Scholarships Awarded

Each year, the Mathematics Department awards academic scholarships to several high-achieving students. This year, the department has established a new scholarship: the James Rue Mathematics Scholarship. Gifts from UND Mathematics Professor Emeritus Dr. James S. Rue have made this new scholarship possible. Dr. Rue first came to the UND Mathematics Department as a student in 1954. He later became a professor here and retired in 1993. An article about Dr. Rue appears in the 2015-2016 issue of the Math Log.1

The Mathematics Department has selected the following students to receive scholarships for the 2017-2018 academic year:

- Daniel F. Malone (James Rue Mathematics Scholarship)
- Charlotte R. Woods (Jay O. & Marie Bjorkeas Mathematics Scholarship)
- Matthew J. Lorenz (Ronald C. & Ann C. Bzoch Memorial Mathematics Scholarship)
- Thomas H. Devine (Deann & Lee Christianson Scholarship)
- Hans V. Musgrave (Paige Plagge Memorial Mathematics Scholarship)
- Jennifer M. Allen (Diana L. Wells Memorial Mathematics Scholarship)
- Erik J. Ford (Judy Ann Utton Memorial Mathematics Scholarship)

We would like to thank Dr. Rue and the other generous donors who have made these scholarships possible!

Department Appoints New Associate Chair

Dr. Michael Minnotte (pronounced mi-NOT-ee) has assumed the role of Associate Chair of the Mathematics Department. Dr. Minnotte first came to the Mathematics Department in 2007. His research specialty area is statistics. He replaces Dr. Michele Ilians (pronounced EYE-

Department Remembers Dr. Tom Robinson

UND Mathematics Professor Emeritus Dr. Thomas Robinson passed away on May 23, 2017. He was 82 years old. Dr. Robinson first came to the UND Mathematics Department in 1958 and retired from his service here in 1997. An interview with Dr. Robinson appears in the Spring 2008 issue of the Math Log.1 Another article about Dr. Robinson appeared in the Fall 1997 issue of the Math Log, and an obituary appears in UND’s University Letter.2 We will miss Dr. Robinson. We extend our best wishes to his wife Sandra and to the rest of his family.

GTAs Graduate

Fanja Andriamasy completed her M.S. degree in August of 2017. As part of her graduate studies, she prepared an independent study report entitled “The Definition and Existence of Integrals in a Banach Space.” Her academic adviser was Dr. Lawrence Peterson. Fanja is currently serving as a high school teacher in Memphis, Tennessee.

Grant Bowker completed his M.S. degree in May of 2017. His academic adviser was Dr. Ryan Zerr. Grant prepared an independent study report entitled “Matrix Groups and Their Lie Algebras.” Grant has recently gotten married. Grant and his wife have moved to Alaska, where his wife is working on a master’s degree in computational physics.

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2. To see the obituary for Dr. Robinson, visit http://blogs.und.edu/uletter. Then click on “In Remembrance,” and do a search on “Robinson.”
Zach Craig completed a master’s independent study report entitled “Seemingly Unrelated Regression.” His adviser was Dr. Michael Minnott. Zach completed his M.S. degree in May of 2017. He plans to pursue a career in the actuarial sciences.

Rebecca Nash also completed a master’s degree here last May. The title of her independent study report was “Matchings in Weighted Graphs.” Her adviser was Dr. Joel Liams. She currently teaches mathematics to students in grades seven through twelve in Belfry, Montana.

Issac Odegard completed his M.S. degree under the guidance of his adviser, Dr. Anthony Bevelacqua. The title of Issac’s independent study report was “p-adic Interpolation.” Issac graduated last May and is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Mathematics at Iowa State University.

Taylor Schlenk also completed her master’s degree here last May. Her adviser was Dr. Michele Liams. Taylor prepared an independent study report entitled “The Effects of Cooperative Learning that Engages Students in the Standards for Mathematical Practice on College Algebra Students’ Attitudes Toward and Confidence in Mathematics.” Taylor currently teaches mathematics at Edmore High School in Edmore, North Dakota. She says “I’m excited to see where that will take me!”

