

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

The Almagest Begins 3rd Year

Welcome to the new school year and another volume of our department's bi-weekly newsletter—*The Almagest*. This tiny tabloid will attempt to keep you informed of many events that should be of interest to members of the mathematics and computer science community. We hope you'll look here for information and announcements for social events, visiting speakers, internships, grad schools, job opportunities, summer research opportunities, conferences, math competitions, programming contests, interesting websites, perplexing problems and puzzles, and a variety of other newsworthy items. Occasionally we'll simply include something just because we find it humorous. Become a regular reader.

Fall Colloquia

Please make room in your schedule this term for our fall colloquia. We've scheduled a series of six interesting talks this term, five of which occur on Monday afternoons. The first talk will be on Monday, **September 20th**. Plan on attending!

Welcome Back REU Participants

Three Alma College students spent part of their summer vacations at various universities doing research in mathematics and physics. **Ryan Spitler** and **Garrett Rodriguez** spent seven weeks at Michigan State University participating in a research program in experimental mathematics, and **Matt Mansell** traveled to Ohio Wesleyan University to study mathematical physics. Take time to ask them about their experiences; I'm sure they'd enjoy talking to you.

First Colloquium of the year

The Four Color Theorem is a simple and believable statement: at most four colors are needed to color any map drawn in the plane or on a sphere so that no two regions sharing a boundary receive the same color. It might be surprising to find out that mathematicians searched for a proof of this statement for over a century until finally finding one in 1976. In this talk, we'll consider the "proof" given by Alfred Kempe, a proof published in 1879 and thought to be correct until an error was found eleven years later. You're invited to look carefully at Kempe's proof and see if you can do what many 19th century mathematicians could not do—find the flaw.

"Are you smarter than a 19th century mathematician?"

Presenter: **Professor Tim Sipka**

Date: Monday, September 20th

Time: 3:40

Place: SAC 216

Refreshments at 3:30.

Taco Party

All computer science and mathematics students are invited to the annual taco party on **Tuesday, September 21st** at Dr. Thall's house.



This is always a great time of fabulous food, perplexing puzzles, and deep dialogue. So, please make room in your schedule to attend this event. The party starts at 5:30 p.m., but feel free to come a bit later. Dr. Thall's house is a short walk from campus at **516 Fairlane Dr.** If you need directions, see Mrs. Smith in SAC 224.

Thinking about graduate school?

If you're a senior who's thinking about going to graduate school, then you should make plans to take the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) during the fall term. You'll need to take the *general test* as well as the *subject test* in the area you plan to study. The next date for the subject area tests is **November 13th**. You must register for this test by October 8th. For more information, please visit the GRE website at: www.ets.org/gre/.

Study Mathematics Abroad

Would you like to add some adventure to your study of mathematics? Are you longing for an off campus experience in some exotic place in the world? Then consider spending next fall in Hungary.

The Budapest Semester in Mathematics is a wonderful opportunity to study math with eminent Hungarian scholar-teachers. You'll attend school near the center of historic Budapest, and all classes will be taught in English. For more information visit www.stolaf.edu/depts/math/budapest.

Math Humor

An infinite crowd of mathematicians enters a pub. The first one orders a pint, the second one a half pint, the third one a quarter pint ... "I understand," says the bartender and pours two pints.

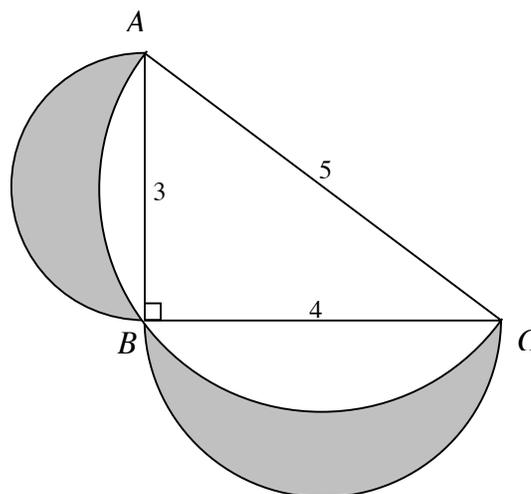
Get Involved!

As you start a new academic year, take advantage of the many experiences available to you:

- ✓ Attend colloquia
- ✓ Attend social events (e.g., taco party)
- ✓ Be a member of the math team
- ✓ Be a member of the programming team
- ✓ Be a grader, tutor, or lab assistant
- ✓ Go to a conference for undergraduates
- ✓ Go to a national conference
- ✓ Apply for a summer research experience for undergraduates
- ✓ Present a poster or give a talk
- ✓ Join a national organization (e.g., PME, ACM)
- ✓ Study mathematics in Budapest

Puzzle of the Bi-week

Triangle ABC is a 3-4-5 right triangle with semicircles drawn on the diameters AB , BC , and AC . Determine the *sum* of the *areas* of the two shaded crescents (a.k.a. lunes).



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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).