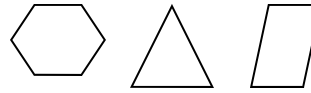




Scott Downing Retires



Professor J. Scott Downing retired in August 2007. Scott came to UNO in 1969 after receiving his PhD in topology at Michigan State University. Topology is an abstract form of geometry and one of the courses which Scott taught for many years is Modern Geometry, aimed especially at Secondary Mathematics Education majors.

In 1974 the Department of Mathematics became the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science. From 1989-1994 Scott chaired the combined department. This was a period of rapid growth of faculty in computer science. In 1994, when Computer Science became a separate department, there was a combined faculty of 30, equally split between mathematics and computer science. Scott hired most of these computer scientists, many of whom are still at UNO and are now the senior faculty in the Computer Science



Dr. Scott Downing

Department in the College of Information Science and Technology.

Over the years Scott has provided much leadership to the mathematics program at UNO. He has often been chair of the department's Curriculum Committee which oversees the undergraduate program, which, among other things,

approves new courses and changes of syllabi for existing courses. He has always had a good understanding of the how's and why's of departmental and university procedures. Anything Scott was in charge of would be done in an equitable manner for both faculty and students.

Scott has been an excellent instructor at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. He taught all three calculus courses on a regular basis in addition to such courses as Introduction to Analysis and Linear Algebra, besides his geometry courses for education majors. Students appreciate his devotion to their academic success and he received high scores in student evaluations.

Scott's wife Gloria has recently retired from the Foreign Language Department at Creighton University where she taught Spanish for many years. They now plan to spend time traveling to their many favorite destinations around the world. We wish them bon voyage for many years to come!

Inspiration is the impact of a fact on a well-prepared mind" Louis Pasteur, 1822-1895



The "Bookman" Visits UNO

On Thursday August 16 a Penske rental truck, driven by Louis Krupp, arrived at UNO from Boulder CO. On board were 39 boxes of old math books and 15 boxes of old history books. Louis rescues these old books from the book recycle bin at the Eco-Cycle Center for Hard to Recycle Materials in Boulder. Their fate would otherwise be to have their hardback covers removed and then the inside paper pages recycled. This keeps them out of landfills. Louis has been doing this for several years and has found a number of outlets for these old books. He takes math books and books on literary criticism to Denver University. He takes foreign language books to the University of Texas in Austin and computer books to a man in Houston who is starting up a computer museum. He contacted UNO when UNL did not respond to his inquiry about accepting old math



Louis Krupp

books.

The UNO Math Club processed these 39 boxes of old math books. About five boxes worth were of sufficient interest that the club members decided to keep them for their personal use. Another five boxes worth form the core of a new Math Club student library. The remainder were given to three local used

book stores who promised to dispose of them properly, i.e. keep them out of landfills. Just a week later Prof John Maloney donated an additional six boxes of advanced math books. So the new Math Club Library is already getting bigger.

Louis is a good friend to have. He has already sent Bruce Garver, Chair of the UNO History Department, a copy of "The Birth of Civilization in the Near East" signed by the author Arnold Toynbee, again, rescued from the same recycle bin in Boulder. Since his Omaha trip he has accumulated many more math and history books, as well as a large new supply of books on literary criticism. On his next trip to Omaha other departments will be invited to participate in this bonanza. For more information about the "bookwork" of Louis Krupp, go to the website of the Mathematics Department at the University of Denver and look at the Winter 2007 newsletter.

"If there is a problem you can't solve, then there is an easier problem you can't solve; find it!" George Polya, 1887-1985

News of Recent Graduates

December 2006

Komla Ahlijah (BS) – grad student in Math with a GTA position.

Gary Beck (MA) – Administrator of Pediatrics at UNMC.

Amanda Beery (MAT) – teaching at Chandler-Gilbert CC in Phoenix AZ.

Mathew Fillingsness (BGS)

Chris Goodrich (MS) – PhD student at UNL.

Nicholas Hildenbrandt (MS) - software engineer Baldwin, Hackett and Meeks, Inc.

James Jordan (BS) – Bank of the West while pursuing other opportunities.

Gavin Jorn (BS) – Kohl's Pharmacy while studying for actuarial exams.

David Kier (BGS) – thinking about grad school at UNO.

Zaher Kmail (MS) – math instructor at MCC.

