



Pittsburg State University
College of Arts and Sciences

Special points of interest:

- Alumnus wins national teaching award
- The number of math majors is currently 50 undergraduate and 6 graduate students.
- Due to the pandemic, many annual events had to be cancelled for the 2020-2021 academic year, including HS Math Honor Day, Math Relays, and the Math Honor Banquet

Inside this issue:

Henke wins award	2
Career Webinar	2
PSU at KME National	3
Math on Facebook	4
Dept loses two	4
Pre-Images	5
Masks & Distancing	7
Colloquium Series	8
KSMAA Meeting	9
Faculty Updates	10
Alumni Highlight	15

News from the Chair

What a year! As I wrote last year, we were all in the process of trying to plan for a fall of unknowns. Our goal was to have as much face-to-face interactions as safely possible. We adopted a variety of instructional modalities to accomplish this goal. In a few of our smaller classes we were fortunate to be able to deliver these courses face-to-face with social distancing and masking. In our larger classes we adapted to online, hybrid, and hyflex delivery modes. Hyflex instruction was the mode of choice for many of our courses. In this model, students were broken in cohort groups which met on alternate days to maintain adequate distancing. The lectures were made available through Zoom for the students who were not able to attend in person. All of these changes required significant upgrades to the technology available in our classrooms and the university worked diligently to provide the necessary equipment. Thanks to the untiring work of instructors across campus and the flexibility of our students we were able to have a successful year and accomplish our academic objectives.

As you might imagine, travel for students and faculty was



restricted. This did not impede our ability to meet virtually. Last spring, as the pandemic was unfolding, there was not time to switch meetings and conferences to an online mode and most, if not all, had to be cancelled. That is not the case for this past academic year. With adequate time, preparation, and technology, faculty and students were able to participate in a variety of professional development experiences. Highlighted in this newsletter were our participation in a virtual KME National Convention hosted by the Missouri Beta Chapter at University of Central Missouri and the virtual KSMAA section meeting hosted by Bethany College in Lindsborg.

One benefit of the pandemic has been our increased comfort with the use of technology to support interactions at a distance. Our increased ability to work virtually has provided opportunities that we never before dreamed possible. We were able to continue

our departmental colloquium series and Dr. Jayawardhana organized a successful Virtual Career Panel for high school students featuring several of our alumni who joined the panel from across the United States.

As always, there continue to be staffing changes in the department. Dr. Coltharp has entered a phased retirement agreement and I have once again been tasked with serving as the acting chair of the chair of the Physics department. Dr. Winters is being relieved of his duties in Physics so he can take on the role of acting chair of the Biology department.

We continue to be saddened by the loss of our retired faculty and friends of the department. In this past year we have lost Dr. Forrest Coltharp and Mr. J. Bryan Sperry. Both of these individuals dedicated their lives to Pittsburg State University and the department, and they will be missed by all.

As we share the news from within the department, we would love to hear from you as well. If you have any news about happenings in your life, please feel free to let us know so we can pass the word on to others. We would welcome a visit from you if you ever happen to be back in Pittsburg.

GET INVOLVED

Want to help students attend conferences? Contact Dr. Tim Flood (tflood@pittstate.edu) for information about supporting student travel.

Join us on Facebook:
Pitt State (Kansas)
Math Alumni

Grad receives Presidential Award



(from the Fall 2020 Pitt State Magazine, pittstate.edu/magazine, used with permission)

Luke Henke (BSEd '08, MS '10), was chosen by a panel of distinguished mathematicians, scientists, and educators for the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching. He began his career in the Pittsburg Community Schools District. For the past seven years he's taught algebra, calculus, college algebra and trigonometry in the Columbus, Kansas, School District. He has integrated the use of 3D printing, drones, electronics, and robots, and spearheaded the first concurrent coursework in his district. He has facilitated math training for the Kansas Department of Education, and his work as a fellow for the Association of American Educators has resulted in multiple publications as an advocate for education. Henke said the award is an unexpected honor, and gave credit to his mentors, colleagues, administrators, families, and students, who help him hone his craft every day. "Without them to serve, none of this is possible," he said. "The Presidential Award is a milestone for my career that will refill my tank many times over as I continue to empower the next generation." In addition to being recognized nationally, he received a \$10,000 award and a certificate signed by President Donald Trump.