Tyler Zambino completed his master’s degree here last May under the guidance of his adviser, Dr. Bruce Dearden. Tyler prepared an independent study report entitled “Graph C*-algebras.” Tyler is currently working toward a Ph.D. degree in Mathematics at Iowa State University. Tyler and his fellow graduating classmate Issac Odegard are thus studying in the same department once again!

Many of our graduating master’s degree students presented public talks on their independent study work here. We congratulate them all for their hard work, and we wish them the best of luck in the future!

New GTAs Begin Service
Several students have begun service as Graduate Teaching Assistants here in the UND Mathematics Department.

Trevor Mara is from Round Rock, Texas. He completed his bachelor’s degree at Schreiner University in Kerrville, Texas, where he majored in Mathematics. He also completed a minor in Information Systems at Schreiner. Trevor enjoys watching college football. His two favorite teams are the Michigan Wolverines and the Texas Christian University (TCU) Horned Frogs. Trevor also enjoys playing blackjack, fishing, and refurbishing old computers.

Jayden Mosbrucker is from Center, North Dakota. Jayden earned his undergraduate degree here at UND, where he majored in Mathematics and minored in physics. For hobbies, Jayden enjoys playing the piano.

Hans Musgrave is from Fifty-Six, Arkansas. (“Fifty-Six” is the name of a small town in Arkansas.) Hans completed his B.S. degree here at UND, where he majored in Mathematics. Hans has an avid interest in all applications of mathematics, including topics ranging from quantum chemistry to machine learning.

Paige Relling also completed an undergraduate degree in Mathematics here at UND. Paige is from Grand Forks. Her hobbies include playing the piano, playing tennis, and singing in choirs.

Elias Schomer earned his undergraduate degree at Wheaton College, in Wheaton, Illinois. At Wheaton, Elias completed a major in Mathematics and a minor in Physics. Elias is originally from Pierz, Minnesota. For the past several summers, Elias has worked at Camp Lebanon, in Burtrum, Minnesota. Elias enjoys playing ultimate, many video games, and most board games. (Ultimate is a certain outdoor sport in which players throw a disk similar to a Frisbee.) Elias also enjoys reading the works of J. R. R. Tolkien.

Julie Wilberg is from Rygge, Ostfold, Norway. She completed an undergraduate degree in Mathematics here at UND. She enjoys playing rugby and soccer.

New Instructors Serve the Department
Dr. Brian Beaudrie served as a temporary instructor here in the UND Mathematics Department during the fall 2017 semester. He was on a sabbatical leave from Northern Arizona University for the entire semester. Dr. Beaudrie earned an Ed.D. degree in Mathematics Education at Montana State University in 2000. He also completed a master’s degree in Mathematics here at UND in 1993. One of Dr. Beaudrie’s main research interests involves investigating and studying ways in which students can most effectively learn mathematics in an “emporium” or “modified emporium” setting. Here “emporium” refers to a learning lab similar to the Math Active Learning Lab, or MALL, here at UND. (We will discuss the MALL in another article later on in this issue of the Math Log.) Dr. Beaudrie is also interested in ways of developing quantitative reasoning abilities in students of all ages. For outside activities, Dr. Beaudrie enjoys spending time with his children, playing golf, and traveling to Las Vegas, Nevada, to “study probability”!

Dr. Cathy Williams also served as a temporary instructor here in the Mathematics Department during the fall 2017 semester. Dr. Williams completed a Ph.D. degree in Educational Research at UND in 2015. She enjoys trivia, and she also enjoys hiking and traveling with her husband Dave. Dave works at UND’s Thormodsgard Law Library. Dr. Williams is originally from Hopkins, Minnesota. She may possibly return to our department in the fall of 2018.
Visitors Present Talks and Lead Discussions

Corinne Jacobson and Ryan Larson led a panel discussion entitled “What is an Actuary” here on the UND campus on February 24, 2017. Corinne and Ryan are both graduates of the UND Mathematics Department. Prior to his retirement in 2010, Ryan served as Senior Vice President and Chief Life Actuary of the Farmers Insurance Group. Corinne is currently Associate Vice President for Valuation at Sammons Financial Group.

