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2 + 2 = More Than 4 200 High School Students to Showcase Math Skills

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February 5, 1996

Contact: Bob Aaron, 309/556-3181**2 + 2 = More Than 4****200 High School Students to Showcase Math Skills
in Contest at Illinois Wesleyan, March 9***office
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hompson***Editor's Note:** Eden Ostermeier, chair of the IWU Math Contest, is a resident of Chatham, Ill., and a graduate of Glenwood High School.

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.--About 200 students from 10 Illinois high schools will test their math skills, March 9, when they compete in the second annual Math Contest at Illinois Wesleyan University.

The high school freshmen through seniors will be matching wits with members of IWU's Math Society, who devised some test questions and obtained copyright permission to use other problems from textbook publishers. IWU math faculty reviewed and edited exam problems.

"We received positive feedback from last year's competition," said Eden Ostermeier, president of IWU's Math Society and chair of the Math Contest.

One teacher, Ostermeier said, called last year's contest "a wonderful experience" and wrote us, saying it "gave mathematically talented students a chance to showcase their abilities which go largely unheralded."

"The Math Contest," explained Ostermeier, an IWU math major who wants to teach high school math after graduation in May, "gives high school students a chance to compete and use their math skills against others in the state. It gives them a sense of accomplishment, especially for those who take home awards. The contest also shows students that math can be fun and practical since most of the problems on the test are taken from practical applications."

Ostermeier, who taught eighth-grade math at Bloomington Junior High School last fall as a student teacher, said: "My interest in math started with eighth-grade algebra. As a math teacher, I want to encourage students to become interested in math and not see it as something foreign, but something that can be fun."

"It's very fulfilling," she added, "when I see that a student understands something--when the light bulb clicks on. It gives me the greatest feeling in the

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world."

The 60-minute exams have 30 multiple choice questions and a single tie breaker question, which isn't in a multiple choice format. The test begins at 10 a.m. in IWU's \$25 million Center for Natural Science Learning and Research, which opened last Fall and houses the campus' math department and five other scientific disciplines.

High school freshmen and sophomores take the same test--but are graded separately so that freshmen and sophomores don't compete against each other. The freshman-sophomore test emphasizes algebra and geometry.

High school juniors and seniors take the same test, but are graded separately too. This exam stresses trigonometry and pre-calculus and some calculus.

Members of the IWU Math Society will grade exams and determine winners.

IWU President Minor Myers, jr., will hand out awards at a 2 p.m. ceremony. Awards will be given to the three students posting the top scores in the freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior categories. The top three schools in each category also will receive awards. Student award winners will receive plaques; trophies will be given to the victorious schools.

About 30 members of the Math Society will participate in the contest, serving as ushers, exam proctors, test graders, and running various math games and other activities. About five members of the Math Society served on the Test Committee, which devised the exams.

High schools slated to participate in the math contest are: Central Catholic, Bloomington, and Normal Community from the Bloomington-Normal area; Rossville-Alvin, Rossville, Ill.; Henry Senachwine, Henry, Ill.; Metamora; Canton; St. Teresa, Decatur, Ill.; Sacred-Heart Griffin, Springfield; and Lincoln-Way, New Lenox, Ill.

The schedule for March 9 is:

- 9-9:45 a.m.--High school students arrive at Illinois Wesleyan, check-in in the first-floor Commons, Center for Natural Science Learning and Research.
- 10-11:15 a.m.--Test instructions and exam.
- 11:30 a.m.-12:30 a.m.--Lunch (Bertholf Commons, IWU Memorial

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Student Center).

- 12:45-1:45 p.m.--Math games
- 2 p.m.--Awards ceremony.

All activities will take place in the Center for Natural Science Learning and Research unless otherwise indicated.

A \$6.50 registration fee per high school student covers the test and lunch. A \$3 registration fee covers the test only.

The IWU Math Society is a group of 30-40 math majors and other students, who meet biweekly to discuss career options and other issues related to mathematics. The society also brings guest speakers to campus. Tian-Xiao He, associate professor of mathematics, is the group's faculty advisor.

IWU, founded in 1850, enrolls about 1,850 students in a College of Liberal Arts, College of Fine Arts, and a four-year professional School of Nursing. A \$15 million athletics and recreation center opened in the fall of 1994; and a \$25 million science building opened in the fall of 1995. The Carnegie Commission for the Advancement of Teaching promoted Illinois Wesleyan to a "Baccalaureate I" institution in 1994, a classification that places it among 161 highly selective National Liberal Arts Colleges in the annual *U.S. News & World Report* rankings. *Barron's Profiles of American Colleges*, another respected college guide, rated IWU "highly competitive (+)" in its latest edition.