Audra Kruse (BSED and BS Math, Magna Cum Laude) – plans to teach for a few years before returning to grad school.

Richelle LeMay (BS)

Tanja Stupar (BS Math, BA German, Summa Cum Laude) – will attend grad school in Hamburg, Germany.

Clyde Travis (BS)

Marcus Tuepker (BGS) – Mutual of Omaha.

May 2007

Benjamin Andera (BGS, Cum Laude) – newly commissioned officer in the Air Force.

Joshua Best (BS, Cum Laude) – Accounting Dept at UP/MBA student at UNO.

Daniel Blazek (BA, Summa Cum Laude) – teaching Math at South HS/ grad student in Ed Admin.

Jeff Blackmore (BS Comp Sci, BS Math) – grad student and student advisor in Comp Sci at UNO.

Jerome Bownes (MS Math)

Tyler Brown (BA, CS minor, Cum Laude) – UNO/MCC GTA.

Derrick Guerrero (BS Comp Sci, BS Math) – grad student in Comp Sci at UNO.

Theresa Hansen (BS) – First Natl Bank/considering actuarial fld.

Daniel Harnett (MS) – PhD student in math at KU.

Thomas Johnson III (BS Math/Physics) – plans to teach

English in Japan/plans to teach secondary math/physics.

Brent Larson (MAT) – teaching math at Omaha Central HS.

Rifyan Nasution (MS) – returned home to Indonesia to find work.

Joan Potter (MAT) – PT instructor for the UNO Math Dept.

Jill Shields (MAT) – teaching at Fort Calhoun HS and hopes eventually to teach at a cc.

Michael Smith (BS) – Griffen Pipe Products/plans to enroll in grad school.

Patrick Spieler (BS) – pursuing employment in the actuarial field.

Eric Thonvold (BGS) - newly commissioned officer in the Air Force.

Bronson Wacker (BS Math/Physics, Magna Cum Laude) – grad student in Physics at KU.

August 2007

Ryan Billington (BS Comp Sci/Math, Summa Cum Laude) – software engineer at DocCenter.

Joseph Lee (BS, Summa Cum Laude) – UNO/MCC GTA Mth.

Trevor Schave (BS Comp Sci/Math, Summa Cum Laude) – software engineer at DocCenter.

Adam Wermes (BS) – finishing up BS in Comp Sci and then going to grad school.

Greg Willer (BGS Geog minor, Magna Cum Laude Extra Muros) – pursuing employment.

Alumni News

Aaron Becker (BA 2003) – quadruple major Comp Sci/Math/ Phil/Poli Sci; software engineer Image Sensing Systems in Twin Cities; grad student in Comp Sci at UM.

Tim Becker (BGS 1994) – case mgr Hands of Heartland; in spare time does research in alternative energy/flex-fuel hybrids.

Rob Bennett (MS 2003) – had been teaching at Iowa Western CC; software application programmer at National Indemnity.

Jim Bradshaw (BS 2004) – construction work, now putting his math to work as an engineer/estimator for Kiewit Construction.

Erin Carmody (BS 2004) – grad student in Math at KU and is currently teaching Calc II.

Mark Church (BS 2001, MS 2003) – full time math instructor at MCC.

Katie (Stinger) Garcia (MAT 2004) – teaches math OPS/new last name!

Ivan Grabowski (MS 1998) – he has done one-on-one advanced tutoring for the Math Dept for the last 1½ years and now

heads the annuity modeling team for Phoenix Life in Hartford CT.

Chad Haugen (MS 2004) – 4th year as a math instructor at Iowa Central CC in Fort Dodge.

Stephanie Mallisee (BS 1999) – developed an IB program at Millard North HS; left teaching to raise a family; plans to return to teaching and to UNO as a grad student.

Eric Manley (BS 2004) – grad student in Comp Sci at UNL.

David Van Veldhuizen (BGS 1988) – retired from the USAF; looking for academic employment; coauthor of the book “Evolutionary Algorithms for Solving Multi-Objective Problems,” Kluwer, 2002.

Adam Walling (MS 2005) – actuarial intern at Mutual of Omaha.

Richard Warr (MA 2005) – Captain in the USAF/working on a PhD in Statistics at the University of New Mexico.

