

Integral

MIT Massachusetts
Institute of
Technology

Mathematics Department

SPRING 2026, VOLUME 13



Dear Friends,

After a short hiatus, we are back and better than ever, reviving *Integral*, a now beloved Math department tradition spanning two decades. The past year has certainly been eventful, both in the world and within the Simons Building. Due to an increased endowment tax, uncertainty about budgets of funding agencies like the NSF, and a potential cap on indirect costs, MIT is implementing budget cuts in the upcoming fiscal year, and this will impact our department as well. And it is pretty clear that immigration policies will also affect who makes up our math community in the long run. On the bright side, our department is still doing very well, and I am excited to loop you back into the happenings of all things in the mathematics department.

PEOPLE

On the faculty front, in 2024, we were fortunate to welcome Shaoyun Bai, Jacopo Borga, and Christoph Kehle, and in 2025, Henry Cohn, Shafi Goldwasser, and Adit Radhakrishnan. We provide brief introductions of them in this edition of *Integral*. We will also have four new assistant professors joining us in the Fall. Hiring outstanding faculty across pure and applied mathematics is always our priority to compensate for the one to three retirements and departures every year. And it is a very competitive landscape for top talent. Every year, we also welcome about eight C.L.E. Moore Instructors and about twenty

graduate students across all fields; they are the future leading mathematicians. These numbers are slightly down due to budget cuts.

We have seen many changes to staff as well, including the well-deserved retirements of Barbara Peskin, our Academic Officer, and Dennis Porch, long-time assistant to the department head. We have a new, great team providing much support to our academic, research and outreach missions. We are grateful for their support and for their commitment to helping the department run smoothly.

We are saddened by the passing of several Emeriti faculty members, Sig Helgason (December 3, 2023), Dan Stroock (March 13, 2025) and most recently Harvey Greenspan (March 20, 2026). Collectively, they shaped the department over more than 100 years, each in their very unique way. Our heartfelt condolences go out to their families.

Our exceptional faculty has once again been celebrated in multiple awards, including elections to national academies, like NAS and the AAAS, invitations to lecture at the upcoming International Congress of Mathematicians (ICM) this summer, and for various major contributions to mathematics. More about the *who* and the *what* of awards inside.

ACADEMICS

We have been working with the wind in our sails to ensure Course 18 continues to provide a vigorous and robust academic experience. More inside from Associate Head, Bill Minicozzi about increasing requirements for the undergraduate Math program (one of the most flexible in the nation!), as well as potentially significant changes MIT is considering to the General Institute Requirements (GIRs).

Notes also from Philippe Rigollet about the new Masters of Science in Mathematics of Data (adding a 5th year to our B.S. program), and from Henry Cohn about RAMP, the exciting new pre-orientation summer program for incoming MIT undergraduates.

As you can imagine, AI is transforming mathematics as well as many other domains. On the research side, some of us are exploring how to use AI systems as assistants or sounding boards, and also interfacing them to formal verification systems as correctness and hallucinations are major issues for Large Language Models. How to use them for our teaching mission is also much on our mind, as Ankur Moitra mentions in his piece.

LEARNING

What makes MIT such a special place is all the energy, the brainpower, the knowledge, and also the constant flow of visitors and seminars to keep us challenged, engaged and informed. This spring, we had the privilege of hosting two Simons Lecturers in pure and applied mathematics, Boaz Klartag and Ray Goldstein, respectively. They brought together much of the department.

Beyond the traditional mathematical fare, Gigliola Staffilani has launched a new "Not Just Math" series, which, as the name playfully suggests, acknowledges that sometimes the most interesting mathematics happens when we venture just outside our usual domain. Starting strong with a first lecture on AI and Mathematicians, the series serves as a refreshing reminder that mathematics thrives not in isolation, but in dialogue with the broader intellectual ecosystem.

