UD Counts on Summer Program to Spur Student Interest in Mathematics; UD Mathematics Professor to Attend National Conference on Proposed Changes in Math Education

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UD COUNTS ON SUMMER RESEARCH PROGRAM TO SPUR STUDENT INTEREST IN MATHEMATICS

The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics this week proposed sweeping changes in the way math is taught to help improve basic math skills and increase interest in a subject many students find unappealing. A November 1988 study by the American Mathematical Society and Mathematical Association of America cites a dire need for more mathematicians with doctoral degrees and notes that nearly half of the 804 Ph.D. degrees awarded from U.S. universities last year went to non-Americans.

In the University of Dayton's mathematics department, Aparna W. Higgins and Harold Mushenheim have designed a seven-week summer research program designed to stimulate interest in mathematical careers by introducing undergraduate students to the excitement of mathematical research and discovery.

"We believe the program addresses a crisis of national proportions—the decrease in the number of students who choose mathematics as a career," said Higgins, a Springfield resident. "One reason for this shortage is that students do not usually have the opportunity to experience the creative aspect of mathematics during their undergraduate training. It's hard to convey that excitement. It's like talking about a roller coaster ride—it's no fun unless you're actually on it."

The four undergraduates chosen for the program will receive a $1,500 stipend to spend June 26-August 4 on campus attending lectures and working on chosen problems. During the final week (August 7-11), the students will attend a joint meeting of the American Mathematical Society and the Mathematical Association of America in Boulder, Colo., where they will give a talk about their research.

For media interviews, contact Aparna Higgins at (513) 229-2103 or 399-6542.

UD MATHEMATICS PROFESSOR TO ATTEND NATIONAL CONFERENCE IN APRIL THAT FOCUSES ON PROPOSED CHANGES IN MATH EDUCATION

Mathematics has relied too much on "rote memorization" of facts rather than problem-solving in the classroom. The use of a calculator as a "fast pencil" should not harm a student's ability to learn multiplication, addition and subtraction.

Those are the views of Bernard Rice, a University of Dayton mathematics professor who gave a talk to colleagues last week about "Everybody Counts," a recent National Research Council report on the state of mathematics education. Rice plans to attend a National Council of Teachers of Mathematics meeting in Orlando in April that is expected to focus on proposals to allow elementary school students to use calculators and computers to solve math problems.

"We have to change our system of teaching," said Rice, who predicts by 1995 students will be using computers to solve algebra problems.

"Our system has been termed a filter because we filter people out. We have to change students' attitudes about math. I'm all in favor of the proposals."

For media interviews, contact Bernard Rice at (513) 229-2108.

The University of Dayton
For further information or assistance in scheduling interviews, contact Public Relations and University Communications, 229-3241.