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NEWS RELEASE

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California State University Channel Islands Student Takes Top Honors at Annual Math Competition

In just a few years since its founding, California State University Channel Islands has already produced some outstanding math minds that are capable of competing with topnotch students from established universities and colleges.

At the March 5 Mathematical Association of America (MAA) meeting held at the University of Southern California, seven CSUCI math student research projects were presented out of a total of 34 from the California-Nevada region. CSUCI senior Juan Zuniga took top honors with the studies of a mathematical game-like problem that required high-level abstract “combinatorial” thinking.

The MAA is a recognized national professional society, based in Washington, D.C., that advances undergraduate mathematics education. The organization focuses on math education, research, professional development, public policy, and public acceptance.

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“This is particularly significant since research-oriented schools tend to dominate the MAA competition,” said Ivona Grzegorzcyk, CSUCI professor of mathematics and chair of the program. “The judges liked all seven of our presentations and singled out Juan’s because it was such an outstanding project that demonstrated high-level thinking skills.”

Zuniga’s presentation, called “Pebbling Modified Web Graphs,” was created last summer in cooperation with fellow student Victor Moreno, as part of a summer grant project. “What is interesting about this project is that it has direct military logistical applications,” Grzegorzcyk said. “Pebbles, or units, must be distributed throughout a spider-like web, while gaining and losing some of them at various times. It has military and computer networking applications—how to achieve logistical goals efficiently at minimal cost. But only a handful of people on a national or international level are capable of solving math puzzles like that.”

The seven CSUCI projects competed with those from major California schools such as Harvey Mudd, which won second and third places at the competition. In other past competitions, CSUCI math students won second place at the Institute for Electrical and Electronics Engineers competition in 2003 and second in the math section of the CSU Undergraduate Research Competition in 2004. The CSUCI math team has also scored high on the annual National Putnam Exam for the past several years.

The MAA will hold its fall meeting and competition on Oct. 8, 2005 on the CSUCI campus.

***Media who plan to cover the event should RSVP (437-8415) to receive a media parking pass.**

California State University Channel Islands’ Mission Statement

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