Alumni Participate in Virtual Career Panel for HS Students

As part of the department's recruitment efforts, a virtual career panel was held on May 13. The panel was organized by Dr. Ananda Jayawardhana and moderated by Dr. Jay and Dr. Cynthia Huffman. Students and teachers from area schools participated. Panelists included 4 Gorillas: Dr. Margaret Mohr-Schroeder (Professor & Associate Dean, Dept of STEM Education, University of Kentucky), Dr. Adam Pintar (Statistical Design, Analysis, and Modeling Group, National Institute of Standards and Technology), Stephanie Lowry (Learning & Development Manager, Provisur Technologies), Jennifer Fowler-Jabben (Senior Manager - Property Casualty Actuarial Transformation, Ernst & Young). The panelists shared how they use mathematics in their careers, the benefits of a mathematics degree, and answered questions from those attending. It can be viewed on [YouTube](#).



KME Virtual National Convention

Kappa Mu Epsilon, national mathematics honor society, held its first ever virtual National Convention on April 17 - 18, 2021. The tradition of PSU's KME Chapter Kansas Alpha being represented at KME conventions continued with Dr. Tim Flood, Dr. Cynthia Huffman, Dr. Harold Thomas, and Dr. Scott Thuong attending.

The PSU chapter of KME, which is called Kansas Alpha, has a long history going back to 1934 when we were the 3rd chapter in the country installed into KME. More than 2000 Pitt State students have been inducted into KME over the years.

Several PSU faculty members have served national offices with KME, starting with J.A.G. Shirk, who was the second National President of KME and also served as Secretary. Dr. Ron G. Smith served as Vice-President (1957-1961) and Dr. Helen Kriegsmann was Editor of the Pentagon journal (1965-71). Dr. J.D. Haggard was Historian (1963-1967). Dr. Harold Thomas served as Historian, President-Elect, and President. He received the most prestigious award granted by KME, the George R. Mach Distinguished Service Award, in 1997. Also, Dr. Thomas and Dr. Huffman each served as Regional Directors for 8 years, and Dr. Huffman served as Treasurer (2007-2015). PSU currently has 1 faculty member leaving the KME Executive Council and 1 faculty member joining it: Dr. Scott Thuong was elected President-Elect at the 2021 national convention, while Dr. Cynthia Huffman completed her 4-year term as Historian. In addition, Gorilla alumna Vanessa Williams (Truman State University) serves as KME Social Media Director.

Dr. Huffman recently published a 60-page 90th Anniversary KME History booklet. One copy of the booklet was mailed to each KME Chapter across the country. The booklet is also available as a pdf on the KME website at <https://www.kappamuepsilon.org/documents/History.pdf>.

Kansas Alpha has a Facebook group called "Pitt State KME Math Honor Society" where information about the monthly local meetings and other events is posted. Feel free to send a request to join the group. There is a Facebook page for national KME, as well as a Twitter account #KMEMath.

The KS Alpha Chapter of KME is very grateful to Dr. Thomas for his generous support for student travel to conventions.



Top Row: Dr. Bryan Dawson, Gorilla alumnus, who presented a workshop at the Convention; Dr. Tim Flood; Dr. Cynthia Huffman



Bottom Row: Dr. Harold Thomas; Gorilla alumna Vanessa Williams and Cynthia Huffman visiting with KME President Brian Hollenbeck, Emporia State

Upcoming Events

MAA MathFest, Virtual,
Aug 4-7, 2021

PSU High School Math
Honor Day,
Oct 7, 2021

PSU Homecoming,
Oct 16, 2021

PSU Fall Break,
Nov 22-23, 2021

Joint Mathematics
Meetings, Seattle, WA
Jan 5-8, 2022

2022 Spring Semester
Starts Jan 18, 2022

KSMAA, Benedictine
College, Atchison, KS,
April 8-9, 2022

PSU Math Relays,
April 5, 2022

KME Regional
Convention, Pittsburg
State University, TBA

PSU Math Banquet,
April 24, 2022

PSU Mathematics on Facebook

If you are a Facebook user, there are two ways that you can stay connected with the PSU Mathematics Department. One way is via a group with a focus on teaching called *Gorilla Math Teachers*. It is a great source of information including teaching ideas and job openings. It also provides a community for asking advice and questions related to teaching. The other way to stay connected is with the *Pitt State (Kansas) Math Alumni* group. Information related to the department and alumni is posted along with interesting mathematical tidbits as well as opportunities and job openings. Both of these groups are closed, so that anything posted is only available to be seen by others in the group. (Can you guess why the Kansas part was added to the name of the alumni group?) We would love to have you join either or both groups if you are interested. Just search for the name of the group within Facebook and put in a request to be added to the group.

Department Loses Two Former Professors

Dr. Forrest Coltharp passed away on July 24, 2020 at the age of 86. He had been a faculty member of the Mathematics Department from 1964 to 1995. His specialty was mathematics for elementary school teachers, and he served as advisor to many mathematics education majors. Memorials in his honor can be given to the PSU Math Department's Coltharp Family Mathematics Education Scholarship. Dr. Coltharp's [obituary](#) and a [PSU story](#) can be found online.



