



The image shows a navigation menu for DChieftain.com. The logo "DChieftain.com" is at the top in a stylized font. Below it are two rows of red buttons with white text: "1st Grade", "3rd Grade", "5th Grade", "Addition", "Multiplication" in the first row; and "2nd Grade", "4th Grade", "6th Grade", "Algebra", "Geometry" in the second row. To the right of these buttons is a blue button with white text that says "PRACTICE NOW" with a right-pointing arrow.

Mathematicians visit Tech

by Allen Stenger | April 18, 2013 | Filed under: News

Almost 100 mathematicians converged on New Mexico Tech last weekend for a two-day conference about college-level math. They arrived from New Mexico, Arizona and El Paso for a joint meeting of the New Mexico Mathematical Association of Two Year Colleges and the Southwestern Section of the Mathematical Association of America. The conference was co-chaired by Dr. William D. Stone and Dr. Annette LaRussa of the NMT Math Department.



Allen Stenger/For El Defensor Chieftain: The youngest speaker at the conference was 16-year-old high-school student Olivia Orrantia-Kotowski, who talked about her fascination with the number pi.

Nearly all the attendees were college-level math teachers, and much of the conference was devoted to swapping techniques for helping students learn better. There has been an explosion in the popularity of online courses at the college level, and several speakers dealt with the particular challenges of teaching students whom you don't see.

The luncheon keynote speaker was Dr. Brigette Russell, policy director of the New Mexico Higher Education Department. She spoke about the low graduation rates at New Mexico colleges, which she

attributes in part to the large number of students who need remedial math at the college level. Remedial courses, also called developmental courses, don't carry college credit, and many students run out of money and financial aid before they can finish enough credits to graduate.

Russell advocated more targeted developmental courses that provide more help in a shorter period of time, and "intrusive advising," where advisers take a more aggressive role in channeling students into courses that count toward the requirements for a major.



Mathematicians experiment with making the tetrahedron, a geometric figure, from a sealed and folded envelope. Hands-on geometric exercises help students develop a sense for numbers and sizes.

There were a number of talks on more purely technical subjects, ranging from nanotubes to math for biology to the number pi. The banquet keynote speaker was Dr. Robert L. Devaney, national president of the MAA and a professor at Boston University. He gave a simple and entertaining walk-through of fractals and the Mandelbrot set, and mesmerized the audience with some animated movies he and his students had made showing the characteristics of these mathematical objects.

The technical and educational parts of the conference concluded with a series of business meetings and administrative roundtables.