

Sinclair Mathnet

October 2003

Volume 10, Issue 1

FROM THE CHAIR



There is something mysterious going on.

It seems that last Fall Quarter we faced the usual host of troublesome problems during the first week. There was, of course, the normal allotment of classes of 33 students in rooms that held 25. There were the several instructors finishing their class at $x:50$ o'clock in Building One and then starting their next class at $(x+1):00$ o'clock a quarter of a mile away in Building Nine. There were the to-be-pitied instructors who arrived at their assigned locations only to find another class assigned to the same location at the same time. There were the many students and instructors who spent the first half hour of their class looking for a parking space. There were hordes of students trying to register late, herds of students trying to switch sections, and heaps of students trying to follow the trail of signs to locate their classrooms that had been moved two or three times.

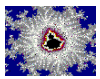
This Fall Quarter we have 3,604 students registered at this writing as compared to 3,444 last Fall. We have more than 100 additional FTE's beyond last year, the greatest increase of any department in the college. We are teaching 142 sections this quarter (four more than last Fall). It seems like things should be *more* hectic than last year. But they seem to be *less* hectic. Of course there are still problems. There was the student who followed the instructions in the letter he received to park in the lot at the old Franciscan Hospital, only to be threatened by the parking attendant with police action if he didn't leave. There were the students who enrolled in the wrong class because they believed the bulletin when it said that Math 116-04 was a graphing calculator section and 116-03 was not, when it should have said just the opposite. There was all of the room assignment manipulating that had to occur before

the quarter began to get everybody into a suitable room, which resulted in eleven classes meeting in rooms different than what appears in the bulletin.

But, in spite of the problems that remain I believe that things are definitely better this quarter. I have heard little about parking problems compared to other quarters. The bulletin mistake on graphing calculator sections pales by comparison to the entire page that was misprinted in the summer bulletin, not to mention the wholesale misprinting of the prerequisites in the mathematics course descriptions in last Fall's catalog. The eleven room changes constitutes only an 8% error rate as compared to the 12% error rate we had last Fall. A Humanities instructor told me with enthusiasm about the fact that his students seem much calmer and ready to study this quarter and that there aren't as many disruptions with students coming late and switching sections. Our secretary tells me she feels the Office has been much quieter than it usually is at the beginning of the quarter. And there seems to be a noticeable reduction in the number of overbooked and double booked classrooms, instructors sprinting across campus to get to their back-to-back classes, late registrants, late adds, and lost students.

One of the best things we have done as a college in recent memory was to decide that we would complete registration before the first day of class.

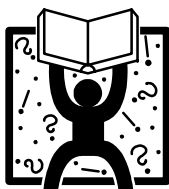
And to what do we owe this happy new state of affairs? A couple things come to mind. A serious effort to increase the number of classrooms and to better utilize them has certainly helped. This was a much-needed effort and I am grateful to those who have pursued it. Continuation of this effort will hopefully eliminate the intense prequarter manipulation of room assignments and its attendant difficulties as well as allow for ongoing enrollment growth. *(Continued on page 4)*



Reminders

- A ten-minute break is scheduled into classes meeting more than two hours. There is no break time scheduled into classes that meet for less than two hours.
- All tests should be approximately one hour in length, even in classes meeting for more than an hour.
- Students taking a test late or early should be given a test different from the one given to the rest of the class.
- Give students a proper review for chapter exams and final exams. This could include summarizing major concepts, theorems and definitions and doing example problems. It should not include a sample test that is too similar to the actual test. Instructors should write their own tests rather than using the ones in the instructor's manual.
- Please remember to turn in a copy of your test as well as the grade distribution to your course coordinator.
- Be sure that unregistered students are not permitted to attend your class.

DEPARTMENT COLLOQUIUM



We will have a Department Colloquium on Friday, October 24, 2003, at 2:30 in Room 1001. All members of our full- and part-time faculty are welcome, as well as students who are interested in mathematics.

1. Dr. Ann Farrell, Associate Professor of Mathematics, Wright State University
“Recent Changes in Grade 7-12 Mathematics Education in Ohio”
2. Dr. Harvey Chew, Professor of Mathematics, Sinclair Community College
“Classical and Modern Theorems about Prime Numbers”

Refreshments will be served.

Part-time Faculty Recognition

A number of part-time faculty members were recognized at the Part-time Faculty Recognition Ceremony held Wednesday, September 10. These faculty members have provided a valuable and excellent service to the Department and to Sinclair students during their tenure at Sinclair and we would like to thank them for their willingness to invest of themselves at Sinclair and for their contributions to the Department and College. The part-time members who were recognized and their years of service are as follows:

Five Year Award

Sandra Berning
Linda Gray
Julie Stuve

Ten Year Award

David Cooper

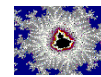
Twenty Year Award

Vincent Miller

Twenty-five Year Award

Lester Steinlage

Congratulations!



