Dear Math/CS/Mathematical Economics majors and minors,

On behalf of the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science, welcome back for another challenging, rewarding, and fun year of classwork and research, making new friends and proving new theorems. This letter provides an overview of our faculty and what they are up to, upcoming courses, and the many opportunities for you as students to get involved with mathematics and computer science in ways that will engage and challenge you.

We will have our traditional Fall Welcome Back Picnic during week three – don’t miss it!

**WELCOME BACK PICNIC**

Friday September 20th at 12 noon

TUTT SCIENCE CENTER (Skillings Common)

Here is an overview of news and happenings in the department for the coming year:

**Our New Paraprofessional:**

Cory Scott takes over the position of paraprofessional. Cory graduated from CC last year with a double major in math and computer science. He has a passion for both subjects, and knowledge of what it takes to get through your math or CS major or minor. Cory can tell you about the fascinating topics that await you in the classes that you have yet to take. He will also keep you tuned in to the many mathematical and social activities going on for students in the department. If you are interested in working as a homework grader, please let him know. If you don’t already know Cory, drop by TSC 210 and introduce yourself.

**Our Faculty:**

We are very pleased to welcome two new year-long visitors. **Michael Penn** in an algebraist who completed his PhD at SUNY-Albany. Prior to joining us, Michael was a visiting professor at Bowdoin College in Maine. Among other classes, Michael will be teaching MA321 (Algebra 1) for us in block 4. When he’s not teaching or proving theorems, Michael can usually be found rock climbing or chasing his 3-year-old son, Enzo (hopefully not at the same time). **Rodney James** completed his PhD in algebraic geometry at Colorado State University. Be sure to ask him what “tropical geometry” is! He also has expertise in numerical analysis, especially linear algebra. Rodney will be teaching MA220 (Linear Algebra) in block 3, and a geometrically-flavored MA110 in block 8. In his free time (hah!), Rodney spends a lot of time cycling, Nordic skiing, and watching Japanese movies.

We are also delighted to be hosting a very special block visitor this block, **Robin Wilson**. Robin is an eminent British graph theorist and historian, and probably the only person in the building with his own Wikipedia entry. He is co-teaching an FYE with Marlow, and he will be giving our first student-level Fearless Friday talk on the second Friday of this block. Robin is an old friend of the department and a wonderful speaker – don’t miss his talk!
We’ll have to muddle along without Andrea Bruder for the fall, and Jane McDougall for the whole year. Both are on sabbatical, taking a well-deserved break to work on their research, develop new teaching materials, and visit colleagues. Meanwhile, Mike Siddoway has moved into Armstrong Hall to take on the important position of Associate Dean. We will miss his presence in the department, but we are excited and proud to have such a wonderful friend and colleague in the dean’s office.

Another exciting new development is that we will be hiring a new tenure-track computer scientist. Expect campus visits from several top candidates in Block 5, with opportunities to attend talks, go out to breakfast with the candidates, and give your input into our hiring decision.

It is business as usual for the rest of us in the department: - Marlow Anderson, David Brown (that’s me – the department chair), Stefan Erickson, Steven Janke, Amelia Taylor (associate chair), Fred Tinsley, and Matthew Whitehead.

Amy Pacheco, our technical director, will continue to be there to help us with any problems arising with technology and to think about creative ways to use technology in and out of the classroom. Marita Beckert, our staff assistant, will continue to be there to help us with everything necessary for the department to run smoothly. Please let them know how much you appreciate their hard work!

Now for some helpful reminders…

The “Capstone Experience” Requirement

The capstone experience requirement is a crowning course or activity that mathematics majors pursue in their senior year. The capstone experience is a graduation requirement of all students who have declared a major in mathematics. There are two different ways to fulfill the requirement:

- MA408 – History of Mathematics taken as a senior (Anderson – block 6)
- A project concluding with a thesis and seminar during block 7. You should select a faculty advisor for this as soon as possible – no later than of block 3 of your senior year. For more information about the thesis, please consult the department web page or any faculty. Note that math majors pursuing distinction must select this capstone option.

Caution juniors: Do not take MA408 as a junior unless you are absolutely sure that you wish to complete the paper and project option as your capstone-fulfillment activity when you are a senior.

Computer science majors are not required to complete a capstone project…yet. However, a research project can be highly rewarding, and we encourage you to consider doing one.
Fearless Friday Talks:

Our departmental seminar series includes presentations each Friday, except for block breaks. Some talks are given by our faculty, some by students, and some by visitors. We rate each talk (G to XXX) to give you an idea of its level of difficulty. You can always learn something interesting at our talks, even from those that eventually move on to more technical material. The talks will often introduce you to topics not normally studied in our regular courses.

We will schedule a student-oriented talk on the second Friday of each block at noon in TSC122 (with pizza). These talks should stir your interest in new topics and will often bridge different areas of mathematics and computer science. Talks that are more research-level are held on the other Fridays at 2:30 pm in TSC229; students are always welcome.

All Mathematics majors and Computer Science majors are required to attend at least 4 seminars and submit a written one or two-page summary to the staff assistant (Marita Beckert) within two weeks of the seminar. This is a graduation requirement, and we do enforce it. Needless to say, we hope you will attend many more than four seminars over your four years at CC! Associate Chair Amelia Taylor will be overseeing the review process to see that your write-ups are suitable – please don’t hesitate to ask her if you have any questions. Reminder: All summaries should be completed by the end of block 7 of your senior year. You can reduce your senior year stress by starting early. I’m just saying.

Pizza Problems and Other Events:

As you may know, we pose (and post) a Pizza Problem each block. The earliest correct solution earns a pizza. Watch for both mathematical and computer science problems posted each block on one of our several bulletin boards as well as the department website.

Expect a number of social events to be organized by Cory; in the past these have included games nights and bowling. Also watch out for the holiday party and spring picnic, dates TBA.

Tutors and Graders:

The department hires graders for many of our courses, and the QRC hires tutors and learning assistants. If you would like to try your hand at these rewarding jobs, please contact Cory or the new QRC director, Steve Getty. This work is essential to guiding many of our students through their courses, and this is an opportunity for you as tutors and graders to gain a deeper understanding of the material as well.

Math/CS Email List:

Throughout the year, we will contact you about seminars, schedule changes, parties, picnics and other math/cs related activities. Most of the announcements go out by e-mail, so make sure you are on our list – check with Cory.

Wishing you all another productive and enjoyable year,

David Brown