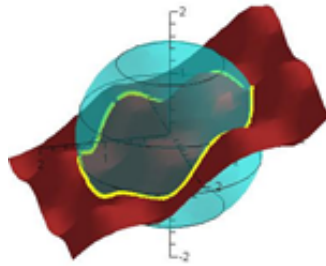




## INTERSECTION POINTS

The Newsletter of the Research  
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The Research Council on Mathematics Learning seeks to stimulate, generate, coordinate, and disseminate research efforts designed to understand and/or influence factors that affect mathematics learning.

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## *Conference Highlights*

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The 46th Annual RCML Conference, *Leading & Learning: Mathematics Made Accessible for All* was held at The Hilton Charlotte University place in Charlotte, NC on February 28 – March 2, 2019. The conference kicked off with the poster sessions featuring 8 posters and 85 presentations over the next two days.

The Wilson Memorial Lecture, *The Language of the Universe*, was presented by Dr. Joseph Graves of North Carolina A&T University. During the lecture, audience members were able see how to complex mathematics was used to understand very fundamental aspects of genetic expression.

This year's founders lecture, *A Mathematics Teacher Educator's Personal Perspective of Research on Mathematics Learning*, was presented by Dr. Rose Sinicrope, who spoke about how the evolution of student learning has progressed over the past 50 years and how this causes us as teacher educators to return to learning theories and practice and standards.

Breakout sessions and posters shared insight across a variety of both mathematics content and pedagogy including early childhood through post-secondary education. Along with topics regarding preservice through veteran teachers sessions

included, but were not limited to, the mathematical beliefs of preservice teachers, technology development and integration, mathematical discourse and conversations, and a variety of other elements related to the broader scope of the learning and teaching of mathematics. All proposals were double-blind peer reviewed with a third reviewer breaking ties. Thank you to all proposal reviewers.



One of the most memorable experiences at the conference occurred when Bill Speer, one of our founding members, awarded Jim Hedden a lifetime achievement award. This was a very special moment for all in attendance.

This year's conference would not have been possible without the tireless work of Program Chair Tyrette Carter of North Carolina A&T University, and Conference Chair Kerri Richardson Smith of University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Each providing countless hours of gathering resources and organizing information to make the 46<sup>th</sup> Annual RCML Conference a wonderful success.

Please join us next year for the 47<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference to be held in 2019 at the Las Vegas, NV. Registration, hotel, and proposal information can be found at [www.rcml-math.org](http://www.rcml-math.org).

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## ***Signal and Noise***

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The purpose of this section is to get to know scholars more deeply and build relationships that span the tests of time, distance, and background. "Signal and Noise" is a reference to gaining statistical information from a data set. Each datum in a data set

provides valuable information. However, it is the responsibility of the statistician to detect the unique structure (i.e., signal) found within a data set. Noise is not a negative aspect of this process but is rather a natural and welcome feature of the complex world in which we live. With that in mind, readers are invited to learn more about a senior RCML member as well as an early career RCML member. Bill McGalliard interviewed members at the 2019 annual meeting of RCML in Charlotte, NC. For this edition of “Signal and Noise”, Dr. Gabriel Matney (Bowling Green State University) is our featured senior member and Ms. Judy Benjamin (Kent State University) is our featured early career member.

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Dr. Gabriel Matney  
Bowling Green State University

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Bill: So I am here with Gabriel Matney of Bowling Green Statue University. Gabriel my first question for you is how long have you been an RCML member?

Gabriel: I have been a member since 2001. My advisor told all of her graduate students that RCML was an organization that we needed to check out. So, I did that as a

graduate student, and after the conference I immediately joined.

Bill: That's a theme that I've heard a lot when talking to a lot of RCML members. A lot of them got into the organization through an advisor. I know that's how I got here. With that said, I did another interview with a graduate student and asked her about ways that she thought we could attract more graduate students. So, I will put the same question to you.

Gabriel: I think the reason that I was attracted to RCML as a graduate student, was because it was a professional space where people would give you an honest and direct set of feedback. However, they would do so in a way that was very edifying for you, in a way that would give you nurturing challenges, which is something that my advisor was really big on. My advisor, Jayne Fleener, was really big on giving nurturing challenges and asking us to do difficult things, but not in a way that would denigrate who we were. So, I think that kind of environment was something that really drew me, and I believe it drew other graduate students as well. So, I think having people experience that kind of growth in an environment that is rich and nurturing is probably the most important factor in having graduate students come to us. Which in turn will help them want to maintain their membership. We want them to be members because they feel the connections of the community and they want to give back as they become professors and the younger generation comes up. There's always going to be that cycle. We always need people to invest in the next generation. So, not just for RCML to have grad students, but for RCML to nurture grad students into becoming members who are professors who nurture other younger people as they progress in the profession.