Professor Jessica Striker, of North Dakota State University, presented the talk “Mind Boggling Toggling” here on the UND campus on Tuesday, October 24, 2017. Professor Striker’s talk was part of the Ed Nelson Memorial Lecture Series.

On November 30, 2017, Dr. Brian Beaudrie and Dr. Barbara Boschmans gave a joint presentation entitled “Teaching Mathematics in Northern Arizona University’s MALL.” (Northern Arizona’s MALL is a learning laboratory similar to the MALL here at UND. We will discuss the MALL later on in this issue of the Math Log.) Dr. Beaudrie and Dr. Boschmans are affiliated with the Department of Mathematics and Statistics at Northern Arizona University. They gave their presentation here on the UND campus.

Where They Are and What They Are Up To

Grant Hadlich (B.S. in Mathematics, Computer Science, and Electrical Engineering, 2011) lives in Seattle, Washington, with his girlfriend Lauren and their dog Elaine. He says that he “has recently accepted a new position at Amazon to work on the flight control system for the drone delivery program.” Before taking the position at Amazon, Grant worked on “navigation and planning systems” at both Rockwell Collins and BAE Systems. For much of this time, Grant and Lauren lived in the Washington, DC, area. The weather in the DC area can often be rather warm and humid in the summer. Grant is looking forward to the cooler summertime weather of Seattle!

Larry Rafferty (M.S., 1964) is retired and lives Mesa, Arizona, from October to April and in Oregon City, Oregon, for the rest of the year. His wife’s name is Willie. Larry says that he spends much of his free time playing bridge. He also says that he is sorry to hear of the passing of retired UND Mathematics professors Lyle Mauland and John Whitcomb. (See the 2016-2017 issue of the Math Log for more information on Dr. Mauland and Mr. Whitcomb.) Larry enjoyed having both of them as teachers. You can reach Larry at (503) 459-9539.

Erik Loge (M.S., 2003) is currently serving as a faculty member in the Mathematics Department at Normandale Community College in Bloomington, Minnesota. Erik has been at Normandale for ten years. He has been active with the Minnesota State College Faculty (MSCF), the main labor union for faculty at two-year colleges in Minnesota. Erik has served as chapter president and as a state board member for MSCF. Erik was on sabbatical for the fall 2017 semester. During this sabbatical, he worked on ways of using Mathematica in his calculus courses more extensively. (Mathematica is a widely available computer algebra system which one can use to do many things. For example, one can use Mathematica to perform algebraic computations, draw graphs, and make images of three-dimensional objects.) Erik is also busy when away from work. He recently completed the Ironman Wisconsin Triathlon. This involved swimming for 2.4 miles, running 26.2 miles, and riding a bicycle for 112 miles! Erik is married and has two sons: Cooper and Fletcher, ages six and four, respectively. His wife’s name is Christina.

Faculty Footnotes


Lawrence J. Peterson traveled to Auckland, New Zealand, in August of 2017 to work with his research collaborator, Dr. A. Rod Gover, at the University of Auckland. The University of Auckland paid for a portion of Dr. Peterson’s travel expenses.

UND Students Compete in Mathematics Competition

UND students Thomas Devine and Matthew Picklo competed in the annual MAA-NCS Team Competition on November 11, 2017. The MAA (the Mathematical Association of America) is a scholarly organization for teachers and students of mathematics in the U.S. The NCS is the “North Central Section” of the MAA. The MAA organizes many meetings and special activities every year. The 2017 MAA-NCS Team Competition involved students from many different colleges and universities in the north central part of the U.S. On November 11, these students gathered at locations on their respective college campuses and worked on mathematical problems. Thomas and Matthew worked on ten different problems. After a period of approximately three hours, the organizers of the competition collected the students’ solutions. Later on, the organizers graded the problem solutions and announced the winners of the contest.

Thomas and Matthew are both majoring in Mathematics. Thomas is working on a double major in Mathe-

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High School and Middle School Students Compete at Annual Math Track Meet

The Mathematics Department hosted its annual Mathematics Track Meet event on Monday, February 20, 2017. At the 2017 Math Track Meet, 213 students from high schools and middle schools in Grand Forks and nearby communities came to Witmer Hall, the home of the UND Mathematics Department, and took several competitive exams involving mathematical problems. Several people from the UND Mathematics Department graded these exams and selected winners in various categories. Several UND students, along with several high school and middle school teachers from the Grand Forks area, helped out with the 2017 Math Track Meet. UND Mathematics Professor Mohammad Khavanin coordinated the event.