From the Chair

The biggest news from the Mathematics Department this year is the newly created Math Science Learning Center, located in rooms 107 (formerly a student lounge) and 108 on the first floor of the Durham Science Center. The Director is Dr. Dana Richter-Egger, Assistant Professor of Chemistry. Here is how it developed. The Mathematics Department has been providing a walk-in tutoring service for about 10 years, staffed by a GTA position. In Fall 2003, this service expanded to Math/Physics Walk-in Tutoring, supported by an NSF STEP grant and staffed by undergraduate math and physics majors. Student usage has been growing every year. In 2006-2007 the Chemistry Department set up its own separate tutoring service, also supported by STEP. Then NU was asked for help and has now provided \$88,000 in permanent Center of Excellence funding. The MSLC just opened this Fall in September. Its visible location is attracting up to 50-60 students per day. Undergraduate majors from all of the sciences are employed as tutors. Future plans include supplemental instruction and mentoring services as well as campus-wide statistical consulting.

Jack Heidel, Chair



2007-2008

Faculty and Staff

Mary Dennison, *Dir Math Lab*
Judith Downey, *Lecturer*
Scott Downing, *Prof Emeritus*
Jerome Drakeford, *Instructor*
G. Griff Elder, *Assoc Prof*
Jenny Farrar, *Instructor*
Steve From, *Professor*
Margaret Gessaman, *Prof Emeritus*
Jack Heidel, *Chair / Prof*
Betty Hickman, *Assoc Prof*
John Konvalina, *Professor*
Marilyn Liebsch, *Advisor*
Yi-Hsin Liu, *Prof Emeritus*
Margaret Mainelli, *Staff Assist*
John Maloney, *Professor*
Dora Matache, *Assoc Prof*
Valentin Matache, *Assoc Prof*
Michael Matthews, *Assist Prof*
Janice Rech, *Assoc Prof*
Jim Rogers, *Assist Prof*
Andrzej Roslanowski, *Assoc Prof*
Vyacheslav Rykov, *Professor*
Larry Stephens, *Professor*
Andrew Swift, *Assist Prof*
Cindy Teller, *Staff Assist*
Robert Todd, *Assist Prof*
Kathy Vranicar, *Instructor*
Zhenyuan Wang, *Professor*
Kristin Wolesensky, *Instructor*



NEW FACULTY



Robert Todd, Assistant Professor

Robert Todd hails from Burlington IA and received his PhD from the University of Iowa in May 2007. His thesis is entitled "Khovanov Homology, Calculation and Applications" and is in the area of knot theory in topology. Robert was hired last Spring as a result of a national search for someone in "Geometry/Algebra" to replace retiring professor Scott Downing, also a topologist. One of the courses Robb will be teaching is "Modern Geometry," aimed at secondary mathematics education majors.

FACULTY AWARDS

Jerome Drakeford, Instructor

On April 13, 2007 Mr. Jerome Drakeford was made an Honorary Initiate of Alpha Sigma Lambda, the National Honor Society for Students in Continuing Higher Education. In announcing Jerome's selection, AΣΛ President Karen Kempkes said that "Jerome Drakeford has been chosen for this honor because of his understanding of the nontraditional student ... Every semester there are lots of people with math anxiety which is so pervasive that it is all they can do to walk in and sit down on the first day of class, and still come back on the second day of class. Jerome Drakeford understands this, and patiently deals with it every day." Jerome received a master's degree in Physics from Creighton University in 1995. He served as the math/science tutor in Project Achieve before joining the Mathematics Department in 2002. He is working on a PhD in Curriculum and Instruction at the University of South Dakota.



Griff Elder, Associate Professor

Dr. Griff Elder has just been awarded the Lipton Professorship in Mathematics, established by Maurice (OU BA Math 1956) and Nancy Lipton and based upon 1) Teaching ability and accomplishments, 2) Research ability and accomplishments and 3) Academic promise. Griff came to UNO in 1995 with a PhD from the Ohio State University in number theory. He teaches a wide variety of courses in advanced mathematics as well as freshman calculus. He is especially interested in reaching out to the very bright Scott Scholars in the Peter Kiewit Institute on UNO's south campus. He has been instrumental in setting up extra curricular activities such as the Problem of the Week and Putnam Exam participation.