Bill: What positions have you held while in your nearly 20 years as an RCML member?

Gabriel: My very first position was the newsletter editor of intersection points. Cheryl Maxwell and other people on the board or within the organization said that I had been coming to conferences for a long time and that they thought they should ask me to do something. So, Cheryl came to me and said, I think you can do this; would you do this for the organization? She said that this is an important role, and we need someone who is organized and caring enough to take on this responsibility. I said, well, nurture me into it. If you help me, I will definitely do a good job for you. Being given the opportunity to serve in that capacity let me learn from Cheryl about a great many things. My next responsibility was on the conference committee. I also ran to be the chair of the vice president for conferences, but I actually didn't get that position. The next position that happened for me was VP for publications. So, that's kind of been my

trajectory.

Bill: What advice would you give to a new RCML member about the best way to potentially get involved with the organization?

Gabriel: Well, I think people can do it much quicker than I did. The best way to get involved is to keep trying to get on a committee like the publications committee or the conference committee. Getting on the conference committee really helped me meet a lot of other members that I didn't know before. So, we all have a few members that we know, and getting on these committees and serving throughout the year helps us know other people better. I think that is a great way to serve. From there, growing into one of the leadership positions is a hope that I have for each of our members.

Bill: Thinking about the current conference that we just had, which in this case is rather timely, because what's it been? Two weeks? Is there any particular or particularly memorable experience that you had at this conference that you would like to share with the membership?

Gabriel: I also tweeted about this, but I really think that the moment when Bill Spear and Jim Hedden had that hug, where there's a recognition of what both of them have done and given to the organization, was really special. We're talking about not hours and not days, but weeks of life that they spent. Perhaps even months of life that they've spent over the course of several years to help RCML become what it is. These are the kind of people that personally inspire me. I want to serve in such a way that I contribute to the community. Both Bill Spear and Jim Hedden have done that. They've contributed to the community. To see them embrace was a very special moment, I think, for all of us this last conference. It's just an inspiration to me.

Bill: Do you know how long it was since they got to see each other last?

Gabriel: I don't know. Jim came and gave a founder's talk several years ago. So, I would say it's been within the last five or six years since they've seen each other.

Bill: I was struck by that too. I agree. So, I just kind of wondered if it had been a while since they'd actually been together. You know how meaningful that was to talk about how one was a model and a mentor of the other, and such great careers.

Bill: So, thinking about next year's conference, which is going to be in Las Vegas

again, what are you looking forward to there? What's going to make you really want to go back there other than, of course, your official duties being VP of publications?

Gabriel: Vegas is always a very energetic place to have a conference. We always find a way to go have some laughs. Some of my colleagues and I, after the conference on a Friday night or a Saturday night, will go see a show, like a comedy show that might be in town from one of our favorite comedians who's running the circuit there in Vegas. Building those memories and experiences with professional colleagues is an important part of what RCML is. In addition to obviously sharing the research that I'm doing, which is always fun to do, taking those moments to go to shows and experience the kinds of things that Vegas can give that other venues can't is good. Several of us still remember the last time we went to Vegas. It didn't snow in Vegas, but it snowed in other parts of the country when we were leaving. Literally, we could not leave Vegas. So, we just kind of figured out who was stuck in Vegas. Some of us saw each other at the airport, while others had already texted, "Hey, I have to stay another night," so, we knew that they didn't get to leave. When we didn't get to leave, we all made this group and went to see a show. We will never forget that. We still talk about that "Oh we got stuck in Vegas!" like it's a bad thing.

Bill: I guess our membership has to say, "What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas," for next year, right?

Gabriel: Right, well, we hope that we get snowed in again next time.

Bill: Well, Gabriel, thank you so much for being here with me today. I appreciate everything, and thank you for your thoughts and your long experience and your long service to RCML. It's very much appreciated.

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Judy Benjamin  
Kent  
State University

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**Bill:** How long have you been an RCML member?

**Judy:** I joined RCML last fall, so not very long.

**Bill:** So, this was your first conference with us?

**Judy:** It was my first conference – with anyone.

**Bill:** Oh, so your first conference at all of any type?

**Judy:** That's correct. I'm a newbie!

**Bill:** Well that's great. You're kind of an ideal person then to do this first interview with. Since this was your first conference in general, what drew you to RCML?