Mr. Jacob Bryan Sperry passed away on May 12, 2021. He was 95 and had been a PSU mathematics faculty member for 32 years, retiring in 1995. Mr. Sperry wrote a book *Programmed Algebra* which was used as a text for many years. He also wrote an [autobiography](#) titled *The Life of a Country Boy*. After his retirement, he continued to help out with the Pitt State High School Math Relays. In 2015, at the age of 89, he scored a touchdown at a KU Alumni Football game, the [video](#) of which went viral. Mr. Sperry's [obituary](#) and a [PSU Story](#) can be found online.

Thanks for the Support!

A big thanks for donations made to PSU in support of the Math Department and its programs. These generous gifts have been used to support travel by students and faculty to conferences, as well as student scholarships. For summer 2020 and the 2020-21 academic year we awarded \$43,300 in undergraduate scholarships and \$14,830 in graduate scholarships.

Pre-Images

The next two pages contain a collection of pictures from the “archives”. How many can you name and date? (Answers at bottom of next page.)

1



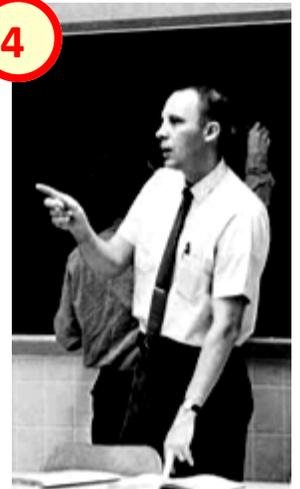
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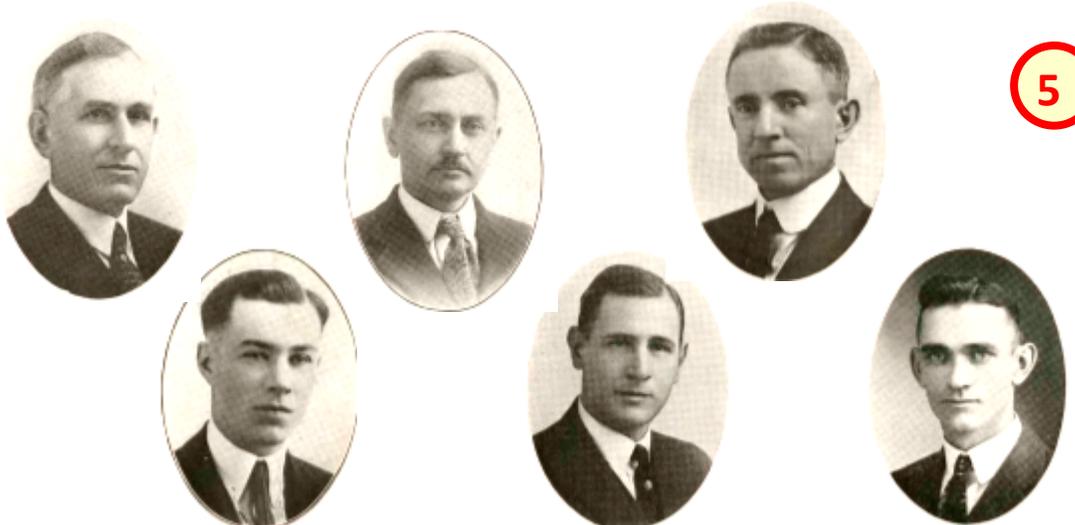
3



4



5



6



Picture 1: Christen Jackson (now teacher at Girard High School) and Dr. Elwyn Davis at the 2007 MOKAN Conference.

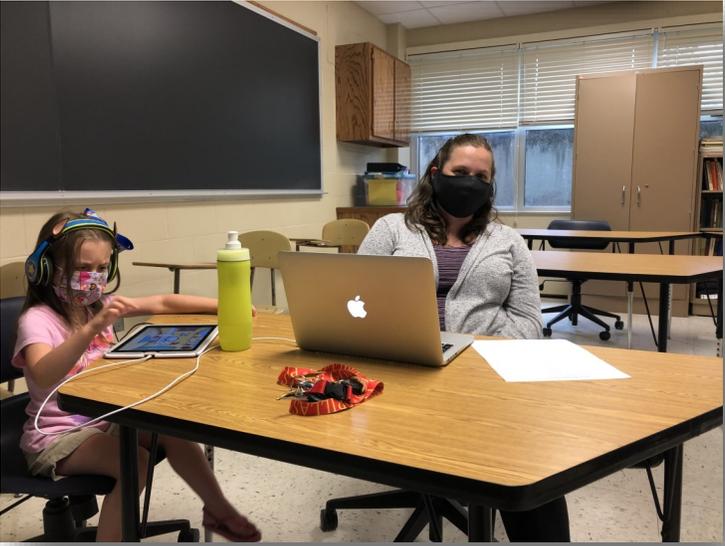
Picture 2: 2014 Math Department faculty. Front row: Dr. Cynthia Huffman, Dr. Hazel Coltharp, Dr. Karla Childs, Mrs. Terry Martin, Dr. Tim Flood. Second row: Dr. Jeremy Wade, Mr. David Newcomb, Dr. Scott Thuong, Mr. George Kaemmerling, Dr. Ananda Jayawardhana, Dr. Yaping Liu, Dr. Tadek Dobrowolski.

