Two Programs Honored for Attracting Underrepresented Groups to Mathematics

The American Mathematical Society grants the "Mathematics Programs that Make a Difference" award to two programs that do an outstanding job attracting underrepresented minority students to the mathematical sciences. The 2010 award was given to the Department of Computational and Applied Mathematics (CAAM), Rice University, and the Summer Program in Quantitative Sciences, Harvard School of Public Health.

According to the American Mathematical Society, CAAM has granted 34 PhDs to underrepresented minority students and 43 PhDs to females in the past 25 years. The interdisciplinary nature of the department's twelve-member faculty has assisted in making CAAM attractive to groups traditionally underrepresented in mathematics. Richard Tapia, the recipient of many mentoring awards as well as the 2004 AMS Award for Distinguished Public Service to Mathematics, leads CAAM's efforts in guiding underrepresented minority students towards degrees in mathematics. During his more than 30 years at Rice, Tapia has mentored dozens of underrepresented groups in mathematics, many of whom continue on to successful careers in academia and industry. Additionally, Liliana Borcea and Beatrice Riviere are two female professors among the CAAM faculty who serve as role models for female students interested in a mathematics career.

The Summer Program in Quantitative Sciences at the Harvard School of Public Health aims to attract students from underrepresented minority groups who are talented in mathematics. Between 6 and 12 minority students participate each year in the four-week program, which includes an introductory course in biostatistics and statistical computing and a lecture series on epidemiology, health and social behavior, environmental health and current research in biostatistics. According to the American Mathematical Society, 87 (66%) of the 131 program participants known to have received undergraduate degrees have earned graduate degrees or have continued on to pursue a graduate degree. At least 67 (51%) have pursued graduate studies related to health or medical school and 40 (31%) have pursued graduate training in statistics or biostatistics.

According to Susan Loepp of Williams College and chair of the selection committee, "Both of the programs recognized this year have had remarkable success in attracting and successfully mentoring underrepresented minorities. The individual guidance and personal connections each program provides for their students have proved to be a key part of their extraordinary track records."

On the Web: http://www.ams.org/news/ams-news-releases/ams-news-releases

To view all of the latest *STEM Trends* articles, click here.

To visit the CPST webpage, click here.