Metzger Announces Retirement

UND Mathematics Department faculty member Dr. Jerry Metzger has announced his plans to retire at the end of the 2015-2016 academic year. Dr. Metzger arrived here at the UND Mathematics Department in 1970. He plans to stay in Grand Forks after his retirement, and he says that we will still see him here in the Mathematics Department in Witmer Hall from time to time. We hope that Dr. Metzger and his wife Diane enjoy their retirement.

Visitors Present Talks

Professor Robert Molina presented the talk “Lights out!” here at UND on April 1, 2015. Professor Molina currently serves in the Mathematics Department at Alma College in Alma, Michigan. He completed his Ph.D. degree in Mathematics at Colorado State University in 1993.

Professor Timothy J. Pennings presented the talk “Do Dogs Know Calculus? Bifurcations at the Beach” on October 1, 2015. Professor Pennings is the Chair of the Mathematics Department at Davenport University in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He received his Ph.D. in Mathematics at Iowa State University in 1987. He also completed a master’s degree in Mathematics here at UND in 1981.

Visitors Present Talks

Professor Molina’s talk and Professor Pennings’s talk were both part of the Ed Nelson Memorial Lecture Series. We would like to thank both speakers for coming here!

Prescott Promoted

Dr. Timothy M. Prescott has been promoted to the rank of Associate Professor. Dr. Prescott completed his Ph.D. degree in Mathematics at University of California-Los Angeles in 2008 and began service here in the UND Mathematics Department as a non-tenure-track faculty member that year. Since his arrival here, Dr. Prescott has developed and taught on-line courses in calculus, differential equations, and other topics. He currently serves on the UND Senate’s Academic Policies and Admissions Committee. His research specialty area is probability, and he has published several scholarly articles on the subject.

Scholarships Awarded

The Mathematics Department has selected the following students to receive scholarships for the 2015-2016 academic year:

- Alyson M. Pascuzzi (Deann & Lee Christianson Scholarship)
- Ethan P. Doll (Paige Plagge Memorial Mathematics Scholarship)
- Lindsey M. Peterson (Diana L. Wells Memorial Mathematics Scholarship)
- Wesley P. Bakken (Judy Ann Utton Memorial Mathematics Scholarship)
- Katie J. Neset (Jay O. & Marie Bjørkaas Mathematics Scholarship)
- Erich C. Jauch (Ronald C. & Ann C. Bzoch Memorial Mathematics Scholarship)

We extend our thanks to the donors who have made these scholarships possible!

Graduate Students Complete Degrees

Jasper Barlich completed his M.S. degree in Mathematics here at UND in May of 2015. As part of his graduate studies, he conducted an independent study and wrote a report summarizing this study. The title of his report was “Perturbation Theory.” Jasper’s academic adviser was Dr. Mohammad Khavanin. Jasper’s long-term goal is to serve in the U.S. Air Force for twenty years. After he finishes his work with the Air Force, he hopes to start a business in automotive repair, restoration, customization, and racing.

Christopher Hellmann also completed his M.S. degree in May of 2015. His adviser was Dr. Gerri Dunnigan, and the title of his independent study report was “The Bootstrap.”
Manoj Khanal wrote an independent study report entitled “Perturbation and Critical Points Analysis of Planetary Motion” and graduated with an M.S. degree last May. His adviser was Dr. Mohammad Khavanin. Manoj has begun work toward a Ph.D. degree in Mathematics at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

Finally, Alexandar Sidles also finished his M.S. degree here in May of 2015. His adviser was Dr. Michael Minnotte. The title of Alexandar’s independent study report was “Envelope Regression: Maximum Likelihood Estimation.” In the near-term future, his goal is to teach mathematics, continue his education in mathematics, or both. Alexandar taught one regular course here in the UND Mathematics Department in the fall of 2015, and he is currently teaching correspondence courses at UND. He also teaches courses at other post-secondary schools in the Grand Forks area.

Each of our four graduating master’s degree students presented a talk on his independent study report near the end of Spring Semester 2015. We hope that all four of these students enjoyed their time here, and we wish them the best of luck!