— Michel Goemans

Faculty Updates

2025



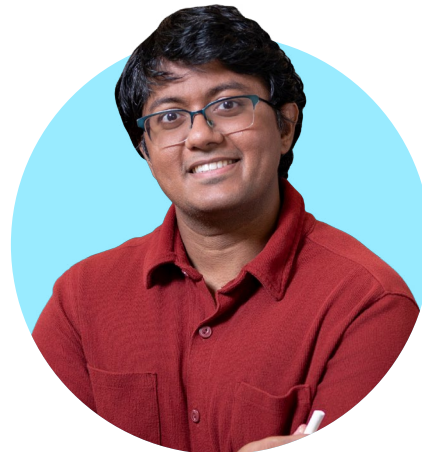
HENRY COHN

An alumnus of MIT, Henry Cohn joined us as full Professor of Mathematics from Adjunct Professor, a role he held concurrently to his position as Senior Principal Researcher at Microsoft Research. Henry's interests span discrete mathematics, discrete geometry, coding theory, cryptography, combinatorics, computational number theory, and theoretical computer science.



SHAFI GOLDWASSER

Previously the Director of the Simons Institute for the Theory of Computing at UC Berkeley and, before that, the RSA Professor in EECS at MIT, Shafi Goldwasser joined us in the Mathematics Department as the Leighton Family Professor. A Turing Award recipient, her work focuses on computational complexity theory, cryptography, computational number theory, and as of late, trustworthy AI.



ADIT RADHAKRISHNAN

Moving to the Mathematics Department is Adit Radhakrishnan, who joined us as Assistant Professor after holding the position of Schmidt Center Postdoctoral Fellow at the Broad Institute, where he remains an Associate Member. His interests are in the foundations of AI with applications in biology.

2024



SHAORYUN BAI

Shaoyun Bai joined us as Assistant Professor from Columbia University, where he was the Ritt Assistant Professor. Primarily focused on symplectic topology, his work draws from low-dimensional topology, algebraic geometry, algebraic topology, dynamics, and arithmetics.



JACOPO BORGA

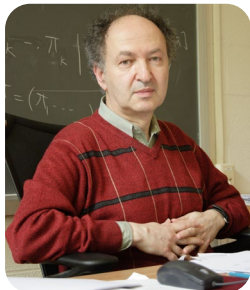
A 2026 Alfred P. Sloan Research Fellow, Jacopo Borga joined us at MIT as Assistant Professor, having previously held the position of the Szegő Assistant Professor at Stanford University. He is focused on probability theory, combinatorics, and mathematical physics.



CHRISTOPH KEHLE

Joining us as Assistant Professor from ETH Zurich and IAS Princeton, Christoph Kehle's research focuses on general relativity, analysis, and partial differential equations originating from physics.

Retirements



GEORGE LUSZTIG retired in 2024 after an extraordinary career. A recipient of many honors including the Cole, Leroy P. Steel, Shaw, and Wolf prizes, his work revolutionized representation theory and shaped large areas of algebra, geometry, and mathematical physics. He received his PhD from Princeton in 1971, and joined our faculty in 1978 from the University of Warwick. Within our department, he was the Norbert Wiener Professor (1999–2009) and is presently the Edward A. Abdun-Nur (1924) Professor Emeritus.



RICHARD MELROSE retired in 2024 following an illustrious career at MIT spanning nearly 50 years. For his groundbreaking work in nonlinear PDEs, specifically microlocal analysis and scattering theory, he received the Bôcher Prize of the AMS in 1984. After his PhD from Cambridge University in 1974, he joined our department in 1976, and was appointed Simons Professor of Mathematics in 2006. Deeply dedicated to the Department, he served as Chair of the Graduate Student Committee and as Chair of the Pure Mathematics Committee. He is now Professor Emeritus.



HUNG CHENG retired in 2023 after nearly six decades at MIT. Joining our faculty in 1965 following his PhD from Caltech and postdoctoral appointments at Caltech, Princeton and Harvard, Hung has contributed extensively to theoretical physics. In 1978, he was elected Academician of Academia Sinica. A devoted teacher, his office was often seen filled with students. Hung is also a writer, and published a historical novel, “Nanjing Never Cries” in 2016. He is now Professor Emeritus.



RODOLFO RUBEN ROSALES retired at the end of 2023 after a prominent career at MIT focused on nonlinear waves, fluid mechanics, material sciences, and numerical PDEs. A prior Sloan research fellow, he received his PhD from Caltech in 1977 and came to MIT in 1980 following positions at Caltech, UC Berkeley, and the Courant Institute. Through both research and teaching, he played a major role in building the Department’s physical applied mathematics group. Ruben served as Chair of the Applied Mathematics Committee between 2002–2006. He is now Professor Emeritus.