Picture 3: Drs. Helen Kriegsmann, J.D. Haggard, and Ron Smith at the 10th KME National Convention in 1955 in Wayne, NE.

Picture 4: Dr. Don Hight from the 1967 Kanza yearbook.

Picture 5: 1925 Mathematics and Applied Mechanics Faculty. Top Row: Professor J.A.G. Shirk, Associate Professor L.E. Curtman, Associate Professor W.H. Hill; Bottom Row: Assistant Professor Harold Hunter, Assistant Professor W.A. Schuster, Instructor F. C. German. Picture 6: KME from the 1980 Kanza. Front Row: Laurie McManus, Penny Lane, Brenda Brinkmeyer, Kay Conklin, Howard Thompson, Douglas Johnston, Annabelle Loy; Back Row: Bryan Sperry, Helen Kriegsmann, Susan Daniel, Pat Keating, James Baber, Roger Winters, Kevin Sperry, Scott Garten, Elwyn Davis, Harold Thomas, Gary McGrath.

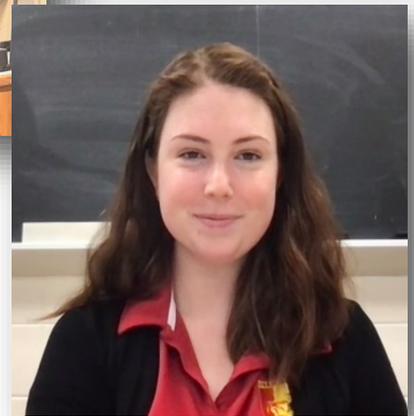
Masks and Social Distancing during Classes and Faculty Meetings



PSU Mathematics Colloquium Series

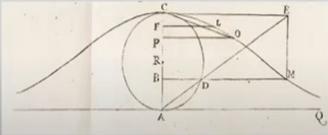
In spite of the pandemic, the Math Department managed to hold a few colloquia. These lectures give the speakers an opportunity to share their research and the attendees a chance to gain new knowledge. To schedule a colloquium or for more information, contact Dr. Liu at yliu@pittstate.edu. The colloquia for the 2020-2021 academic year are listed below.

- ◆ Dr. Bobby Winters, PSU, *The Pegboard Game: A Computational Approach-An Introduction to Finite State Machines*, September 17, 2020
- ◆ Mr. Michael DeGuerre, PSU, *Using Technology to Teach Vectors in Secondary Education*, November 17, 2020
- ◆ Dr. Cynthia Huffman, PSU, *Maria Agnesi with the Preacher, the Witch, and Calculus*, April 13, 2021, virtual and available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A4D-zAGRGkc>
- ◆ Ms. Laura Phillips, PSU, *Assessing Student Attitudes Towards Mathematics*, April 27, 2021, virtual
- ◆ Mr. Paul Modlin, PSU, *Diffie-Hellman Encryption*, May 7, 2021, virtual



Maria Agnesi
with
the Preacher, the Witch, and Calculus





dato del denominatore; ma il differenziale del denominatore è $2ax$, dunque il differenziale di ax^{-1} , o sia a , farà $-2axdx$, cioè $-2ax$; il differenziale di x^{-1} , o sia di $\frac{1}{x}$, farà $-\frac{1}{x^2}dx$, cioè $-\frac{1}{x^2}$; e generalmente il differenziale di $\frac{a}{bx^n}$, o sia di $\frac{a}{bx^n}$, farà $-\frac{anx^{n-1}dx}{bx^n}$, cioè $-\frac{anx^{n-1}}{bx^n}dx$.

Dr. Cynthia Huffman, University Professor

KSMAA Meeting

Pitt State mathematics faculty continue to be very active in the Kansas Section of the Mathematical Association of America (KSMAA). Dr. Tim Flood is (outgoing) Chair, Historian, and Coordinator of Section Liaisons, Dr. Cynthia Huffman is Public Information Coordinator, Webmaster, and Newsletter Editor, and Dr. Scott Thuong is co-coordinator of the Kansas Collegiate Math Competition.

