sup>th</sup>**. **Dr. Peiru Wu**, the Director of the Industrial Mathematics program at Michigan State, will give a presentation on M.S.U.'s unique master's program, a program that produces generalized and versatile problem solvers.

### "The Industrial Mathematics Masters Program at Michigan State"

Presenter: Dr. Peiru Wu

Date: **Tuesday, January 26<sup>th</sup>**

Time: 4:00

Place: SAC 216

*Refreshments at 3:50.*

What is a Mersenne prime, and how do I find one? Those questions, along with several others, will be answered by **Dr. Andrew Thall**, Assistant Professor of Mathematics and Computer Science, in a talk he'll be giving on **Tuesday, February 9<sup>th</sup>**.

### "How To Win \$100,000 By Being a Geek"

Presenter: Dr. Andrew Thall

Date: **Tuesday, February 9<sup>th</sup>**

Time: 4:00

Place: SAC 216

*Refreshments at 3:50.*

## Juniors: Another Reminder about REU's

Have you ever contemplated doing graduate study in mathematics or computer science? Would you like to "test the water" and see if grad school might be the right thing for you? If you're a *junior* wrestling with these questions, then please consider applying for a summer REU (Research Experience for Undergraduates). This is a great opportunity to spend 7 or 8 weeks of the summer working on some interesting project in mathematics or computer science. And to make it even more attractive, you'll receive a stipend of approximately **\$2500** in addition to free room and board. There are numerous REU's dealing with a wide variety of topics such as mathematical biology, knot theory, statistical genetics, cryptography, machine learning, actuarial science, combinatorics, and graph theory. For more information, check out the following web site: [www.ams.org/employment/reu.html](http://www.ams.org/employment/reu.html)

## A Reminder to Senior Math Majors

Senior presentations are just around the corner with the first one coming on **Tuesday, March 16<sup>th</sup>**. Before the presentations begin, seniors are required to submit a topic for their presentation and then submit a paper on that topic. The due dates for those events are:

### Friday, January 29<sup>th</sup>:

Submit your topic to Ms. Smith, SAC 224.

### Friday, March 12<sup>th</sup>:

Submit your paper to Ms. Smith, SAC 224.

## Letters 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 discourteous and dangerous.
3. Give your professors ample time to write the letter. I like to have at least two weeks to complete the task.
4. 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.

## Math Humor

Evaluate the following integral:

$$\int 3(\text{ice})^2 d(\text{ice})$$

## Apt Anagrams

A DECIMAL POINT = I'M A DOT IN PLACE.

ELEVEN PLUS TWO = TWELVE PLUS ONE.

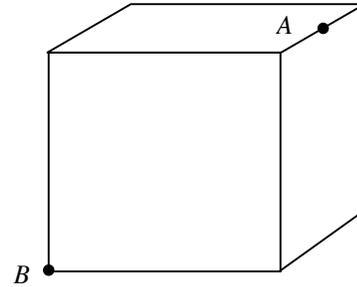
DORMITORY = DIRTY ROOM.

## Solution to the last puzzle

Three students submitted correct solutions to the last puzzle—the one in which we were asked to identify the number that appeared twice on the cube. The correct answer, 3, was submitted by **Rob Danbert, Jonathan Morley, and Amy Baranowski.**

## Puzzle of the Bi-Week

A bug is sitting at the midpoint *A* of the top edge of a cube and wants to walk to the lower left corner point *B* of the front face. If each edge of the cube is 4 inches long, what's the *length* of the *shortest* path the bug can take?



The first student to submit a correct solution to Professor Sipka will receive a small (and I mean very small) prize.

Student assistant: Matt Mansell

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 Matt Mansell (11mgmans) or Tim Sipka (sipka).*