



February 17, 2011

Frank Serio, Head
Department of Mathematics
Northwestern State University of Louisiana
153 Kyser Hall
Natchitoches, LA 71497

Dear Frank,

I understand that you are currently reviewing your program to determine how best to chart a course, both for the Department of Mathematics and, more generally, the mathematics program at Northwestern.

Since 1993, when we first re-connected at the Louisiana-Mississippi Section Meeting of the MAA, we've talked a lot about the importance of mentoring students in mathematics outside the classroom. We've both invested a lot of time to prepare students to participate at the annual Section meetings, and Northwestern faculty involvement at the Section level has, in my opinion, played a significant role in keeping our Section vibrant.

One aspect of the Northwestern program that I've found notable is the *requirement* that all majors work with an advisor to prepare and present independent work at the Section meeting. While we've discussed how meaningful such an experience is, Northwestern faculty made a commitment to including *all* majors, not just those so inclined, to support the outside-the-classroom effort required for students to make what is almost always their first professional presentation. I know that this takes an enormous amount of time, and I commend you and your colleagues for your willingness to go the extra mile for your students.

I look forward to seeing you at the upcoming Section meeting. I expect it to be, as usual one of the high points of my year!

Best regards,

Michael Pearson
Associate Executive Director
Director of Programs and Services