New GTAs Join the Department

Several new Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) have begun work toward master’s degrees here in the Mathematics Department.

Harison (Fanja) Andriamasy is originally from Madagascar. Fanja received her undergraduate degree in Mathematics from Brigham Young University-Hawaii. She can speak three different languages fluently: Malagasy, French, and English.

Grant Bowker is from Fort Peck, Montana. He completed a B.S. degree in Mechanical Engineering here at UND. After a year of graduate study in mechanical engineering, he switched his graduate degree major to Mathematics. In his leisure time, Grant enjoys stand-up comedy and playing the guitar. Finally, he likes to spend time with his friend Anna.

Daniel Carroll is from New Brighton, Minnesota. His undergraduate degree is from Mayville State University, where he majored in Mathematics. He also completed a minor in Business.

Zach Craig is a native of Velva, North Dakota. He completed a bachelor’s degree in Mathematics with a minor in statistics here at UND. He enjoys playing strategical card and board games, such as Risk or Settlers of Catan.

Rebecca J. Nash completed a Bachelor’s of Science degree in Mathematics Education at the University of Mary in Bismarck, North Dakota. Her home town is Billings, Montana. For hobbies, she enjoys crocheting and painting.

Issac Odegard is from Crystal, North Dakota. He holds a bachelor’s degree in Mathematics from UND.

Taylor Schlenk completed her undergraduate degree here at UND, where she majored in Mathematics and Secondary Education. After graduating from UND, she obtained secondary school teaching licensure for mathematics. Taylor enjoys listening to music, working out, and being around people. Her home town is Conway, North Dakota.

Tyler Zambino is from New Ulm, Minnesota. He attended Bemidji State University, where he completed a bachelor’s degree with a major in Mathematics and a minor in Physics.

We welcome our new GTAs, and we hope that they all do well here!

Where They Are and What They Are Up To

Mary (Sinks) Axtell (B.S. in Mathematics with Secondary Education, 2005) lives in the Des Moines, Iowa, area. She writes, “Hello math friends, hope you are finding yourselves well! There are so many fond memories from my time at UND.” One of her favorite memories is hot tub parties in the snow while studying for calculus final exams. Following her graduation from UND in 2005, Mary taught high school mathematics in Crookston, Minnesota. In 2008, Mary and her husband Chris Axtell moved to West Des Moines, Iowa. Mary served as a substitute teacher in West Des Moines for a few years and at the same time worked as a mathematics tutor. Mary and Chris now have three children: Norah, age 6, Lolah 4, and Watson 2. Mary’s primary job now is “domestic engineer,” but she gets her math “fix” by tutoring students from grade seven through the college level. She spends ten to twenty hours tutoring each week. She also says, “I am certainly grateful for the education I received at UND and the math professors that truly cared to support their students through rigorous course work.”

Semere Habtemicael (M.S., 2012) completed his Ph.D. degree in Applied Mathematics at North Dakota State University in December of 2015. The title of his dissertation was “Modeling Financial Swap and Geophysical Data Analysis Using Barndorff-Nielsen and Shephard Models.” He has accepted a postdoctoral fellow position at Harvard Medical School. His longer-term goal is to be a faculty member at a college or university somewhere in the U.S. Semere feels grateful toward the UND Mathematics Department faculty
and his former classmates here for their help and cooperation during his graduate studies at UND.

Grant Hadlich (B.S. in Mathematics, Computer Science, and Electrical Engineering, 2011) currently lives in Falls Church, Virginia, with his girlfriend Lauren and their dog Elaine. Following graduation from UND, Grant worked for Rockwell Collins in Warrenton, Virginia. He served as a Senior Software Engineer and technical software lead of a navigation product used in a new European helicopter. Following the completion of this product, Grant accepted a position as a Senior Software Engineer at BAE Systems, in the Arlington, Virginia, area. In his free time, he enjoys biking around the DC area trails and following the “wind gusts” coming from Capitol Hill. He is grateful for his education in the Mathematics Department, as he feels it helped him excel in group problem-solving settings better than his other two majors.