Awards to Faculty

2026

ROMAN BEZRUKAVNIKOV received the NAS Maryam Mirzakhani Prize. **TOBIAS COLDING** was awarded the Rolf Schock Prize. **SEMYON DYATLOV** received the AMS Bôcher Memorial Prize. **DOR MINZER** received the NAS Michael and Sheila Held Prize. **ANKUR MOITRA** received the IEEE W. Wallace McDowell Award. **ZHIWEI YUN** received the AMS Chevalley Prize. Five faculty—**JEREMY HAHN, DOR MINZER, PHILIPPE RIGOLLET, GIGLIOLA STAFFILANI,** and **NIKE SUN**—were invited speakers at the International Congress of Mathematicians.

2025

ALAN EDELMAN and **SCOTT SHEFFIELD** were elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the National Academy of Sciences, respectively. **GEORGE LUSZTIG** received the ICBS Basic Science Lifetime Award. **WEI ZHANG** received the AIM Alexanderson Award. **JÖRN DUNKEL** was named an APS Fellow.

2024

ROMAN BEZRUKAVNIKOV and **SEMYON DYATLOV** received ICBS Frontiers of Science Awards. **DANIEL KLEITMAN** and **ELCHANAN MOSSEL** were elected to the National Academy of Sciences and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, respectively. **SCOTT SHEFFIELD** received the Henri Poincaré Prize. Peter Shor received the IEEE Claude E. Shannon Award. **MICHEL GOEMANS, ELCHANAN MOSSEL, PETER SHOR,** and **MICHAEL SIPSER** received STOC/FOCS Test of Time Awards. **JOHN URSCHEL** received the SIAM DiPrima Prize and an honorary Doctor of Letters degree from Dartmouth College. **YUFEI ZHAO** received the AMS-MOS Fulkerson Prize.

For more about awards our community has received, head to:

Celebrating the Lives and Careers



SIGURDUR HELGASON (1927–2023) was one of the defining figures of modern differential geometry, Lie theory, and integral geometry. Born in the small town of Akureyri, Northern Iceland, Sig studied at the University of Copenhagen, earned his PhD at Princeton under Salomon Bochner, and joined the MIT faculty in 1959 after first arriving as C.L.E. Moore Instructor. He served as departmental graduate chair from 1986 to 1993, and retired in 2014 after 55 years on the faculty.

Sig's mathematical influence was profound. His landmark books *Differential Geometry and Symmetric Spaces* and *Differential Geometry, Lie Groups, and Symmetric Spaces* opened difficult subjects to generations of mathematicians and earned him the 1988 Leroy P. Steele Prize for Expository Writing.

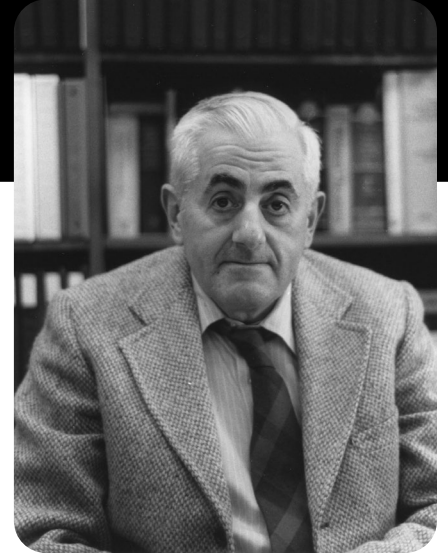
In 1975, MIT awarded Sig its first Graduate Teaching Award, in recognition of his superb lectures, dedicated mentoring, and devotion to students. Often in December, Sig and his wife Artie held an open house at their home in Belmont, serving delicious Scandinavian delights. He was a much-beloved, kind and modest colleague who spoke highly of others and took evident pleasure in the shared life of mathematics.