MALL Opens

In the most recent issue of the Math Log, we noted that the Mathematics Department was planning to implement a new instructional format in many introductory Mathematics courses. With the new format, instruction will occur in the Math Active Learning Lab (the MALL). The MALL is now open. It began operations on a small scale during the summer of 2017, and full-scale operations began in the fall of 2017.

The MALL is an instructional laboratory in which students learn mathematics by computer-assisted individual study. Tutors are available in the MALL to help students as the need arises. In addition to studying at the MALL, students also attend a weekly “focus group” meeting. During the focus group meeting, an instructor guides the students through various learning activities and addresses any problems or questions that the students may be having.

The student success rates for courses taught at the MALL in the fall of 2017 were generally lower than the success rates for these same courses in previous semesters here at UND. We are disappointed in these success rates, of course, but the MALL Director, UND Mathematics Department faculty member Dr. Michele Liams, says that she is not completely surprised by the drop in success rates. A few other colleges and universities in the U.S. have tried instructional techniques similar to those in our MALL in recent years. Dr. Liams says that many of these other schools observed a drop in success rates when they first implemented the new instructional techniques. She also says that in courses taught at UND’s MALL, we are placing more emphasis on application problems than we did in the past. This can make courses more challenging.

Another factor that can affect success rates is extra credit. Dr. Liams notes that in recent years, graduate students have taught many of the courses that we now offer through the MALL. She says that some of these graduate students used to give extra credit points to students in various situations. We no longer offer extra credit in courses taught at the MALL, and this may be one of the causes of the lower grades we are currently observing at the MALL.

Dr. Liams also noted that students in MALL-based courses must be more “accountable” for the way they manage their time. Students are expected to spend a certain minimum number of hours each week studying at the MALL, and the MALL staff actually record the number of hours each student spends at the MALL. Students may work in the MALL anytime during the MALL’s hours of operation. Statistics show that some students often postpone their study in the MALL until just before the weekly deadline and then spend several hours in the MALL in a short period of time. Dr. Liams believes that this practice may be having a negative effect on student success rates.

Dr. Liams plans to improve communication with students at the MALL. She plans to stress the importance of spreading one’s study time out over the entire week. Various resources to help students are available at the MALL, and Dr. Liams intends to remind students of these resources more often in the coming months and years. Another method of communication with students at the MALL is their “try” score. Dr. Liams and her staff periodically gather data on student attendance at the focus group meetings, the number of assignments that students hand in, the number of hours they spend in the MALL each week, and similar things. The staff then use this data to compute a “try” score which, to some extent, measures the effort that the students are putting forth in the course. The “try” score does not count toward the students’ grades, but Dr. Liams plans to communicate it to the students more frequently in the future. She hopes that this will motivate the students to work more effectively.

Achieving high rates of student success is a challenge for mathematics instructors at many colleges and universities in the U.S. It is exciting to see what the UND Mathematics Department is doing to achieve higher student success rates. We believe that our student success rates will improve in the near future. Watch for more news about the MALL in the next issue of the Math Log!

Lona Spicer Retires

If you have visited the UND Mathematics Department office anytime within the last thirty years, you may have met the Mathematics Department secretary, Mrs. Lona Spicer. Lona retired from her service here in October of 2017. The Math Log editor met with Lona last summer (the summer of 2017), and we discussed her experiences here in the Mathematics Department, as well as some of her experiences during the Flood of 1997.
Lona originally came to UND in 1982. She served as a word processor in UND’s Chemistry Department until 1987, when she joined the Mathematics Department. Lona says that her job changed dramatically over the course of her years here. When Lona first came to our department, she did not have a computer. Instead, the office had a computer “terminal,” which Lona would occasionally use to obtain information from a computer in another building. During her early days in the Mathematics Department, Lona would often type exams and memos for faculty members, lecturers, and graduate teaching assistants (GTAs). After just a few years, Lona began using a personal computer. She continued to type exams, but to do this, she began using TeX, a special computer software program that she ran on her computer. (TeX is pronounced “teck.”) When Lona used TeX to type exams, the printing and mathematical symbols on the exams would look very similar to the printing and symbols that you would see in a textbook or in a book from the library.