Daniel Johnson (B.A, 1963) lives in Devils Lake, North Dakota. He is currently employed at Lake Region State College.

Craig Nansen (B.S.Ed., 1971) is now retired. From 1971 to 1985, Craig served as a classroom teacher in the Des Lacs United #7 school district and in the Minot public schools. From 1985 until his retirement, Craig served as Director of Technology for Minot Public Schools. He has also recently served as an adjunct professor at Minot State University. He earned M.Ed. and Ed.S. degrees from Northwestern State University of Louisiana in 1996 and 1999, respectively.

You can reach Craig by mail, at 2801 6th St SE, Minot, North Dakota 58701, by telephone, at (701) 838-6444, or by e-mail, at craig.nansen@gmail.com.

Laura (Wagner) Bosch (M.Ed., 2008) was married last summer. See photo of Laura with her friends Katrina (Nagel) Eberhart (M.Ed., 2007) and Haley Skipper (M.S., 2007).

Faculty Footnotes

Thomas Gilsdorf and Mohammad Khavanin have published the article “Existence and uniqueness for nonlinear integro-differential equations in real locally complete spaces” in the journal Scientiae Mathematicae Japonicae.

Jerry Metzger and Thomas Richards have published the article “A prisoner problem variation” in the Journal of Integer Sequences.


Issac Odegard and Ryan Zerr have published “The quadratic irrationals and Ducci matrix sequences” in the journal Linear Algebra and its Applications.

**Zerr Named Director of Essential Studies**

UND Mathematics Department faculty member Dr. Ryan Zerr (pronounced “zeer”) has begun service as UND’s new Director of Essential Studies. Essential Studies (or ES) is one of the requirements for all undergraduate degrees at UND. The main purpose of Essential Studies is to allow students to achieve certain specific learning goals. To achieve these goals (and to fulfill the ES requirements), students take and complete various academic courses that they choose from several different groups. Essential Studies replaces the “General Education Requirements,” or “GER” requirements, that you may remember from your past studies.

For the 2015-2016 academic year, Dr. Zerr’s work as ES Director constitutes 75% of his official job duties. The remainder of his duties are associated with his usual work as a Mathematics Department faculty member. Dr. Zerr spends much of his time in the Essential Studies office, which is located in O’Kelly Hall, not far from Witmer Hall. One of Dr. Zerr’s duties is to help students who come to the ES office with questions or special petitions. He handles many of the questions and petitions himself, but he refers some of them to UND’s Essential Studies Committee.

Another duty for Dr. Zerr is to organize activities which help students achieve the various learning goals of Essential Studies. For example, last fall (the fall of 2015), Dr. Zerr organized a “poster session.” Students from certain ES courses in several academic departments here at UND prepared posters describing some of their course projects. They then attended the poster session itself, where they displayed their posters and explained their work to other students.

In recent years, UND faculty and administrators have devoted considerable attention to “assessment” activi-
ties, that is, ways of measuring student achievement of learning goals. These activities usually go beyond the analysis of ordinary student grades. The Essential Studies Director is responsible for organizing assessment activities for the ES program. In the fall of 2015, Dr. Zerr recruited several instructors of ES courses to help him with such an assessment activity. These instructors collected project reports and term papers from several hundred students in certain ES courses from various UND academic departments. The instructors then met with Dr. Zerr at a large meeting to analyze the students’ work. No single faculty member examined the report or paper of every student, of course, but Dr. Zerr made sure that at least two different faculty members looked at each report or paper. The faculty members scored the papers on the basis of certain scoring criteria, or “rubrics.” In this way, Dr. Zerr was able to assess the students’ progress toward achieving the official learning goals of the Essential Studies program. Dr. Zerr then summarized the results of the assessment activity in a written report for other UND administrators.

These are only a few of Dr. Zerr’s duties as Director of Essential Studies. He also keeps up with much of his usual work as a Mathematics Department faculty member. For example, in the fall of 2015, he taught one section of Math 488, our department’s “capstone” course. He is also continuing work on the Scientific Thinking and Integrative Reasoning Skills (STIRS) program. The STIRS program involves faculty members from several different universities in the U.S. It aims to improve undergraduate college education in our country. See the 2014-2015 issue of the Math Log for further information on STIRS.