DANIEL STROOCK (1940–2025) was a major figure in probability theory and stochastic analysis. Dan joined the MIT faculty in 1984, served until his retirement in 2010, and continued teaching through spring 2024. He chaired the Pure Math Committee from 1995 to 1997, and was the inaugural holder of the Simons Distinguished Professorship in 2002.

Dan's mathematical work, especially his collaboration with S. R. Srinivasa Varadhan on diffusion processes and the martingale problem, transformed modern probability. In 1996, he and Varadhan received the AMS Steele Prize for Seminal Contribution to Research. His many honors also included a Guggenheim Fellowship, election to the American Academy of Arts & Sciences, and membership in the National Academy of Sciences.

Dan was known for his intellectual seriousness, independence, and candor. He was forthright in challenging authority, and he published several critical commentaries in the MIT faculty newsletter. Dan valued intellectual honesty and had little patience for pretense. At the same time, he had a wry sense of humor and a deep appreciation for beauty, mathematical and otherwise.



HARVEY GREENSPAN (1933–2026) will be remembered as the driving force behind the creation of the Applied Mathematics section of our department, together with CC Lin. In Harvey's view, applied mathematics is its own discipline, comprising fluid mechanics, computation, combinatorics, statistics, and other fields, unified by mathematics for understanding the natural world. The present-day structure of Applied Mathematics here still follows that vision.

Harvey studied mathematics and physics at the City College of New York, earned his PhD at Harvard, joined our faculty in 1960, and retired in 2002.

Harvey was deeply principled and tough-minded, willing to argue for institutional change as he believed necessary. He served as Applied Mathematics Chair between 1965–1975 and 1983–1985. To defend the independence of Applied Mathematics, he created an Applied Mathematics common room, afternoon tea, and calculus offering, distinct from those offered by the department as a whole. His unique approach and his uncompromising personality sometimes led to tensions. However, our Applied Mathematics community thrived as a result, and it is now one of the great assets of our department. Harvey truly was a visionary, and we all benefit from his enduring devotion to the field.

Academic Matters



Changes to Undergraduate Programs and Requirements

Bill Minicozzi

There are big academic changes in the works, both in the math major and in the broader undergraduate program. The department has revised the math major, effective next year, increasing the total number of required classes by two and adding three new requirements: A) Real Analysis, B) Probability and Statistics, and C) at least one class from a short list of rigorous classes across the major.

The requirements A) and C) are intended to be sure that all students get at least two rigorous classes that expose them to higher level mathematical thinking. The prob/stats requirement B is similar to the 18.03 and 18.06 ones.

At the Institute level, the Task Force on the Undergraduate Academic Program has proposed broad changes to the General Institute Requirements (GIRs). Perhaps the largest change is to the science core, which currently consists of two classes each in math and physics (single variable calculus, multi-variable calculus, mechanics and electricity and magnetism), one class in chemistry, and one class in biology. The proposal consists of two tiers of science, math and engineering GIRs:

- I. Common foundations: Two classes in math and one in physics, roughly comparable to 18.01, 18.02 and 8.01.
- II. Flexible foundations: 36 units that cover at least 6 units each in four areas:
 - A. Biology.
 - B. Chemistry.
 - C. Computing.
 - D. Probability, statistics and machine learning.

The full draft proposal can be found at



Announcing the Master of Science in Mathematics of Data

Philippe Rigollet

I'm excited to announce that the department is launching a new Master of Science in Mathematics of Data, a rigorous and research-driven program shaped in response to the growing interest of our undergraduates and the expanding importance of data science. Over the past few years, I have seen a remarkable increase in enrollment in 18.650, Fundamentals of Statistics,

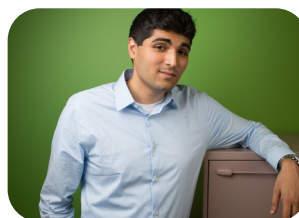
reflecting a broader surge of interest among our majors driven in part by the rise of modern AI. At the same time, the mathematics of data extends far beyond statistics, bringing together probability and algorithms and underlying many of the advances in this area. I have worked with Michel Goemans and Ankur Moitra to develop this program, with valuable input from our visiting committee. It also reflects the energy of a department growing in this direction, with new assistant professors Adit Radhakrishnan, Alex Damian, and Jorge Garza-Vargas contributing through their research and teaching. Beginning next fall, the program will offer a small cohort of 18 or 18C students an intensive fifth year combining advanced coursework with a substantial research thesis.