After a few more years, most people in the Mathematics Department had their own computers and were using computer software to type their exams themselves. Lona no longer needed to type so many exams, but other administrative tasks were becoming more demanding. One example of this was financial accounting. The Mathematics Department has various financial accounts here at UND which it uses to pay for such things as photocopying, office supplies, new computers, or office furniture. Every time we purchase such things, our office staff here must log in to one or more computer software systems and supply account numbers and various other items of information. In an earlier era, the staff would have supplied this information by filling out paper forms. We used to call this “paperwork.” Lona says that the computer work associated with purchasing and other financial matters has become very demanding in recent years.

Lona also mentioned the example of hiring. The Mathematics Department normally employs approximately fifteen to twenty undergraduate students in various capacities. Many of these work in the tutorial center that we operate here in Witmer Hall or in the new Math Active Learning Lab (MALL). We are continually hiring new students. Each time we hire a new student, our office staff must again log in to various computer software systems and supply all sorts of information. This can require our staff to do a significant amount of work.

For the last year or two of Lona’s service here, our clerk, Mrs. Lacey Pietron, has done most of the administrative work relating to accounting, hiring, and other personnel issues. This eased the burden on Lona, but Lona still continued to fulfill many duties up until her retirement. Lona often answered the telephone, and she was usually the first person to greet students as they walked into the office. She helped many students with various issues relating to registration in Mathematics courses. She also dealt with problems that arose when students had registered for a course without having previously taken the necessary prerequisite courses. And Lona performed several tasks related to the scheduling of courses and exams. She prepared various memos, and she also helped with the preparation of the Math Log newsletter! Lona used her computer for much of this work. By the time she retired, Lona says, she was working on her computer “all the time.”

**The Flood of 1997**

For most of her years here, one of Lona’s continuing objectives was to help ensure that our work progressed smoothly. This was especially important at the time of the Flood of 1997. As you may know, the Red River of the North experienced a severe flood in the spring of 1997. At the peak of the flood, water covered most of Grand Forks. Lona told me some interesting stories relating to the flood. She began by describing one of the precautions she took during the early stages of the flood. During these early stages, as the floodwater was still rising, people began to realize that most Grand Forks residents might have to evacuate the city. Lona knew that if an evacuation were necessary, most people would be staying with friends or relatives in other towns and cities, some of which might be very far from Grand Forks. So Lona asked all of the Mathematics Department faculty, lecturers, and GTAs to tell her where they would be going in the event of a mass evacuation. Lona kept a record of the information that everyone had provided, and she put this information in a notebook. If an evacuation should be necessary, she would then be able to maintain contact with everyone. These precautions were “just in case” a mass evacuation should occur.

It so happened that as the waters were rising, it was almost time for some of the Mathematics graduate students to take their comprehensive exams. The comprehensive exams were scheduled for a Saturday. Lona told me an interesting story concerning a graduate student who called her the evening before the exams. The student lived in East Grand Forks, on the other side of the flooding Red River, and she was concerned that the last bridge across the river might soon be closed. This would prevent her from taking the comprehensive exams. Lona said to her, “Why don’t you come and stay at my place? The back door will be open.” The student accepted the invitation and arrived at Lona’s house very late that evening.
The next day, the students came to Witmer Hall (the home of the Mathematics Department here on the UND campus) and began taking their comprehensive exams. While the exams were in progress, the civil defense sirens sounded, indicating that floodwater was about to cover large parts of Grand Forks.

In 1997, Mrs. Donna Boe was serving as the Mathematics Department’s clerk. Donna had joined the department a few weeks before Lona had. Donna and her husband Gary lived in the town of Hatton, North Dakota, a few miles from Grand Forks. Hatton was not threatened by the flood, and Donna and Gary invited several people from the Mathematics Department, including Lona and her husband Gary, to stay at their house. After a few days, Lona and her husband Gary, along with many of the other flood refugees, were able to move on to stay with friends or relatives in other locations.