Dr. Zerr still has his old office here in the Witmer Hall, and we frequently see him here. We look forward to continuing our work with him here in the Mathematics Department and within the university as a whole.

**Millspaugh and Iiams to Serve as Associate Chairs**

Dr. Richard Millspaugh and Dr. Michele Iiams have agreed to serve jointly as Associate Chair of the UND Mathematics Department. Dr. Millspaugh and Dr. Iiams are replacing our past Associate Chair, Dr. Ryan Zerr, who is now busy in his new role as UND’s Director of Essential Studies. We thank doctors Zerr, Millspaugh, and Iiams for their valuable service to the Mathematics Department!

**Department Organizes Annual Math Track Meet**

The Mathematics Department hosted the annual Mathematics Track Meet on February 16, 2015. The Department prepared, administered, and graded individual and team exams for 228 students from high schools and middle schools in Grand Forks and nearby areas. We received help from several Grand Forks area teachers.

**Dr. James Rue Discusses Education in North Dakota**

Last summer, the Math Log editor met with Dr. James S. Rue. Dr. Rue served as a faculty member here in the UND Mathematics Department in the 1950s and again from 1970 to 1993. We discussed Dr. Rue’s background and his years at UND. Dr. Rue’s stories provide a glimpse into academic life in North Dakota in the middle of the twentieth century. His stories also provide an update on the recent activities of a few of the other people you may have met here at UND.

**A One-Room School**

Dr. Rue grew up on a farm near the town of Sheyenne, North Dakota. From the first grade through the eighth grade, he attended a one-room school located in the country away from any towns. The school was one and one-half miles from Dr. Rue’s home, and he sometimes had to walk through deep snow to get there. The teacher lived on a nearby farm and also walked to the school. The school had no running water and no electricity. There was a coal-burning heating stove in the middle of the room on the main floor and a well in the basement. Students used a hand-operated pump to fetch water from the well. Approximately twelve to fifteen students attended the school. The students were at several different grade levels, of course, so the teacher often had to work with students of one age group while the other students worked on exercises or activities.

Beginning with the ninth grade, Dr. Rue went to high school in Sheyenne. The high school had four teachers and approximately seventy-five students attended it at any given time. In high school, Dr. Rue studied algebra and geometry, as well as most of the other usual topics one studies in high school. He says that his geometry class included proofs.
In 1947, Dr. Rue graduated from high school and enrolled at what is now Mayville State University, in Mayville, North Dakota. At the time, Dr. Rue was not particularly interested in mathematics. But soon after he came to Mayville, he took mathematics courses from Mr. Richard Forseth. Mr. Forseth was a good teacher, and thanks to his inspiration, Dr. Rue’s interest in mathematics increased. Dr. Rue also took courses in education, i.e. courses in which one studies the art of teaching. He did “practice teaching” in mathematics and general science in the Mayville public schools.

In 1951, Dr. Rue graduated from Mayville State with a B.S. degree and began a teaching job in the town of St. John, North Dakota. The Korean War was under way, however, and after only a few weeks on his new job, Dr. Rue was drafted into the U.S. military. He traveled to the island of Okinawa, where he served with the U.S. Army. The U.S. Air Force had a base on Okinawa, which it used during the war, and the Army’s mission on Okinawa was to defend this base against any possible attack.

Dr. Rue returned from military service in October 1953, and in the spring of 1954, he began work toward a master’s degree in Mathematics here at UND. He took classes here during the spring semester and summer session of 1954. During the 1954-55 academic year, he taught school in the town of Mahnomen, Minnesota. In the summer of 1955, he took more classes at UND and completed his master’s degree. His main academic adviser was the Mathematics Department Chair, Dr. Raymond C. Staley.