The 2021 KSMAA meeting was held virtually on March 26-27. A team of PSU students competed in the Kansas Collegiate Math Competition, held in conjunction with the KSMAA meeting. Students participating were Ty Covey, Emily Cummings, and Rylee Dennis. Many years the presentations (and attendees) at the annual KSMAA meeting are dominated by PSU faculty and students. However this year, only one person from Pitt State gave a presentation and that was Dr. Cynthia Huffman, who spoke on *Calculus Notation: Agnesi vs. Colson*.





Dr. Karla Childs

This year everything changed! In academia, the COVID-19 pandemic led to more online classes, new social distancing measures, and postponements of annual events.

Moving forward, I'm happy to announce that we have started planning our 20th PSU Mathematics Department's Math Honor Day after having to cancel in 2020. Stephanie Lowry, PSU Math alum, will be our keynote speaker at Math Honor Day this fall. Stephanie has had several career opportunities that all started with a teaching degree in mathematics. The date is Thursday, October 7, 2021.

I have also been working on key new modules in my Geometry course. I was invited to be part of the competitive MODULE(S2) project to pilot Geometry materials during Fall 2021. The Mathematics Of Doing, Understanding, Learning and Education Secondary Schools, MODULE(S2), project is funded by an NSF grant "to create a gold standard for the preparation of secondary mathematics teachers." "Additionally, the project investigates the impact of instruction with the modules on prospective teachers' knowledge—thereby informing nationwide efforts in teacher education." (<https://modules2.com/our-project/>) I am so excited about this important project to ensure PSU students are up-to-date and well-prepared with the best information we have about teaching and learning mathematics; in the end, PSU Math graduates who go on to teach, go on to impact the lives of thousands of K-12 students!



Dr. Ananda Jayawardhana

I am the chair of the Committee on ASA Archives and Historical materials for 2021.

I will start a three-year term as an Assistant District Governor of the Rotary District 6110 starting June.

I chaired the committee on Midwest Mathematics and Statistics competition in April 2021.

Joint with Yaso (aka Manel) Jayawardhana, KUMC School of Nursing, and Karen Johnson, PSU, I presented a poster *Attitudes Towards the COVID-19 Pandemic and its Consequences to Nursing Staff in Southwest Missouri and Southeast Kansas* at [Innovations in Design, Analysis, and Dissemination: Frontiers in Biostatistics and Data Science conference](#).

Graduate student Laura Phillips did three surveys on Attitude Towards Elementary Statistics, Attitude Towards Business Statistics, and Attitude Towards College Algebra during spring 2021 under my guidance.

I will continue to serve as a PSU representative for the statewide planning committee of the Tilford Conference for the 15th year.

I presented a poster at the 2020 Joint Statistical Meeting and published the paper in proceedings:

Title: Bayesian Prediction Bounds in Accelerated Life Testing: Weibull Models with Two Levels of Acceleration (with former graduate student Robert Custer).



Dr. Hazel Coltharp

What a year . . . how many times did you use “unprecedented”? A shout out to all of the Math teachers out there who spun on a dime to go totally online in Spring, 2020, then to have to wait and see what Fall, 2020 would yield, then try to juggle socially distancing (in public schools!), cleaning their rooms every time they turned around, delivering content via hybrid, high-flex, or totally online or f2f, with students changing their choices constantly based on exposure/quarantining guidelines! At least we all have learned what a valuable support tool (or total delivery tool) technology can be, but also, how very much our students need the human contact of an in-person teacher! We don’t just deliver math! As a result, some of our internship students and student teachers were affected, but all graduated. We had six graduates meeting the requirements to teach secondary math from the Fall, ’20 and Spring ’21 semesters. Of those, all had jobs lined up before Spring semester was over (our fall graduate stayed around to start on a master’s then applied in K-12); we have the school districts of Joplin, Ft.

Scott, Sarcoxie, Cherryvale, Cherokee (Southeast), and Topeka represented with all but one at the middle school level. We also had one of our spring Master’s graduates secure a job at Joplin High School! Our middle school major (BS in Math with the 5-8 emphasis) continues to be popular, and clearly there’s a need, and despite the way it was worded in a press release this spring, we are still producing secondary math teachers, and hope to improve our numbers! We simply have re-named the degree as a Bachelor of Science in Math with an emphasis in 6-12 or 5-8.

