

# AMS Committee on Meetings and Conferences Report 2018

The Committee on Meetings and Conferences (CoMC) held its annual meeting March 24, 2018 at AMS Headquarters in Providence. Rebecca Garcia of Sam Houston State University, chair, presided.

**Actions taken by CoMC** include the following:

- **Child Care Grants at Sectional Meetings** The AMS and MAA have offer reimbursement grants of US\$250 per family to help with the cost of child care for registered participants in the Joint Mathematics Meetings (JMM). The funds can be used for child care expenses from local resources at JMM or for any other form of child care (such as hiring a nanny at home, bringing a caregiver to the meeting, etc.). A survey conducted in the Fall 2017 Sectional meetings confirmed the utility for Child Care Grants for Sectional Meetings. *CoMC voted unanimously to recommend that the Council ask the AMS staff to look into developing a plan for child care grants at Sectional meetings.* It was noted that if child care grants were restricted to AMS members, this could be viewed as part of the strategic initiative on membership development.
- **2018 Annual Review: Scientific Program of the JMM** Wen-Ching Winnie Li and Christina Sormani (chair) formed a subcommittee that carried out the review of the scientific program of the JMM. Three notable items arose from their review:
  - Their study noted that 65% of attendees rate “making a presentation was ‘important’ or ‘very important’ in their decision to attend the meeting. In the 2016 JMM, 35 participants gave distinct presentations in different Special Sessions. The subcommittee moved that in order to allow room for others to present their work, “CoMC recommend to the Council that an individual may give at most one AMS Special Session talk at a given JMM.” This motion was passed unanimously at the CoMC Meeting in March. It was presented to the Council in April 2018, where the motion as stated did not carry. Concerns were expressed that such a policy would have a very small impact and would be very complex to administer.
  - Their analysis of the invited addresses revealed that attendance was generally higher for addresses that are co-sponsored with other organizations. *CoMC voted unanimously to create a subcommittee to explore the possibility of establishing joint invited addresses at the JMM with NAM and other organizations.* CoMC members Edray Goins, Kelly McKinnie, and Christina Sormani volunteered to serve on this subcommittee.
  - CoMC requested staff to create a “suggest a speaker” button for all invited addresses.
- **2018 Annual Review: John von Neumann Symposium** Monica Nevins (chair) and Rebecca Garcia formed a subcommittee that carried out the review of the John von Neumann Symposium (JvNS), an endowed series of presentations held quadrennially to an endowed series of presentations held quadriennially that focuses on seminal concepts in mathematics. The Symposium memorializes the life and accomplishments of John von Neumann. The next JvNS is scheduled to take place in 2020 and the JvNS Selection Committee will soon be appointed by the the AMS President. Garcia reported on the main challenges faced by the series:
  - Low diversity among attendees and speakers,
  - Low attendance in general,
  - Low visibility.

The subcommittee suggested a number of alternatives for the JvNS that would maintain the spirit of the endowment:

- Shortening the JvNS,
- Making it a Short Course at JMM,
- Request that it be held at a mathematical institute, or

- Offering scholarships

CoMC unanimously voted *to send a copy of the CoMC review of the JvNS to the next von Neumann Symposium Selection Committee.*