When Dr. Rue completed his master’s degree, Dr. Staley asked him to stay on here as a faculty member. Dr. Rue accepted the offer. He noted that some of the other Mathematics Department teachers at the time were Ken Hankerson, Walter Lyche, Ruth Mackichan, Woodrow McBride, John Peterson, Philip Rognlie, and, of course, Dr. Staley. The UND campus was much smaller then than it is now, and after a short time, Dr. Rue came to know every faculty member on the campus.

The Communist Party

Dr. Rue told me another interesting story concerning his employment here in the 1950s. By 1955, the Korean War had ended. But as you may know, the Cold War was still very much in progress. Many Americans were deeply concerned about the threat of communism. As a consequence, when Dr. Rue signed his employment contract for the 1955-56 academic year, he had to sign a pledge stating that he would not join the Communist Party! (By the way, he fulfilled this pledge!)

Dr. Rue served on the faculty here from 1955 to 1957 and again from 1958 to 1960. During the 1957-58 academic year, he worked at the Boeing Company in Seattle, Washington. In 1957, he married his wife Sue. Sue had grown up in Colorado, and in the 1950s, she was a piano instructor at a small piano school here in Grand Forks. She had previously earned a master’s degree in Music from the University of Michigan.

In 1957, the Soviet Union launched Sputnik, the first artificial satellite to orbit the Earth. Sputnik generated an increased interest in education in the U.S., and UND administrators decided that UND faculty members should have higher academic credentials. In particular, they should have Ph.D. degrees. As a consequence, six UND Mathematics faculty members, including Dr. Rue, left UND in 1960 to pursue Ph.D. degrees or careers in industry. In the summer of 1960, Dr. Rue attended a summer mathematics “institute” at Iowa State University in Ames, Iowa. In the fall of 1960, he assumed the position of Instructor at Iowa State and began work toward a Ph.D. Dr. Rue’s studies went well, and he completed his Ph.D. in Mathematics in 1965. His research specialty area was functional analysis.

A Motorcycle Accident

Dr. Rue served as a faculty member in the Mathematics Department at the University of Wyoming during the 1965-66 academic year, and from 1966 to 1970, he was a Mathematics faculty member at Washington State University. While at Washington State, he was severely injured in a motorcycle accident. He missed an entire semester and part of another semester. When he finally returned to classroom teaching, he taught a class from a wheelchair. He soon regained the ability to walk, but since then, he has always walked with a slight limp.

In 1970, Dr. Rue attended a meeting of the Mathematical Association of America (MAA) in Texas, and during this meeting, he met with UND Mathematics Department Chair Dr. Ronald Bzoch. Dr. Bzoch offered him a job here in the Mathematics Department, and he accepted the offer. In the fall of 1970, the Rues returned to Grand Forks. Dr. Jerry Metzger also came to UND in the fall of 1970. (Dr. Metzger is still actively serving as a faculty member here, but he plans to retire at the end of the 2015-16 academic year.)

Dr. Rue served as faculty member here from 1970 until his retirement in 1993. During this time, he taught a variety of courses, advised graduate students, and served on various committees. He occasionally taught summer classes and courses at the Grand Forks Air Force Base. He eventually rose to the rank of Full Professor, and he served as the Mathematics Department Chair from 1990 to 1993. In 1991, he underwent surgery for prostate cancer. The surgery went well, and the cancer has not recurred.

Dr. Rue enjoyed his work here in the Mathematics Department. He says that the people here all got along
well with one another. He developed personal friendships with many of his colleagues which have continued to the present. He still lives here in Grand Forks with his wife Sue, and twice each week, during the summer, he plays golf with retired UND Mathematics faculty members Dr. Tom Robinson and Dr. Milt Winger. He frequently has coffee with Robinson, Winger, and retired Mathematics faculty member John Whitcomb. Dr. Lyle Mauland used to participate in the golf matches, but health problems now make this impossible.

For the past several years, the Rues have spent most of the winter months in Lake Havasu City, Arizona. During their time in Arizona, they frequently visit with retired UND Mathematics faculty member Dr. Gene Kemper and his wife Mickey, who also spend most winters in Arizona. On the way to and from Arizona, the Rues sometimes visit retired UND Mathematics faculty member Dr. Dave Uherka and his wife Dorothy in Cedar City, Utah. The Uherkas live in Cedar City throughout the year.