John Konvalina, Professor

Dr. John Konvalina received the 2007 Kerrigan Award for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics, founded by Mr. Patrick Kerrigan (UNO BA Math and Physics 1973). John came to UNO in 1975 with a PhD from the State University of New York at Buffalo, in combinatorics. He has taught virtually every course in the department over the years and is a very popular instructor in the department, based on his inimitable bluff and friendly personality, and broad knowledge of mathematics. Previous recipients of this award have been Valentin Matache in 2005 and Dora Matache in 2006.



Dora Matache, Associate Professor

Dr. Dora Matache received an Alumni Outstanding Teacher Award for 2007, one of three each year in the College of Arts and Sciences. Dora came to UNO in 2001 with a PhD from the University of Kansas in statistics. Dora teaches both undergraduate and graduate analysis courses as well as statistics and probability. Students like her because she is well organized, friendly and accessible for extra help. She contributes to many extracurricular teaching activities as well such as the Problem of the Week, Internet Testing of basic skills and the annual Mathematics Awareness Month symposium each April. Previous recipients of this award in Mathematics have been Larry Stephens in 2001 and Valentin Matache in 2003.

Math and Physics in a Prairie Town University: 1909-1968

by Denver Applehans, UNO History Department

A New University

Classes began on September 14, 1909 for twenty-six students at the University of Omaha. In 1911, the catalog lists seven courses in mathematics including: Geometry of Space, College Algebra, Plane and Spherical Trigonometry, Analytic Geometry, Differential and Integral Calculus, and Mechanical Drawing. Advanced classes in Differential Equations, Astronomy and other high-level mathematics were offered "for those students who wish to continue the study of mathematics."

Recitation constituted the bulk of coursework, though the sciences also included lab work. Classes attained a credit for each hour of recitation per week, every three hours of laboratory work, fieldwork or research under the supervision of a professor. Freshman mathematics feel under the "Absolute Requirements" category for undergraduate courses. Physics feel into the "Required Electives" category. Additional math and physics courses could be taken under the final category of classes, General Electives.

Students completed all absolute requirements in the first two years and at least half of their required electives. Classification as a "regular junior" allowed students to begin working in their major and minor areas, or concentration "groups". Mathematics and Astronomy made up group seven, though the catalog listed no specific astronomy classes. Physical and chemical sciences comprised group eight, this included all majors in science, with the exception of astronomy.

Reverend Walter N. Halsey, Professor of Latin and Mathematics comprised the entire mathematical staff the first year. He also led daily chapel services and served as the first Dean of the University in 1913. Halsey came to the university as a previous pastor of the Third Presbyterian Church of Omaha.

Tuition in 1911 totaled \$30 per semester and physics lab fees added an additional \$2 per class. Summer session at the university began in the summer of 1913, basic mathematics including algebra, plane and solid geometry and trigonometry as well as general physics courses were offered. Education and physics classes were eight weeks long while the rest of the summer classes were six weeks in duration.

The Second Decade

Mathematics and physics were taught by the same professor for most of the 1920s. Glenn Reeves, a professor of mathematics and physics from 1921-1923, also coached the university basketball team. John Kurtz, B.A., a 1923 University of Omaha graduate, joined the faculty immediately after graduation. His status changed from student assistant in mathematics to staff instructor in Mathematics. The university annual posted a short poem by his senior picture,

"The freshmen all adore his class,
And work hard so they will pass,
They pay most strict attention,
Whenever 'Trig' is mentioned."

John Kurtz accepted a position as Instructor in Mechanical Drawing and Shop Work in 1923. Hilma Peterson, A.B., joined the faculty as an Instructor of Mathematics from 1926 to 1928, after graduating from the university, having matriculated there from 1922 until 1926. While in school she played on the women's basketball team. As an instructor she coached the team to a 12 and 1 record for the 1928 season. Her most memorable decision, though, entailed changing the uniform from "bloomers and heavy hose to black trunks and cardinal blouses." The stir this change caused abated only with the team's winning record.

In 1928, the university reorganized again into fifteen departments including the Department of Mathematics, Physics and Pre-Engineering. Thomas McKibbin, M.A., L.L.B., hired in 1927 as a Professor of Mathematics and Physics, received the appointment as

head of the department. He earned his M.A. from Stanford University in 1918.