On a personal note, my husband survived not only the pandemic as Crowder’s president, but just a few months before that struck, they were without technology (period) for several months as they worked through a ransomware attack, and unlike the pipeline company, they didn’t pay! He said that he started his term with a computer “virus,” and ended that year with a human virus! They are much stronger now technology-wise, and probably were so grateful for the return of technology that going totally on-line was just the “new thing,” but he has reached the time in his career that will allow him to retire, so next school year will be his last . . . at least in that retirement system! I can’t see him just hanging around an empty house, so will keep you updated! Our kids are continuing to flourish – Jean, went up for tenure and promotion at Missouri Southern and will now be Dr. Coltharp, Associate Professor! Our son, Benjamin, who spent the end of his first year teaching and his second year teaching, in the pandemic, finished his Master’s in Ed Leadership and started an MBA – not necessarily to leave education, but recognizing that there are more people who would rather move through the “curriculum” side than the “finance” side, so he’s learning all sorts of new vocab words and concepts in the business world! In addition to finishing his second year teaching math at his alma mater, Carl Junction High School, he just finished his first year coaching boys’ and girls’ tennis – a success in terms of the numbers of kids who came out, but mom’s calling it a “rebuilding” year! We packed up our lawn chairs several times and followed the team to Springfield and other locations, closer to home to cheer on the Bulldogs. That’s about it on the personal side – I guess I’ll comment that I’ve been granted a three-year phased-retirement beginning this coming fall. I could have retired sooner, but love my job, but having taken on a part-time, on-line job in Math curriculum, I thought a gradual phase-out would be nice. Plus, we are up for accreditation in three years (the Teacher Education Unit) with CAEP, so I didn’t want to leave in the middle of that. I will still teach the Techniques class and supervise the Internship class and the Student Teachers as well as oversee the data collection for CAEP, all the while hoping to ease into more hours online and a more flexible schedule!

On the larger Math Family topic, as noted in the article in the general information part of the newsletter, we were all saddened at the loss of both Dr. Forrest Coltharp and Mr. Bryan Sperry. They both were fixtures in the Math Department as teachers and advisors (my father-in-law was my advisor and our President, Dr. Steve Scott’s); they were beloved teachers of thousands of future elementary and secondary teachers – Basic Concepts of Geometry and numerous math content for elementary teachers, and they were true servant leaders in their churches, families (their families alone have produced at least seven math teachers that I can think of), and professions serving the PSU Math Department, PSU in general, and the larger Math profession in so many ways. Personally, it was very hard to say goodbye to my father-in-law last July as he was so instrumental in my career path, and supportive of me in the department. We established a Coltharp Family Math Education Scholarship in his honor the purpose of which is to supplement/pay for the content licensure exam for future math teacher candidates, then, as finances allow, a scholarship during student teaching; as we all know that student teachers not only have to pay a full semester’s tuition, but also are advised against working during that semester. My husband was with his dad in his last hours, and tells that after many hours of anxiety, he finally laid down to rest and was able to go to sleep by reciting a math lesson!! Finer teachers, men, husbands, and fathers (and fathers-in-law) would be hard to find.

Not only do we hope to return to a more normal classroom environment in which we can see our students’ smiling faces, we also hope to return to our on-hold events like Math Honor Day and PSU Math Relays. We have our fingers crossed that everyone stays healthy and safe over the upcoming year, and we have a reprieve from the downsides of the pandemic! Send us your high school graduates – it’s the only way we can produce more secondary math teachers!



Dr. Cynthia Huffman

I hope that everyone has been able to stay healthy. It has been a unique year with efforts to support students as they dealt with the unusual times, quarantine, and family members with the virus. Attendance at a plethora of professional development events over the years, experience with teaching online, and already having created many videos for my courses really paid off this year. A big shout-out goes to the PSU Center for Teaching, Learning, & Technology for providing opportunities that helped us be prepared!!!

I have always thought it was the eyes that I used to determine if a student was understanding in class, but now, after having experienced students wearing masks, I realize that it is the entire facial expression that I use. Sure looking forward to the day when we can have face-to-face classes without masks again!

As is expected for professors, I split my work time among teaching, scholarly activity, and service. Teaching continues to be my favorite. I try to make learning mathematics fun and relevant for my students. As usual, I teach a wide variety of courses from general education to graduate level. Typically that includes 4 preparations, along with pro gratis extras— honors projects, masters problems, independent studies, and writing to learn courses.

Since the last newsletter, I had five more articles about “[Math Treasures at the Linda Hall Library](#)” published in the online journal *Convergence*. Other recent publications include the first “[Euler Archive Spotlight](#)” in the inaugural issue of the journal *Euleriana* and an article “[Mathematical Mysteries of Rapa Nui \(Easter Island\) with Classroom Activities](#)” joint with Dr. Thuong and Dr. Ximena Catepillan of Millersville University. It was fun to analyze data from drone images taken during the study trip to Easter Island and then to create related classroom activities. I appreciate Dr. Thuong’s amazing skill at creating GeoGebra applets!

