

OURFA²M²: An Online Math Conference By and For Students

Online Undergraduate Resource Fair for the Advancement and Alliance of Marginalized Mathematicians

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Additional Organizers: Gavi Dhariwal, Bowen Li, tahda queer, Jenna Race

History:

The founding organizers (three undergraduates, one graduate student, one college dropout) identified gaps in undergraduate programming and decided they wanted to create an online conference to try to fill those gaps.

- 2020: Founding, one day conference, no funding, support from AMS
- 2021: New organizers join, conference becomes a two-day event, funding from various sources, support from MAA
- 2022: New organizers, first NSF grant with MAA as grant writing institution
- 2023: New organizers, second NSF grant with MAA as grant writing institution

Who is OURFA²M² for?

OURFA²M² is for “marginalized mathematicians,” which we use to include:

- Students of color
- Women students
- Queer and trans students
- Immigrant students, undocumented students, international students
- Disabled students, neurodiverse students, chronically ill students
- Nontraditional students, low income students, and community college students
- Students at schools with fewer resources
- First generation students and other students from families without connections to academia

This is not an exhaustive list of ways one can be marginalized in math. Further, while we intend to serve marginalized mathematicians, their allies are also welcome and encouraged to attend.

Gaps we attempt to fill:

- Programming for and by students
- Programming that addresses all marginalized students as a collective
- Programming targeting early undergrads

Lessons:

For professional allies to students:

- When working on projects intended to support students, include students! Their feedback and involvement will make your projects more effective.
- Consider encouraging them to create their own organizing projects.

For students:

- Your project is possible. You don't need anyone's permission or approval to be official or worthy of respect.
- There are other people out there noticing the same problems you are. Find them, and work together.

Data:

From the 2022 conference:

- A subset of registrant demographics:
 - 20.3% Hispanic/Latine/Latinx
 - 11.7% Black/African American
 - 32.8% Asian/Pacific Islander
 - 46.6% Woman
 - 23.1% First generation college student
 - 16.9% Neurodiverse/neurodivergent
 - 24.8% LGBTQ+
- 305 unique participants
- After-conference survey:
 - 93.3% felt very or mostly welcome
 - First math conference for 81.4%
 - 91.5% felt much more or slightly more prepared to pursue a math career
 - 42.5% had heard of none or almost none of the opportunities presented in the conference
 - 57.6% would definitely recommend OURFA²M²; 39% were likely to do so

Conference segments:

Our conference segments are intended to address needs we observe in undergrad mathematicians.

- Experiences Panel: Current and recent undergrads with diverse identities discuss their experiences at REUs, study abroad, internships, counselorships, et cetera
- Opportunities Panel: Directors of such programs discuss what they're looking for and what students can expect
- Our Stories: Professional mathematicians with diverse identities talk about their path from undergrad to their current position
- Crash Courses: Mathematicians with experience advising undergrads give short introductions to various fields of math which are common to undergrad research
- Networking: Student participants and professional participants chat about various topics in breakout rooms
- Resource Presentation: Quick slideshow of REUs, conferences, jobs, organizations, and other resources that are known to us
- Plenaries: Presentations from mathematicians with something unique to share with our participants

We select speakers carefully, to include diverse identities and career paths. We include topics in pure math and applied math as well as math education and math communication.

Our future:

We hope to continue bringing in new organizers who are current students and can best meet the needs of their peers. We hope OURFA²M² continues to be a resource for years to come.



Pictured: 2023 Organizers Bowen Li, tahda queer, Gavi Dhariwal, Luke Seaton, Ashka Dalal, Jenna Race, Lee Trent, Zoe Markman