**Judy:** Well, honestly my advisor, Karl Kosko, recommended it, and what Karl recommends I do (haha). He's an excellent mentor and he thought our research lines up beautifully with RCML's purpose. Also, he felt like it would be a good environment to get my feet wet with presenting and such. He felt like it was a good group of people with a mentoring attitude. So, that's why he suggested it, and what I found out was after they accepted my proposal, I started bragging to everyone that I was presenting at RCML. The other professors in my department all told me the same thing. They told



me, “Oh, you’re really going to like that. There’s really good people there, and they’re very supportive!”. So, everyone told me that I was in for a good experience, and they were right. It was really great. And everyone was so friendly and supportive and welcoming!

**Bill:** Good! Well, do you plan to maintain your membership, and if so, what would cause you to continue to be a member?

**Judy:** Well, I do plan to continue my membership. One thing when I started receiving the journal: the journal has been actually a good resource for me as a doctorate student. It’s a good journal, and it has helped me. But, what a great organization! I’m proud to be part of it. So, I am going to stick with it, and I hope to go to come back to the next conference, if I can find a worthwhile study next year.

**Bill:** Well, one thing about RCML is that you can present on projects that aren’t finished, or maybe is even just an idea.

**Judy:** I actually sat through a couple of presentations that were just ideas where the presenters were looking for feedback. They were looking for direction, and I thought that was really cool. What a great idea to collaborate with great minds from across the country, and get feedback for what you’re wanting to look into. I thought that was wonderful.

**Bill:** A question that I have for you relating to graduate school is that RCML would like to continue to be attractive to graduate students. So, what sorts of things could we, as an organization, do to attract more graduate students or to continue to do so?

**Judy:** That’s a good question. I don’t know how you could go about advertising to grad students. I heard about it through my mentor, but I feel like it would be helpful if they were just aware of what a great opportunity it is to be a part of this membership. I think advertising RCML somehow, but I don’t know how you would get the word out, besides through other members, which is how I heard about it.

**Bill:** Right, well, that’s actually how a lot of us heard about it, because I got involved in RCML through one of my doctoral committee members also. So, you’re going to find that the more people you talk with, that’s a reoccurring theme.

**Bill:** What excites you about next year’s conference?

**Judy:** Just coming back in with more experience and more confidence, because I was a little nervous and shy this time, but I feel like I would probably see some familiar faces next time. I really met some awesome people this time, and I would look forward to running into them again and seeing and hearing what everyone is working on and sharing what I'm working on and getting some feedback or maybe even my dissertation.

**Bill:** How far away are you from your dissertation?

**Judy:** I have one more semester of coursework after this and then I'll try to pass those comps and get started writing next spring.

**Bill:** Are you going to do a pilot study first?

**Judy:** I'm doing a pilot study now, so we'll see how that goes.

**Bill:** If you could talk with a long standing RCML member, what might you ask them?

**Judy:** The only thing I was kind of wondering was: how people that go to these conferences often, or have gone to many of them, strategize getting the most from the experience? For me, I just basically went to whatever presentation looked interesting, and that was really fun for me. I'm curious how people go about choosing, because I couldn't even see everything I wanted to see. There were too many overlapping presentations. So, I just picked the things that looked interesting. Some of them were quite different: not related at all to what I'm studying, but that was really fun for me, like Natalia Bailey's work with Guatemala. I have really no pressing need to understand what's going on with the math education in Guatemala, but that was so cool learning about that. I learned a lot, and I'm so glad I sat in on it. To answer your question, I just would be curious how other people strategize how they choose which presentations to see. If you should sit in on stuff that's related to your work or if you should just sit in on stuff that you know nothing about. I kind of did a little of each this last week, and I really enjoyed that.

**Bill:** Is there an experience or maybe several memorable experiences at this particular conference that you would like to share with the membership?

**Judy:** Yeah, I introduced myself to one of the organizers, Kerri Richardson, on the first

night, because I was nervous about having all of the right equipment and stuff for my presentation. When I shared with her that it was my first conference, she was just so warm and helpful and excited to welcome me to the organization and made me feel really good. Then, when I presented, and I introduced myself, I mentioned that it was my first conference, and they cheered for me. They literally cheered me on, and it just really made me feel really welcome and it put me at ease right away. It was very nice. That meant a lot to me.

**Bill:** When I mentioned the person that brought me to RCML, that was Kerri Richardson. She was on my doctoral committee. So, lots of connections here!

**Judy:** Oh my gosh, she was really helpful and very supportive. She's great. Also, the keynote speakers were incredible. I was so glad. They were really incredible. Those were memorable talks as well. All of those were highlights of the weekend for me.

**Bill:** If you had to pick a future location for an RCML (next year is at Las Vegas; the year after that is going to be with me in Kansas City), where would you like to see RCML?

**Judy:** Not that I could afford to travel there, but I met someone from the University of Hawaii, but I don't know her last name. I thought that would be a nice place to go. I want to go to Hawaii! That would probably be an expensive journey, but that would be lovely. I want to go get their climate for a while.



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