"RAMP"ing up to Freshman Year

Henry Cohn

I'm looking forward to welcoming the first cohort of students to the department's RAMP program this summer. RAMP (a self-referential acronym standing for RAMP: A Mathematics Program) is a new intensive summer mathematics program for incoming MIT first-year students interested in majoring in mathematics, which Michael King, Li-Mei Lim, and I are running. This is the inaugural summer, and we'll have twenty-four incoming students and six current math major counselors, who will live together on campus for the month of July and participate in math classes that explore topics deeply, encourage collaboration and curiosity, and build problem solving skills. Our goal is to welcome students to the department and help build a sense of community while giving them a sense of what it means to think deeply about mathematics.



AI and Assessment

Ankur Moitra

In the last few years, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has made major progress and is poised to upend the conventional way of doing things across many fields. In the Math Department, we are not an exception and have been exploring the ways that it can help accelerate progress, both in research and teaching. A number of faculty are working on using Large Language Models (LLMs) to generate proofs in Lean, both to formalize already known mathematics and to serve as a proof assistant to help mathematicians more efficiently explore the space of possible proofs, en route to new theorems. In the classroom, students are relying on LLMs and we are experimenting with new tools that offer critical feedback and help students stay engaged with challenging material. How do we help guide students to the answer, without stealing their "Aha" moments? As with any new technology, it is hard to predict the future, but faculty and students are embracing AI and exploring how to use it effectively.

Recent PhDs

2025

Niven Achenjang

(Bjorn Poonen)

Evan Chen

(Wei Zhang)

Mo Chen

(Steven Johnson)

Ryan Chen

(Wei Zhang)

Zihong Chen

(Paul Seidel)

Anlong Chua

(Roman Bezrukavnikov)

Alex Cohen

(Larry Guth)

Tino Damiani

(John Bush)

Davis Evans

(John Bush)

Haoshuo Fu

(Zhiwei Yun)

Marisa Gaetz

(David Vogan)

Sarah Greer

(Laurent Demanet)

Mitchell Harris

(Pablo Parrilo)

Andrey Khes

(Peter Shor)

Cameron Krulewski

(Haynes Miller)

David Lee

(Jeremy Hahn)

Tang-Kai Lee

(Bill Minicozzi)

Matthew Lerner-Brecher

(Alexei Borodin)

Weixiao Lu

(Wei Zhang)

Nitya Mani

(Pablo Parrilo & Yufei Zhao)

Elia Portnoy

(Larry Guth)

Zhi (Robert) Ren

(Youssef Marzouk)

Xinrui Zhao

(Tobias Holck Colding)

2024

Julius Baldauf

(Bill Minicozzi)

Deeparaj Bhat

(Tomasz Mrowka)

Adam Block

(Alexander Rakhlin)

Gonzalo Cao Labora

(Gigliola Staffilani)

Gefei Dang

(Wei Zhang)

Patrik Róbert Gerber

(Philippe Rigollet)

Shashi Gowda

(Alan Edelman)

Alasdair Hastewell

(Jorn Dunkel)

Arun Kannan

(Pavel Etingof)

Daniil Klyuev

(Pavel Etingof)

Vasily Krylov

(Roman Bezrukavnikov)

Jae Hae Lee

(Paul Seidel)

Ishan Levy

(Haynes Miller)

Nicholas Liu

(John Bush)

Calder Morton-Ferguson

(Roman Bezrukavnikov)

Matthew Nicoletti

(Alexei Borodin)

Alexander Ortiz

(Larry Guth)

Ashwin Sah

(Yufei Zhao)

Mehtaab Sawhney

(Yufei Zhao)

George Stepaniants

(Philippe Rigollet)

Danielle Wang

(Wei Zhang)

Catherine Wolfram

(Scott Sheffield)

Pu Yu

(Scott Sheffield)

Murilo Corato Zanarella

(Wei Zhang)

PhD Destinations

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Participants at the Putnam 2025 celebratory dinner

Putnam 2025

Exciting happenings this year with the Putnam competition. Cheng Jiang '27, Luke Robitaille '26 and Chunji Wang '29 score top team honors for MIT. All members of the team, alongside Zixiang Zhou '26, are Putnam Fellows, with Luke being a Putnam Fellow for the fourth consecutive year. Jessica Wan '28 was awarded the Elizabeth Lowell Putnam Prize for the second consecutive year.