Teaching Tip

Have you ever wondered whether to collect homework from your students, and if so, how to do so in a way that is most beneficial to students and not too time-consuming to look over and grade? Notwithstanding differing philosophies on the necessity or importance of collecting homework, we should agree that students are faced with many conflicting priorities, and usually the most urgent or pressing course requirements and work/life responsibilities are given the greatest attention. Consequently, when assigned homework is expected to be completed by students but not collected in some fashion, students often become remiss, admittedly to their own detriment, about regularly completing the assigned problems. This is especially true in lower level courses where the importance of completing homework problems for success in the course is not as appreciated or realized. For instructors who desire to more greatly motivate their students to complete assigned problems, a way to accomplish this is to collect the problems, or some of the problems, on a regular basis.

The following is a recent strategy I have found successful in my twice-a-week MAT 102 Intermediate Algebra classes. On the first day I assign them the homework exercises for each section on a homework/class schedule handout. This generally includes most of the odd-numbered problems for each section. I convey and emphasize my expectation to them that they are to be working these assigned problems as we work through the sections, but mention that each student will likely vary in how many of these he/she needs to complete to master the material. I also underscore the importance of completing homework as it relates to successfully completing the course. However, these assigned problems are not the problems I actually collect from students.

Each class period at the break I put on the board about a dozen carefully chosen

problems from the exercises in the sections covered that day. These are a mixture of even and odd problems. The problems are to be carefully worked by students and submitted at the start of the next class period. They submit them on the instructor's desk as they come to class. I only actually grade two to four of the problems depending on the number of problems collected. I do grade these two to four problems carefully, and each problem is generally worth one point. However, one point on the problem set is earned just by submitting the problems on time, which is the start of class on the day they are due. So each set of problems will be valued from three to five points with one point just being awarded for turning the homework in on time. If a student does not turn the homework in on time, he/she may turn it in by the start of the next class period, but they lose one point for not having it turned in on time.

The advantages I have found in collecting homework in this way is that I know the students are at least doing the exercises I collect, which have been carefully chosen so that students get at least a modest coverage of the various types and difficulty of problems. Further, since I generally only grade two to four problems, it is not that time-consuming to grade, which for a class is usually about thirty to forty minutes. Since this is twice a week, then it is only about one and a half hours each week. In addition, I return the homework to the students the following period, so they are getting more regular feedback on how they are doing on the material.

Determining whether and how to collect homework for a class is not an easy decision to make since it does involve committing some time each week for this effort, but I believe the benefits for students of collecting problems in some fashion does make a difference for a number of them in the long run.



(continued from page 1) But I think one of the best things we have done as a college in recent memory was to decide that we would complete registration before the first day of classes. This was a step long over due and it seems to be having the positive effects Vice President Dunn has talked about. The vast majority of students are now ready to begin studying on the first day of class. They are registered, they have their books, their baby sitters, their rides and their tuition taken care of. They can think about school. Their classes are not incessantly interrupted by late-arriving students who have to be caught up. Their instructors can concentrate on being teachers instead of managers of revolving-door classrooms and continually morphing rosters.

For years the college resisted, in fact I think we never seriously considered the thought of getting all the students registered before starting classes. How could our students possibly get themselves

registered before the beginning of the quarter we thought? We'd be turning students away, we would lose enrollment, we wouldn't be serving the needs of the community. But, as it turns out, our students are able to register on time when they have to, we haven't lost enrollment and maybe the community has a greater need for us to teach people to get things done on time than to train them to do things late.

I think possibly there is a lesson to be learned here for us as teachers. Give people a high, but reasonable, expectation and a few won't reach it. But the vast majority will. Give them a lower expectation and the same few won't reach it but, unfortunately, the vast majority will. In other words, lowering our expected standard to catch the ones who don't reach it is a slippery slope that always leaves a few coming up short and trains many to perform below their potential.

Al Giambrone ■

Part-Time Math Faculty!

Do you feel like a nomad, wandering the halls, dragging all your worldly possessions with you? The Math Lab (room 1315) has created a small space just for you. We have a computer station, printer, locking cabinet drawer, and a small table with chair reserved for your use. When building 16 is too far away, and you just need a little space to sit down and take care of some class chores, come hang your hat in the Math Lab! (Monday-Thursday 8 am to 8 pm, Friday 8 am to 4 pm, Saturday 9 am to 3 pm)

Harvey's Joke Corner

Three S.C.C. students shared a hotel room and were charged \$30 (\$10 each). The clerk realized later that they were due a \$5 discount and asked the bellhop to return the \$5. The bellhop reasoned that 5 is not divisible by 3, so he kept a \$2 tip for himself and returned \$1 to each student. Therefore, each student paid \$9 for the room and the bellman had \$2. $3 \times 9 + 2 = 29$. What happened to the other dollar?



A very small college team lost an AMATYC Math Competition to our S.C.C. all-stars. They said they were "outnumbered."