



AMSI News

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Three things

AMSI now has four members in Western Australia: Full Member UWA and three Associate Members: Curtin, Murdoch and Edith Cowan. I visited them in the first week of April to hear what they valued and wanted from their membership. In addition to discussing our research workshops and research training events, there were three things that we agreed to progress.

1. Accreditation of mathematical sciences majors

There are various arguments in favour of accrediting our majors, certainly in conjunction with the Statistical Society of Australia. One is that it can help defend our programs against hostile administrations looking to reduce our offerings or fine us for small class sizes. Another is that it will provide quality assurance for employers with an appetite for our skill sets. And it can also provide us and our deans with a marketing pitch. The one I like is the ability to improve our engagement with our graduates.

Our colleagues in WA are in favour of an accreditation program suited to their diverse needs. The learned societies clearly need to be the accrediting bodies but their resources are limited. On the other hand almost all mathematical sciences departments are AMSI members. So I have offered to poll our members on the issue with a view to resourcing a work plan with the learned societies. We will discuss this in detail at the face to face members' meeting in July.

2. A small grant scheme

With the launch of the AMSI Foundation finally happening we have the opportunity for some new research initiatives. One of these is the creation of a competitive small grant scheme, as mooted in the Decadal Plan. The absence of such a program is a noticeable gap in the current grant spectrum. At least initially the scheme would focus on those early and mid-career researchers historically unsupported and especially in smaller schools where ARC and NH&MRC grants are rare. This would provide valuable track record for the larger grant schemes and boost research and career outcomes. AMSI's Research and Higher Education Committee will be exploring this over the next few months.

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3. Collaborative Research Groups

Another gap in the grant spectrum available to the mathematical sciences is the support for special topics across a number of institutions. The Canadians do this very well, PIMS currently funds a number of Collaborative Research Groups (CRGs): <https://www.pims.math.ca/scientific/collaborative-research-groups>, for example, in Geometric Analysis, Explicit Methods for Abelian Varieties, and Applied PDEs. These programs run for around three years and involve three or four universities, often one of them being outside the PIMS membership. In the Australian context we would expect participation from government agencies as well as from partner universities abroad. The outcomes are manifold and strategic, for example, the growth of track record for individuals and groups, increased postgraduate training opportunities in key areas, and the increase of Australian capacity at the forefront of new areas. CRGs also directly attack the tyranny of distance which still separates universities in the West from those further east. Again our Research and Higher Education Committee is looking at programs like the CRGs along with novel sources of funding, including from State Governments.

It is my sincere hope that AMSI will be able to better support its Western Australian members and that we will see a Summer School being held there sometime in the next few years.



I was a Monash undergraduate and took out a La Trobe PhD in 1981 in geometric mechanics and Lie groups. This was followed by a postdoc at the Institute for Advanced Study in Dublin. I've enjoyed teaching at RMIT, UNE and La Trobe. My research interests lie mainly in differential equations, differential geometry and the calculus of variations. I'm a proud Fellow of the Society, currently a Council and Steering Committee Member. I became AMSI director in September 2009.