The department and our success with the competition was also featured in a video by YouTuber Gohar's Guide, whereby Gohar sits in on 18.A34, aka the Putnam Seminar. You can watch it here:

Happenings in the Community

In our PRIMES: how mentorship programs help build mathematicians

Mentorship stands as a vital cornerstone of the department. Founded by Pavel Etingof and Slava Gerovitch, PRIMES has expanded to include a wide variety of programs. Sustained through the shared commitment between the department, alumni and donors, these programs have encouraged and enabled budding mathematicians to engage in research and education.

When **PAIGE BRIGHT** arrived at MIT as an undergraduate, she joined PRIMES Circle, mentoring fellow students through mathematical texts and research papers for three years. After entering graduate school, she returned to $\sqrt{\text{mathroots}}$ as a counselor, eventually becoming the program's residential



Enabling discovery: how fellowships power mathematical research

Graduate fellowships are investments in discovery itself. The MathWorks Fellowship, and the thoughtful support of Jack Little '78, President and Founder of MathWorks, has been instrumental in enabling our doctoral researchers to access world-class computational tools that accelerate breakthrough work.

After **BENJY FIRESTER** completed his Bachelor and Master's degrees at Harvard, where he worked closely with Tristan Collins on differential geometry,

director. Her progression reflects something fundamental—mentorship is central to mathematical culture and how mathematicians develop.

Paige describes how explaining concepts to others compelled her to understand material more deeply. "It's very common in math, I think, to have to learn things as you apply them, so you are flying the plane and building it too. What I really enjoyed about PRIMES Circle, and that I have found in math more generally, was that it was an opportunity to say that I know enough about the subject to help mentor someone else in a meaningful way."

Working on education has made her a better researcher, and caring about research has made her a better educator. "If you can think about it well enough to mentor someone else, then you'll know how to work your way through your own problems," she explains.



Our outreach programs document the concrete impact of mentorship, presenting an opportunity for high school, undergraduate, and graduate students alike to grow as mathematicians. The mathematics community strengthens as those who have been supported become supporters themselves, forming a culture of generosity amidst a shared passion for mathematics.

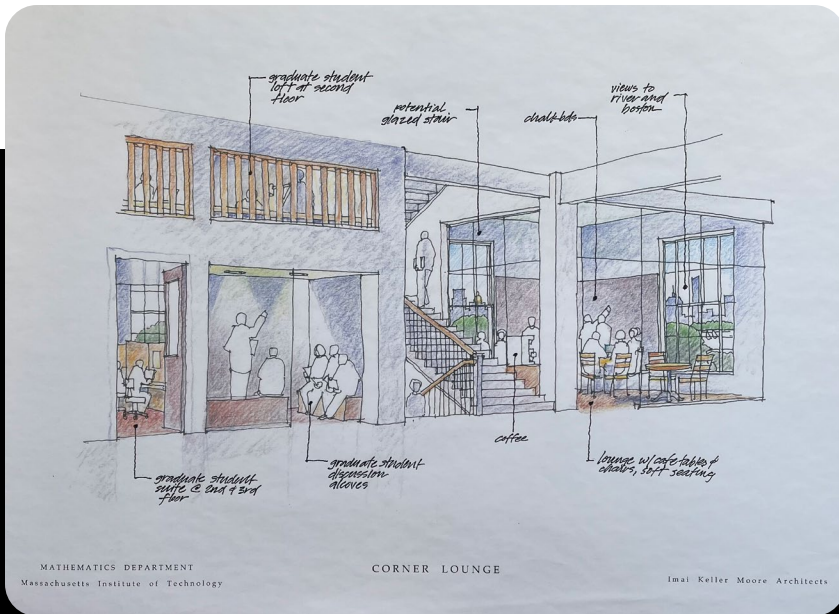
Read more about our outreach programs on our website at:

