

PRESS RELEASE

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For more information, contact:

Jackie Hanson

Extension Associate III / Communications Lead

College of Natural & Applied Sciences

University of Guam

Tel: (671) 735-2060

Email: jhanson@triton.uog.edu

UOG sets the stage for STEM careers with high school Math Day

One of the largest classrooms on the University of Guam campus was standing room only on Saturday, Nov. 16, as 70 middle and high students and their teachers came together to indulge in their favorite subject — math. It was the 14th UOG Math Day, an event designed to get youth excited about pursuing math courses in college and to give them confidence toward pursuing STEM degrees and careers.

“Several students who end up majoring in math at UOG had experienced Math Day when they were in high school,” said Dr. Hideo Nagahashi, professor of mathematics at UOG and lead organizer of Math Day. “Math Day participants have also gone on to be accepted into advanced degree programs in the U.S. mainland.”

Launched in 2008 by then-math assistant professors Dr. Alicia Aguon and Dr. Grazyna Badowski, UOG Math Day invites inspirational guest speakers and has evolved to include a math quiz competition as well. While it has been a high school event in years past, this year was the first year that middle schoolers participated as well. Students competed in teams answering timed questions in algebra, geometry, statistics, pre-calculus and calculus.

In his welcoming remarks, Dr. Maika Vuki, interim associate dean of UOG's College of Natural & Applied Sciences, described math as a universal language and a highly versatile subject.

"We cannot move into any other branch of science without mathematics," he said. "We're so excited to have you — the young generation, the future generation of STEM — here with us."

The event has become well-known among public and private school math teachers — some have been bringing their students since the first Math Day in 2008.

"I don't even know how many I've been to," said Lindsay Hashberger, a high school teacher at Harvest Christian Academy. "I think it's good for [our students] to be in a university setting, where they're getting to see people who have made [math] their career. Whether they do great in the competition or not, I want them to come and have the experience of hearing from someone they wouldn't have heard from and seeing who else is in the math community."

Guest speaker: 'Leading students to their own discoveries'

The guest speaker this year was Daichi Matsumoto, who refers to himself as an experimental math teacher at Jiyunomori Gakuen Junior & Senior High School in Japan. He has developed original lectures that have resulted in invitations to lecture at schools around Japan.

"Instead of mechanically following the textbook and rules of mathematical computation, he presents the materials from his own perspectives, leading students to their own discoveries," Nagahashi said. "He encourages students to think, discuss, and speak — no matter what their ideas are."

Matsumoto said he always considers that the concepts and theorems presented to students in a math class could be just a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

"So I always stage my lecture so that I will be as dramatic and memorable as possible for them," Matsumoto said. "[...] I believe my lectures will motivate students to study further if their first encounter is dramatic."

He engaged Guam's students in an interactive lecture of looking for patterns in complex number structures. His approach was to never provide the answers or solutions, but rather to have the students come up and show the class what they had figured out.

"It was a beautiful scene," he said. "Students with different grades and backgrounds tackled the same problem."

Quiz competition winners

In the middle school quiz competition, 11 teams competed with three tying for first place:

- Hanyoung Park and Chanyoung Park, Luis P. Untalan Middle School
- Kelly Cho and Melody Cho, St. John's School
- Derrick Yan and Donggeon Kim, St. John's School

In the high school algebra, geometry, and statistics competition, 14 teams competed with the following winners:

- First place: Alick Zhao and Noah Kim, St. John's School
- Second place: Yaxin Liu and Celina Kim, Harvest Christian Academy
- Third place: Claire Suh and Offeia Yordy, St. John's School

In the high school pre-calculus and calculus competition, 12 teams competed with four tying for first place:

- Chaemin You and Ye-Jun Yeo, Harvest Christian Academy
- Vivian Wen and Shiyori Shibahata, Harvest Christian Academy
- Leon Park and Sihoo Kim, John F. Kennedy High School
- Chanju Lee and Zunaid Jafar, St. John's School

Math Day is supported by a Docliani Mathematics Enrichment Grant from the Mathematical Association of America.

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Photo captions:



2024-nov-uog-math-day-leslie-aquino

Dr. Leslie Aquino, chair of the Division of Mathematics & Computer Science at UOG, welcomes 70 middle and high school students to the 14th UOG Math Day on Nov. 16, 2024.



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UOG student Michael Tenorio reviews scores as a volunteer judge for the Math Quiz Competition at UOG Math Day on Nov. 16, 2024, on the UOG campus.



2024-nov-uog-math-day-daichi-matsumoto

Daichi Matsumoto, a visiting math teacher from Jiyunomori Gakuen Junior & Senior High School in Japan, engages students in an interactive lecture at UOG's Math Day on Nov. 16, 2024.



2024-nov-uog-math-day-leon-park

Leon Park, a student from John F. Kennedy High School, carefully considers a pattern in a set of numbers during the guest lecture at UOG's Math Day on Nov. 16, 2024.



2024-nov-uog-math-day-yaxin-liu-celina-kim

Yaxin Liu, left, and Celina Kim from Harvest Christian Academy collaborate on their answer during the high school algebra, geometry, and statistics quiz competition at UOG's Math Day on Nov. 16, 2024.



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(From left) UOG math and computer science majors Yoonji Seo, Lydia Sombria, Shannon Ada, and Joriza Luzano assist with registration at UOG Math Day on Nov. 16, 2024, on the UOG campus.



2024-nov-uog-math-day-4

Faculty in the Division of Mathematics & Computer Science at UOG: (From left) Dr. Joo-Chul Yoon, Katrina Quinata, Dr. Hyunju Oh, Dr. Leslie Aquino, Dr. Hideo Nagahashi, and Dr. Byoungyong Lee. The division has been putting on UOG Math Day since 2008.

Photos courtesy of University of Guam