As the university struggled to stay solvent, tuition rose fifty percent to \$75 in 1928, the lab fee for physics remained at \$3, but a lab fee for engineering charged \$10 per semester.

The number of classes listed in the bulletin also increased dramatically in the late 1920's. Physics classes increased from the basic four to ten and mathematics courses increased from the nine previously listed to fourteen. But the university was rebuked for this in a report in 1931 completed for the new governing body of the institution. The survey states,

"The present set-up and course arrangement is open to considerable criticism, primarily because of an overload of courses which cannot possibly be offered every year or every semester, with the limited number of professor and instructors engaged, and also because of a considerable load of dead material in courses now-a-days [sic] seldom offered in reputable colleges."

Mathematics and physics were apparently less susceptible to the puffery though: 9 mathematics classes appear in the bulletin and 9 were taught; 19 of the 22 physics classes listed were taught.

The university sought accreditation through the North Central Assoc of Colleges and Secondary Schools. Space on campus and failure to raise money for an endowment continually blocked accreditation. The school needed to hire more professors with doctorates to lead the departments. They didn't have the money. In 1929, the Board of Trustees voted to give the school to the city if Omaha would assume the college as a municipal university.

Municipal University

A bill passed the state legislature in 1929 to allow municipalities to own universities in the state. In a vote on May 6, 1930, a slim majority of .085 percent changed The University of Omaha to the Municipal University of Omaha. A lawsuit finally decided at the Nebraska Supreme Court stalled the Regents from taking official control of the university until January 1931, but the *de facto* ownership sat with the city. With this transfer, Omaha joined the growing ranks of municipalities that supported their own university. The change brought a professionalization to the university which it lacked in its independent years.

The new president continued seeking accreditation by the North Central Association. He reorganized the College of Liberal Arts into eight departments and sought a professor with a doctorate to head each of these departments. The six Ph.D.'s hired included Dr. James M. Earl, who earned his doctorate at the University of Minnesota in 1928. He accepted a position as Associate Professor of Mathematics for his first year and advanced to full professor the following year. The bulletin for 1931-32 lists 26 faculty total, eight percent of these were dedicated mathematics teachers. The catalog for 1931-1932 listed nine classes available in mathematics the same as offered under the private university with the exception Theory of Equations replaced History of Mathematics. Once Dr. Earl established himself at the university, course offerings grew to include: Commerce Algebra (added 1933), Mathematics of Finance (1933), Mechanics I and II (1933), Projective Geometry (1933), Higher Algebra (1933) and Finite Differences (1934).

Tuition dropped for Omaha residents to \$56 per semester, though it rose a dollar to \$76 for non-residents, a matriculation fee of \$5 was also added, paid once upon entry. The physics lab fee rose to \$5 per semester and a refundable \$3 per semester physics lab deposit added to the bill.

The change in leadership at the university promoted more

stability in the faculty. Dr. Earl remained an instructor and head of the Mathematics Department into the 1960's. Alice Yaggie, B. Sc., joined the faculty in 1940 as a Lecturer in Calculating Machines, teaching both in the mathematics and engineering departments. Classes in the math department stayed basically the same except for the addition in 1941 of an entire class devoted to the slide rule, one titled Math of Finance, and Elementary Topics in Mathematics. The class on the slide rule utilized a 15-foot slide rule to demonstrate techniques in class that had been acquired to teach an extension class in 1935.

The university's space issues finally diminished in 1938 when the university moved to its present site. The Public Works Administration helped with the cost of the new building, "one of the most advanced university buildings at the time." According to school officials, it boasted the "only completely air-conditioned college campus in the nation." In 1939, with the space available to house its students, the North Central Association finally granted the Municipal University of Omaha accreditation.

War Years

World War II caused a great deal of upheaval at the University of Omaha. More than 1,350 students and faculty served in the military in World War II. Students on campus rationed supplies and trained for military service. Special classes were taught in engineering and aviation and the school year was broken into three full semesters. The university mobilized, though mathematics and physics continued more or less as usual. Harry L. Rice, M.Sc., joined the department as Assistant Professor of Mathematics in 1942. The only classes added during the war years were Spherical Trigonometry and Projective Geometry.

Post War Boom

After the war, the campus exploded with new students. Overcrowded classrooms were the norm as almost double the number of students enrolled in the fall of 1945.

