

William Lowell Putnam Competition

Schedule

- Saturday, December 7, 2019
- Morning Session: 10:00 am - 1:00 pm
- Afternoon Session: 3:00 pm - 6:00 pm
- Place: McBryde Hall room 210
- Practice Sessions: TBA
- Registration Deadline: Friday, October 11, 2019

For more information, please contact Dr. Martin Klaus.

General Information

History: The competition began in 1938 and is designed to stimulate a healthful rivalry in mathematical studies in the colleges and universities of the United States and Canada. It exists because Mr. William Lowell Putnam had a profound conviction in the value of organized team competition in regular college studies. Mr. Putnam, a member of the Harvard class of 1882, wrote an article for the December 1921 issue of the Harvard Graduates' Magazine in which he described the merits of an intellectual competition. To establish such a competition, his widow, Elizabeth Lowell Putnam, in 1927 created a trust fund known as the William Lowell Putnam Intercollegiate Memorial Fund. The first competition supported by this fund was in the field of English and a few years later a second experimental competition was held, this time in mathematics between two institutions. It was not until after Mrs. Putnam's death in 1935 that the examination assumed its present form and was placed under the administration of the Mathematical Association of America.

Rules: The competition is open only to regularly enrolled undergraduates, in colleges and universities of the United States and Canada, who have not yet received a college degree. No individual may participate in the competition more than four times. An eligible entrant who is also a high school student must be informed of this four time limit.

Schedule: The examination consists of two Saturday periods of exactly three hours each. Morning Session 10:00 am -1:00 pm, Afternoon Session 3:00-6:00 pm.

Students who for religious reasons cannot take the examination at the scheduled hours may take the examination after sundown on Saturday, upon request by the supervisor and approval of the Director.

Description: The examination will be constructed to test originality as well as technical competence. It is expected that the contestants will be familiar with the formal theories embodied in undergraduate mathematics. It is assumed that such training, designed for mathematics and physical science majors, will include somewhat more sophisticated mathematical concepts than is the case in minimal courses. Questions will be included that cut across the bounds of various disciplines, and self-contained questions that do not fit into any of the usual categories may be included.

Prizes and Scholarships: Prizes will be awarded to the departments of mathematics of the institutions with the five winning teams. In addition, there will be prizes awarded to each of the members of the teams. The five highest ranking individuals are designated Putnam Fellows by the MAA. Prizes will be awarded to each of these individuals and to each of the next twenty highest ranking contestants.

The annual **William Lowell Putnam Prize Scholarship** will be awarded to one of the Putnam Fellows. This scholarship carries a value of \$12000 (plus tuition at Harvard).

The **Elizabeth Lowell Putnam Prize** will be awarded to a woman whose performance on the Competition has been deemed particularly meritorious.

On the local level, i.e. at **Virginia Tech**, about \$200-250 in prize money is available for the best performances in the Competition.