The Rues have a son Kevin living near Detroit Lakes, Minnesota, and a son Mark who lives in southern Indiana near Louisville, Kentucky. Dr. Rue and Sue have five grandchildren.

I would like to thank Dr. Rue for his contributions to UND and to the Mathematics Department here and for visiting with me last summer. We all hope that the Rues continue to enjoy good health and a meaningful retirement!

The Pseudo-Sum

By Larry Peterson

Many things continue to change here on the UND campus. Construction a new building is now under way just south of Witmer Hall. The “Collaborative Energy Complex” will connect Leonard Hall and Upson I. It will mainly serve UND’s College of Engineering and Mines.

Another possible change here at UND is still in the planning stages. Faculty and administrators are discussing the possibility of remodeling the Chester Fritz Library. As you may know, the Chester Fritz Library is the main library here at UND. It occupies a large four-story building on the north end of the open “Quadrangle” area of the campus. Part of the plan would be to reduce the number of books in the library. This could free up a considerable amount of space. UND would then use the new free space for study areas and various student services.

One possible student service in the Chester Fritz Library building could be a Mathematics “Emporium.” A Math Emporium would be a special study center for certain introductory Mathematics courses. For these courses, instruction would take place in the Emporium rather than in an ordinary classroom or lecture hall. Students would mostly work at their own pace with help from tutors and special computer software. For most students, this self-paced work would replace the traditional classroom lecture.

These are only a few of the things that are changing or that may change here at UND. Watch the Math Log and other UND communications for information on further developments! And please send us mail with information about things that you are doing yourself! We will print some of this information in the next issue of the Math Log. I enjoy hearing from you, and I think that many readers of the Math Log do as well. In any case, whether you have news for us or not, I hope that things are going well for you!

Mathematics Department Faculty and Staff for 2015-2016

Anthony J. Bevelacqua ..................................................... Professor
Gwennie A. Byron .......................................................... Senior Lecturer and Math Learning Center Director
John B. Collings ............................................................. Associate Professor
Bruce G. Dearden ............................................................ Professor
Gerri M. Dunnigan .......................................................... Associate Professor
Stuart R. Farm ................................................................. Senior Lecturer
Cheryl L. Halcrow ......................................................... Associate Professor
Doojin Hong ................................................................. Associate Professor
Joel E. Iiams ................................................................. Professor and Chair
Michele A. Iiams ............................................................ Professor and Co-Associate Chair
Mohammad Khavanin .................................................... Professor
Jerry M. Metzger ............................................................. Professor
Richard P. Millsbaugh ..................................................... Professor and Co-Associate Chair
Michael C. Minnette ....................................................... Professor
David P. Morstad ........................................................... Senior Lecturer and Mathematics Computer Lab Director
Joseph Newhall ............................................................. Instructor
Ratha Panini ................................................................. Instructor
Lawrence J. Peterson ...................................................... Associate Professor
Lacey Pietron ................................................................. Clerk
Timothy M. Prescott ..................................................... Associate Professor
Mary E. Rerick .............................................................. Senior Lecturer
Thomas L. Richards ...................................................... Assistant Professor
Alexandar C. Sidles ...................................................... Part-time Lecturer
Jessica R. Snyder ......................................................... Senior Lecturer
Lona Spicer ................................................................. Administrative Secretary
Shuzo Takahashi .......................................................... Associate Professor
Eun-Jung Youn ............................................................. Instructor
Ryan J. Zerr ................................................................. Professor

Ryan J. Zerr .................................................................. Professor
The following persons are responsible for monetary gifts to the UND Alumni Association specifically designated for the improvement of the Department of Mathematics. We thank you for your generosity!

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*multiple contributions

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Your generosity is gratefully acknowledged and sincerely appreciated!

Your teachers and friends are wondering what you are doing. Help us satisfy their curiosity! Photos are also welcome!

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Be sure to say that the information is for the Math Log!

2015-2016