Continuing to conduct scholarly activity helps prevent burnout and hopefully, also helps bring excitement to my teaching to encourage students to have a growth mindset and a desire to be lifelong learners. A very enjoyable project this past year has been to study two original sources: Maria Agnesi’s 1748 2-volume work on algebra and calculus *Instituzioni Analitiche* and John Colson’s English translation *Analytical Institutions*. Today many people know of Agnesi due to Colson mis-translating the name of a cubic curve, so that it became commonly known as the Witch of Agnesi. Also, being from the Continent, Agnesi used Leibniz’ notation for calculus, while the Englishman Colson used mostly Newton’s. This summer my 320th professional talk will be over this research at an international History of Math conference, originally scheduled to be in Scotland, but now virtual.

A few years ago I had a grant to write some Open Educational Resource (OER) materials. Since then I have continued writing OER materials and publishing them on PSU’s [Digital Commons](#). To date, the 22 activities have had 3,980 downloads in 106 countries. I hope to create some activities on the Agnesi/Colson research, too.

Service-wise at the state level, I continue as the public information officer/webmaster/newsletter editor for the Kansas Section of the Mathematical Association of America. Extra this spring, I completed a major overhaul of the webpage to a new system. I hold 4 national offices. I am the Chief Editor of the Board of Editors for the MAA Classroom Resource Materials book series (11 manuscript reviews in the past year), the National Historian for Kappa Mu Epsilon (created a 60 page 90th Anniversary booklet, term concluded in April & now training new historian), on the board of editors of a journal called *Euleriana*, and the Secretary/Treasurer/Newsletter Editor for the MAA Special Interest Group on History of Math. Closer to home, I am completing a term on the PSU Higher Learning Commission committee, and I serve as an eLearning Academy online course reviewer, an online teaching College Coach, and the editor of this newsletter, along with serving on various other committees.

I sure enjoy hearing what all of you are doing, whether it be through Facebook, LinkedIn, or some other means. (In case you didn’t know, there is a Facebook group called “Pitt State (Kansas) Math Alumni”.) It is wonderful to hear how well so many of our alumni are doing in their careers and personal lives. Please continue to keep in touch and to stop by the department anytime you are in town. Stay safe!!! Once a Gorilla, Always a Gorilla!



Dr. Yaping Liu

This year again, the Covid-19 pandemic caused the cancellation of many regular activities, but things are getting back to normal gradually. In the spring, I taught all classes face-to-face, albeit wearing face coverings in the classroom all the time. I had my regular teaching loads and usual service responsibilities during the last two semesters. In the Mathematical Modeling class, I developed a new project titled Epidemics Modeling to help the students gain more understanding of the ongoing pandemic. They also developed their own models for the pandemic and made predictions on what could happen in the near future. In April this year, two students in my Mathematical Modeling and Senior Seminar classes submitted projects to the undergraduate class project competition of the Midwest Math and Stats Student Conference and won awards. Regarding research, I have one paper submitted to a professional journal for publication.

From July 2020 to May 2021, four graduate students in the math department have successfully finished their research and passed the master's comprehensive exams. This is a bit lower than our historical average of seven during the last two decades. But considering the difficulties everyone has been facing, this is not too bad.

Regarding personal life, there have been some significant changes in my family during the past year. My younger daughter got married last fall, and my elder daughter gave birth to another girl earlier this spring. I have nothing to complain except the difficulties in doing long distance travels so that I could not see my kids and grandkids as often as I would have liked to.



Mr. David Newcomb

Being a full-time instructor in the Mathematics Department at Pittsburg State University continues to be a challenging and fulfilling experience. Preparing for the variety of courses that I teach (Mathematics for Elementary Education I, Calculus I, and Mathematics Education Seminar) keeps me extremely busy. In addition, in the spring semester I teach the Technology in Secondary Education class and the PSU Ready College Algebra class at Colgan High School.

These past three semesters were completely different from any others unless you only taught online classes. The change to more online and hybrid classes was not difficult for me. However, some of the students were in an educational environment for which they were not entirely prepared. Last semester all my classes were face-to-face since they were scheduled in auditoriums or limited in capacity. So, at least for me, teaching seems to be getting back to "normal."

My wife and I have continued some of our usual summer activities. We completed a few projects around the home including replacing some weathered siding and windows and painting the garden shed. This summer we have already worked on a few lawn mowers for ourselves and for friends. We continue to help at our son-in-law's Tailwind Cyclists bicycle shop. The garden is looking good with green beans, potatoes, tomatoes, okra, and squash. We have not been able to go camping this spring but we are looking forward to the possibility of camping later in the summer or this fall. We did go on several bicycle rides around the area.