Dr. Earl and Harry Rice constituted the standing faculty in the Mathematics Department. The Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Thompson, noted in his annual report to the University President that, "The Mathematics Department has carried a heavy instructional load and faculty activities have been primarily taken up in an attempt to meet this demand." Dr. Earl noted an increase in interest in mathematics from both the students and the public in his 1955 Annual Report, "The demand for students with mathematical training at all levels has increased sharply recently, in industry, the government, and the armed services."

In an effort to help struggling students who may not have been sufficiently prepared for college, an experimental class, Mathematics 95, entered the catalog beginning in 1957. This remedial class was designed to improve "basic mathematical skills" and prepare a student for further college level mathematics. The class met five hours per week and counted for two credits. Unfortunately, an evaluation completed in 1959 found students who completed Mathematics 95 did not fair better in regular collegiate mathematics courses than students of a similar skill level who did not take the remedial class. In fact, alumni of the class fared worse on average. The class did not appear in the Fall 1961 catalog. In 1960, the Department of Mathematics embarked on another experiment in education. "Mathematics 414TV: Probability and Statistics" brought three lectures a week into a students home by television. The students then met on alternate Saturdays for discussion on the assigned problems. The class appears only in the academic year 1960-1961.

In 1960, computer science classes began in the mathematics department. The UO curriculum committee for the College of Arts



Dr. James Earl

and Sciences added Mathematics 313, Introduction to Electronic Data Processing for the spring semester 1961.

Mathematics Department Changes

The year 1963 proved to be pivotal for the Department of Mathematics. Dr. Earl retired after 32 years of teaching. Reviewing his years of teaching, he noted an increase in demand for mathematicians after World War II. "Before the war about the only job mathematics graduates could seek was in teaching. Now they are also needed for space and missile programs and by business to operate computing machines." His student's careers supported this statement. In the year of his retirement, 27 of Dr. Earl's former students worked at White Sands, New Mexico Nuclear Testing Grounds.

In Dr. Earl's place, the university hired Dr. Hubert L. Hunzeker. He earned his doctorate from the University of Michigan in 1958. Hunzeker, a native son of Nebraska, grew up in Pawnee County and graduated from Peru State College. Dr. Harry W. Johnson, who earned his doctorate at the University of Chicago in 1951, also joined the faculty as an instructor in Mathematics, though his first role was as Director of the new Reading Improvement Laboratory.

Dr. Hunzeker left the university in December 1967 stating that poor leadership of the university president and regents pushed him out of the university. He said, "The reason I am leaving is because I got a better job. The reason I started looking is because I lost confidence in the regents."

Computer science in the mathematics department continued to evolve in the mid to late 1960's. The first programming class appears in the mathematics curriculum in 1963, Introduction to Computer Logic and Programming. In 1965, the first specific programming class, Mathematics 170: FORTRAN, was approved by the Curriculum Committee for one credit hour. The program grew rapidly on campus. The following year, computer courses were listed under the heading "Computer Science" in the Department of Mathematics and not simply under mathematics. The burgeoning class offerings included FORTRAN, Computer Programming, Advanced Computer Programming Techniques, Numerical Methods and Linear Programming. The programming language Cobal was added in 1967 for one credit.

The year 1968 marked the first time a mathematics club formed. The 1968 Tomahawk notes the Omaha Math Metrics, "a functioning outgrowth of the math department. The club is affiliated with Upsilon Mu Alpha, a society which distributes information on math-related activities from several campuses in the U.S."

State Institution

In 1965, students at UO paid 72 percent of the university budget through tuition. They paid only a few hundred dollars less per year than their counterparts at Creighton University. Students at municipal colleges nation-wide paid an average of 35 percent. The University of Omaha changed hands again in 1968, this time from the city of Omaha to the State of Nebraska. Refusal to pass a mill levy by the voters of Omaha and high tuition rates as a result convinced the Regents of the University that a change of ownership seemed inevitable. The municipal university declined nation-wide as other city universities joined the state system or reverted to private hands. The measure to pass the university to state hands passed almost four to one in Omaha.

Conclusion

Mathematics was one of the six departments on which the Municipal University of Omaha built its academic reputation to achieve accreditation. Mathematics and physics grew along with the university. The Department of Mathematics blossomed in the 1960s and gained a graduate degree. Physics became its own department in 1961 and grew at a steady pace.



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