- **2017 Annual Review: Summer Research Institute** In 2017, the Summer Research Institute (SRI) was one of three programs reviewed by CoMC. The only recent examples of these three-week long SRIs occurred in 2005 and again in 2015 in algebraic geometry. Upon review, the subcommittee voiced concerns about the paucity of women among the invited speakers, the large claim that the SRI makes on AMS staff resources, the relevance of three-week conferences, and the fact that the AMS was giving so much support to conferences in just one field. CoMC reported this to the Council in 2017, but no specific action was taken. In the 2018 CoMC meeting, the committee passed the motion *to reaffirm its March 2017 statement that the AMS should not organize another SRI in algebraic geometry.*
- **AMS Website for Conference Information** In 2017, an idea to create an arXiv-like platform for conferences to be hosted by the AMS was discussed. A subcommittee explored the idea and reported to CoMC in the 2018 meeting. The subcommittee comprised Pierre Albin (chair), Ivan Corwin, and Niles Johnson. A discussion on the value of having a comprehensive searchable listing of conferences led to committee to unanimously pass the resolution *to encourage AMS Staff to enhance the current Mathematics Calendar, to incorporate options for searching on appropriate fields.*
- **2019 Annual Review** CoMC chose as a topic for its Annual Review “The overall AMS Program at the JMM.” The subcommittee consists of Kelly McKinnie (chair), Edray Goins, and Frank Sottile. As part of this review, a focus group will be held at JMM 2019 in Baltimore.
- **The Maryam Mirzakhani Lecture** At its March 2018 Meeting, CoMC discussed various possibilities for naming an address after Maryam Mirzakhani and unanimously passed the following: *COMC recommends to Council that the AMS create an annual invited address at JMM to honor Maryam Mirzakhani. This will be implemented by naming and publicizing one of the current five AMS Invited Addresses as “The Maryam Mirzakhani Lecture.”* This was reported at the 2018 Council Meeting, and after discussion, this motion was also unanimously passed.
- **2019 CoMC Meeting** The next CoMC Meeting will be held at the Chicago O’Hare Airport Hilton on March 9, 2019.
- **Change to Welcoming Environment Policy** CoProf recommended adding “immigration status” to the list in the last sentence of the first paragraph of the Welcoming Environment Policy, so that the first paragraph would read:

*“The AMS strives to ensure that participants in its activities enjoy a welcoming environment. In all its activities, the AMS seeks to foster an atmosphere that encourages the free expression and exchange of ideas. The AMS supports equality of opportunity and treatment for all participants, regardless of gender, gender identity or expression, race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion or religious belief, age, marital status, sexual orientation, disabilities, veteran status, or immigration status.”*

This change was unanimously approved by CoMC via vote by email.

## Other Activities

- **Abstract System for AMS Meetings** The abstract system used to handle abstracts for AMS meetings is no longer adequate for the needs of the JMM, and AMS staff were reviewing possible replacements. Although the options are still under review, it is likely the abstracts system that is chosen will not be able to produce the journal *Abstracts of Papers Presented to the American Mathematical Society*. Abstracts of papers presented at AMS meetings will, however, be made available online and/or in print, and the AMS is committed to maintaining an archive of abstracts, in order to keep a permanent record of its meetings.

- **Suggesting Special Lecturers** At its 2017 meeting, CoMC recommended that the web pages for the Einstein and Erdős Lectures contain a link for recommending potential speakers. A “Suggest a Speaker” link has been added to each page.
- **Video-recording Lectures** At JMM 2018, all but one of the Invited Addresses was video-recorded and accessible directly by the public. CoMC members expressed interest in continuing these recordings and making them accessible to members. Additionally, the committee followed up with a discussion of the opportunities that video recording might offer for the AMS Short Course. The possibilities it considered included live webinars, remote participation, and making video-recording accessible to members. CoMC recommended that the staff explore these ideas further.
- **CoMC Panel at the 2018 JMM** At its meeting in March 2017, CoMC unanimously agreed to sponsor a panel at JMM 2018. The first such panel ever sponsored by CoMC, it was entitled “Collaborative Research Communities in Mathematics,” and the panelists were Sam Ballas (Florida State University), Ruth Charney (Brandeis University), Brian Conrey (American Institute of Mathematics), and Satyan Devadoss (University of San Diego). The panel was organized by a subcommittee comprising Alan Reid (chair) and Irina Mitrea, who also served as the moderator. A report written by Monica Nevins (past chair of CoMC) describes the panel as informative and, though attendance was light, there was plenty of interest in sharing collaborative research practices. CoMC discussed ways in which the content of the panel could be disseminated more broadly, such as webinars or an article in the *Notices*.

Rebecca Garcia, Chair  
December 2018