Flood Cleanup

After the floodwater receded, Lona continued her service to the Mathematics Department, or more specifically, to the people of the Mathematics Department. In many cases, the basements of people’s houses had been flooded. Several people from the Mathematics Department worked together to help clean out their basements. They would carry damaged items up from the basement and clean and disinfect the basements. In many cases, wallboard and paneling had to be removed. Lona helped to coordinate the cleanup efforts. She had a list of Mathematics people who were able to assist with the cleanup. She would call the people on the list to tell them where the group would be working on any given day.

As the days and weeks went by, cleanup and recovery efforts continued. Life in most parts of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks returned to normal. Classes at UND resumed. Twenty years have now gone by since the flood, and Lona is now sixty-five years old. She says that it is “time to retire.”

I asked Lona if she had any other interesting stories to tell. She replied by saying “I had fun. I would not have stayed here this long if it hadn’t been fun.” Lona says that she had fun at the Mathematics Department social events, and she enjoyed eating lunch with the other people here in the Mathematics Department office. She misses the many retired Mathematics faculty members she knew here who have now passed away.

Words of Wisdom

I asked Lona if she had any words of wisdom or advice for students and young people. After thinking for a moment, Lona said that she would advise students to “learn to do things on their own.” She says that students sometimes expect too much from their teachers and their parents. Students need to assume responsibility for their own education. This is probably good advice! It comes from someone who has worked with students for a long time!

Lona continues to be in touch with students. When I talked to her last summer, she said that she was continuing to receive e-mail messages and telephone calls from former undergraduate and graduate students. She said that from time to time a former student would drop by the Mathematics Department office.

If you drop by the Mathematics Department office now, of course, Lona will likely not be here. But Lona and her husband Gary still live in Grand Forks! If you would like to write to Lona, you can do so by e-mail. Her e-mail address is lona.spicer70@gmail.com. I think that she would be happy to hear from you!

Finally, I would like to extend my thanks to Lona! I would like to thank her for sharing her stories and thoughts with the readers of the Math Log. And I would also like to thank her for all of the things she has done for the Mathematics Department and for our students over the past thirty years. We all wish her a healthy and happy retirement!

The Pseudo-Sum

By Larry Peterson

I hope that you get a chance to read the article about Lona Spicer beginning on page 4 of this issue of the Math Log. Lona retired in October of 2017, after many years of service as the secretary here in the Mathematics Department. Even if you are not interested in financial accounting, hiring, or class registration, you should still read the part of the article dealing with the Flood of 1997 here in Grand Forks.

A few weeks after Lona’s retirement, Rita Amundson joined the Mathematics Department and became our new secretary. Rita is learning very quickly and is already making a very valuable contribution here. We welcome Rita!

Many other new and old things continue to happen here in the Mathematics Department. This issue of the Math Log describes a few of them. I hope that you find these things interesting. And I hope that interesting things are happening in your lives as well! If possible, please send us news about your activities! I always enjoy receiving news from our past students and including this news in the Math Log! The Mathematics Department address appears on the next page.

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5. Donna’s and Lona’s husbands are both named Gary.
6. In a few neighborhoods, all of the houses were eventually torn down. These neighborhoods were never rebuilt.
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!

James & Janet Loos
Joseph & Joyann Guzek
Rodney & Marlys Kjellberg
Michael B. Kalina*
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Peter Willyard, in memory of Lyle E. Mauland
Lowell J. Schweigert, in memory of Thomas J. Robinson
Carol M. Hokana & Nick Bonifanti
Dr. Milton E. Winger

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Forrest & Susan Bjerkaas

Deann and Lee Christianson Scholarship
Drs. Lee & Deann Christianson

Judy Ann Utton Memorial Scholarship
Bruce & Lori Anderson

Jim Rue Mathematics Scholarship
Jim Rue*

Bequest for MALL
Rodney B. McKinney

*Multiple contributions

If you would like to make a monetary contribution to UND, to the UND Mathematics Department, or to one of our scholarships, please make your check payable to the “UND Foundation.”

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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