he moved to MIT to work with Toby Colding. Benjy studies elliptic PDEs and free boundary problems through geometric regularity theory, Einstein's equations, minimal surfaces, and fluid dynamics, systems governing everything from black hole geometry and extra dimensions predicted by string theory to the surfaces made by fluid and solid interactions. His current research focuses on optimal transport and the Monge-Ampère equation, as well as a new geometric connection between minimal surfaces and the Bernoulli free boundary problem through capillarity. "There's a bridge you can construct where solving one equation gives solutions to another," Benjy explains. "It allows you to use the tools in one field in another." This work has drawn international recognition, and has led him to present at conferences at Denmark, NYC, DC, Greece and beyond.

Though Benjy's final proofs are entirely formal, computational tools like MathWorks have become essential to

discovery. Traditional abstract methods may yield only existence results, confirming solutions exist but revealing little about their quantitative behavior. Software allows him to visualize high-dimensional behavior and design the energy functionals underpinning the equations, allowing a more concrete understanding of the behavior of solutions. Benjy's methods show how modern computational tools accelerate research, even in abstract non-numerical domains. "Software enables rapid and large-scale hypothesis testing—you can see things and visualize them, and you can test thousands of things that you couldn't otherwise. It opens doors that were previously inaccessible."

Through fellowships such as these, our graduate students have been able to engage in timely and impressive research, making remarkable advances in their fields during their time with the department.



Ten years of the Simons Building renovation

Michael Sipser

A little over ten years ago, the Mathematics department returned to its long-term home in Building 2. We had just spent the previous five semesters, beginning with Fall 2013, in temporary swing space in Building E17/18 while our space was renovated. Renovation was sorely needed and welcome. Our space had hardly been touched in many decades. The offices and hallways were drab and tired, and the space was increasingly cramped.

Planning for that renovation had begun a few years earlier. An entry in my calendar dated April 10, 2010 reminds me to inform the faculty at one of our lunch meetings about a forthcoming “study of our space needs for possible renov someday”. And so the adventure began.

The architectural firm Imai, Keller, Moore, was commissioned to propose initial “conceptual” drawings. It quickly became clear that our space needs far exceeded the space available. As department head back then, I already knew this, but we hoped that a reconfiguration might somehow make it work. Wishful thinking. In fact, bringing the building up to code and updating HVAC and

other systems would actually shrink usable space by 10%. To save space, IKM proposed converting first-floor offices into double-deckers! We were rightly skeptical of that idea (see drawing above). Around that time, Jim and Marilyn Simons provided a renovation-enabling major gift. The renovation would move forward. But how could it succeed without getting additional space?

Ann Beha Architects was then brought in to design the project. A new idea emerged: add a fourth floor. The remarkable story of how that came about will appear in the forthcoming second volume of our departmental history, *Recountings*, but suffice to say that it provided a marvelous solution to our space problem, creating amazing spaces for small and large gatherings, graduate student clusters, lovely new offices, and glorious views across the Charles. Now known as the Simons Building, our home has come alive. When wandering the hallways we see discussions around top-quality slate blackboards, faculty meetings in our beautiful new seminar room, and administration events taking place in our spectacular and often-booked common room.

We are immensely grateful to Jim and Marilyn, the Leighton family, and to the other donors whose generosity made this renovation possible.

How to help the Math Department

1 FUNDRAISING FOR MIT MATHEMATICS

Your gifts help us attract and support top faculty and students.

- **Math Unrestricted Fund:** #3879500
- **Grad Student Fellowship Fund:** #3857701
- **PRIMES Fund:** #3895820

To support our programs, contact Senior Director of Development Erin McGrath Tribble at emcgrath@mit.edu or 617-452-2807.

2 CAREER GUIDANCE FOR OUR STUDENTS

Each year we run a panel discussion “From Here to Where?” in which alumni talk about their path after graduating with a degree in mathematics to show our students the many career options available post-MIT. If you’d like to participate, on campus or Zoom, contact Gigliola Staffilani at gigliola@mit.edu.



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STAY IN TOUCH

To send us your feedback, email us at Integral@math.mit.edu.