I hope students and faculty have a wonderful 2021/2022 academic year at Pitt State. Best wishes to all.



Mrs. Terry Martin

Well, no one in education can dispute that this has been a challenging 15 months in education for administrators, teachers, and students. However, many of us have learned some new technology by necessity.

After a 2-year break, we will plan and hope for the Pitt State Math Relays on Tuesday April 5, 2022. Whether or not the day looks significantly different than past years remains to be seen.

I continue to serve as faculty advisor for Campus Christians and Chi Omicron Rho. I also continue to serve as a board member for Countryside Christian School, which is now a pre-school only.



Dr. Scott Thuong

This spring I taught a topics course on the philosophy of mathematics. I never took a class in this area, but in the last few years I developed an interest in the subject - in particular - foundational issues with infinite sets and real numbers. It was quite a learning experience for me as well as for the students.

With COVID restrictions lifting, I look forward to our local Kappa Mu Epsilon chapter and math club becoming livelier in the Fall. I will continue as co-coordinator of the Kansas Collegiate Math Competition, and begin my term of national president-elect for KME. Pitt State will host the 2022 regional KME meeting, as the 2020 meeting was cancelled. I look forward to organizing it!

This past year, I helped found the PSU Ping Pong Club as faculty advisor. Even with COVID around, the club grew quite rapidly, with strong attendance at our weekly meetings. Perhaps eventually we will even compete or collaborate with clubs at neighboring universities.

I wish everyone a great academic year!



Dr. Bobby Winters

I am giving up acting chair of Physics to become acting chair of Biology. I am Vice President of the board of Kansas Paraguay Partners. In addition, I continue as Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Director of the Polymer Chemistry Initiative, Director of PSU in Paraguay, and Interim Chair of the Department of Chemistry.

Alumni Highlight

Where we “brag” on one of our former students!

Dr. Harold Thomas is our featured alumnus for this newsletter. From Garnett, KS, he graduated high school in 1952, and started at KS State Teachers College (now PSU) in the fall semester. After 2 years of college, he was drafted by the US Army toward the end of the Korean conflict. After training, Harold spent 18 months in Japan, was honorably discharged in June of 1956, and went back to college to start his Junior year, receiving the BS in Educ. degree in 1958 with a major in Mathematics. He continued at Pitt State as a graduate assistant in Math and earned the MS degree in 1959.

During his undergraduate and Master's degree years, several significant things occurred. First, Harold met his future wife, Alice, in the audio-visual dept. where they were both student employees. They married in 1956 soon after his military time was finished, and had 3 sons, 2 of which graduated with degrees from Pitt State and the youngest with a degree from Kansas State. Alice graduated with two degrees from Pitt State, in Biology-Medical Technology and in Nursing. As a student employee, Harold changed from audio-visual to assist his twin brother, Gerald, as a Collegio Photographer in the Spring semester, 1953. According to Dr. Thomas, “I was also blessed academically to have an outstanding faculty advisor, Prof. Frank German, and the best departmental chair you could ask for, Dr. Ron Smith.”

Harold taught for one year after finishing his Master's on a temporary appointment. Dr. Smith then encouraged him to go to graduate school



(Left) Dr. Thomas at the 1973 KME National Convention.

(Right) Alice and Harold in 2014 walking near the University Lake.



and work on the PhD degree in order to continue college teaching. So the family moved to Stillwater, Okla. where he was a grad assistant at Oklahoma State University. He completed a PhD in Math with an emphasis in Statistics in 1964. Dr. Thomas returned to Pitt State on a tenured appointment to teach Statistics as an assistant professor. He taught at PSU for 34 years, retiring in 1998 as professor emeritus.

In addition to teaching, Dr. Thomas enjoyed serving in many service roles at PSU. He wrote, “Most important I think was 30 years working with Kappa Mu Epsilon, mathematics honor society. This culminated in serving a four year term as national president. KME then presented me with the George Mach distinguished Service Award. Other service activities and awards include Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society, Math Assoc. of Am., PSU Alumni Assoc., the Faculty Assoc., KNEA, and PSU Foundation Board of Trustees.”

Dr. Harold and Alice Thomas have endowed accounts with the PSU Foundation for the benefit of students. These include Scholarship accounts for Mathematics and Nursing students and a travel expense account for Kappa Mu Epsilon students to attend KME conventions. The Mathematics Department is proud to have Dr. Thomas as an alumnus, a retired faculty member, and a generous donor!!!

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If you have anything to be included in the newsletter, please send it to cjhuffman@pittstate.edu

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