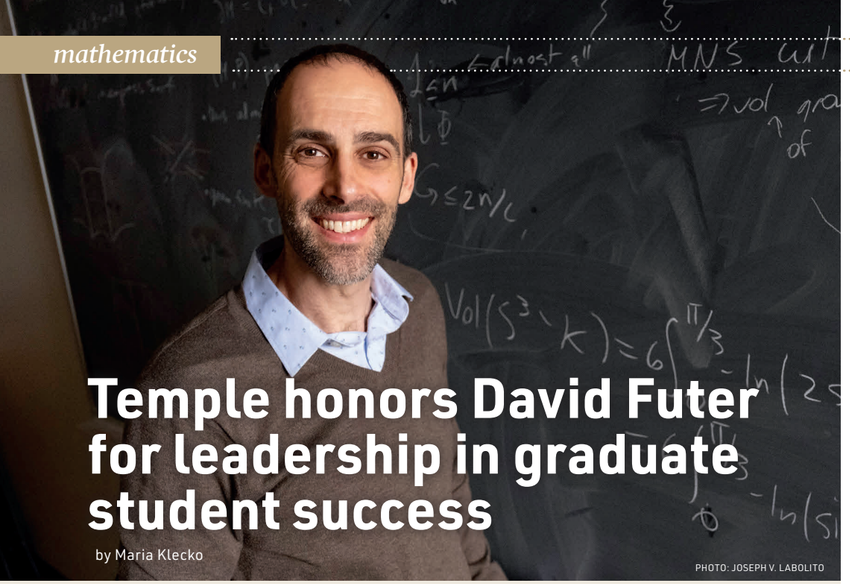


Temple honors David Futer for leadership in graduate student success

by Maria Klecko

PHOTO: JOSEPH V. LABOLITO

Mathematics professor David Futer has been named a recipient of the university's inaugural Excellence in Graduate Stewardship Award, one of two new graduate faculty awards created to recognize faculty members who have made exceptional contributions to graduate education and student success. The award honors faculty members who go beyond traditional teaching and advising responsibilities to develop and strengthen graduate training programs.

Futer has spent 18 years at Temple building a career that combines internationally recognized research with a commitment to student mentorship and graduate education.

Futer's research focuses on low-dimensional topology and geometry, fields that explore the possible shapes and structures of three-dimensional spaces. Futer studies questions related to the geometry of the universe, including how space might connect back to itself and how geometric properties such as area and curvature are influenced by topology.

"My research in geometry and topology is driven by the quest to understand the geometry of potential mathematical shapes of our physical universe," Futer said. While his research has earned recognition in the mathematical community, Futer said he is equally inspired by teaching and mentoring students.

"Temple students persevere through obstacles to master challenging ideas," he said. "I have also really loved working with graduate students to explore three-dimensional geometry and discover beautiful new forms of symmetry."

As graduate chair of the Mathematics Department, Futer led a series of reforms designed to strengthen the department's graduate programs. Those efforts included launching a professional development seminar to better prepare students for doctoral study and expanding mentoring opportunities through both faculty and peer support networks.

The initiatives contributed to significant improvements in student retention and degree completion, while also increasing the proportion of doctoral degrees earned by women.

Futer said the changes helped create a more supportive and engaging graduate experience for students across the department. "In the end, the reforms to our program made it a better experience for everyone," he said.

CELEBRATING OUTSTANDING TEACHING AND RESEARCH

Two students in mathematics earned CST awards for teaching and research.

"I think the best aspect of teaching is the opportunity to experience the sparks of learning something new vicariously through the students," said Aditya Sarma Phukon, who earned the Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award. "Witnessing their subsequent growth inspires me to do better not only as a teacher but in my own learning journey as a graduate student."

Afrina Asad Meghla earned the Outstanding Research Assistant Award. "What I enjoyed most about my RA position was working at the intersection of mathematics, computation and neuroscience," said Meghla. "I particularly enjoyed building and refining computational models of neuronal dynamics, connecting theory with prior research, and seeing how small modeling choices could lead to different outcomes."

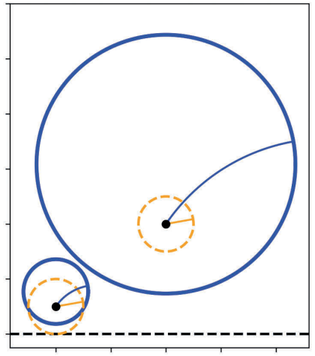
INAUGURAL INTEGRAL BEE

The Department of Mathematics hosted its Inaugural Integral Bee featuring participants from Calculus 2 (math 1042 and 1942). Confronted with 10 exceedingly hard integrals, Jose Rodrigo Burgos Trujillo came out on top with 86% of the possible points. Other top finishers were Bailey Barrett, Iskender Nusupov and Matteo Crespi.

MATH FACULTY AND STUDENTS HOST EXHIBIT AT ICM'S MATH FESTIVAL

With sponsorship from the Simons Foundation, Professors Jaclyn Lang and Beca Lufi led a team of undergraduates, graduate students and faculty in creating an exhibit for the Math Festival at the International Congress for Mathematicians (ICM), at the Pennsylvania Convention Center in Philadelphia.

The exhibit, titled *Are we there yet? An exploration of distance*, used the concept of distance along with hands-on activities to showcase the process of mathematical development and exploration. Activities included a hyperbolic virtual reality video





game, p-adic cornhole, tessellation puzzles, origami, straightedge and compass constructions and more.

"Distance is a great concept because it is both something everyone is familiar with and very visual," explained Lang. "We can illustrate our ideas with pictures rather than with formulae and calculations. People have an intuition for how distance behaves, and we can surprise that intuition when we change the definition of distance and see new phenomena."

CST students created many of the exhibit activities, such as web apps, crocheted hyperbolic planes and a model of the streets of Philadelphia.

"The students honed their technical communication skills, from creating posters, presenting them in Math Club and preparing to guide the general public in the activities at the festival," said Lang.

SK DAY OFFERS INSTRUCTION AND MENTORSHIP

Thirty-one middle school girls attended the Mathematics Department's Sonia Kovalevsky Day (SK Day) 2026. Led by current area high school students and Temple undergraduate and graduate students, as well as Temple professors, students learned about knot theory, quantum computing, permutations and abstract notions of distance.

SK Day, named for a trailblazing Russian mathematician and the first woman to earn a doctorate in mathematics, brings middle school girls to campus to learn about mathematics and careers. The program focuses on providing participants with competent and engaging mathematical instruction intertwined with strong mentorship by Temple undergraduate and graduate women students in STEM disciplines, who are in a position of scientific leadership at the college level.



PHOTO: CONNOR MCVAIL

JESSICA BABCOCK EARNS CST TEACHING AWARD

by Greg Fornia

Jessica Babcock, assistant professor of instruction, was awarded the Italia-Eire Foundation Distinguished Teacher of the Year. The honor was presented during a 2026 ceremony that recognized outstanding teaching, mentoring, research and service within the College of Science and Technology.

Babcock, who earned both her undergraduate and graduate degrees at Temple, joined the department in 2008.

"Professor Babcock has consistently demonstrated excellence in making students feel comfortable and being an engaging professor," said one of her students. "What sets her apart is not only her passion for her students and Mathematics, but also her personalized teaching style. I cannot express my gratitude to Professor Babcock for guiding me, giving me advice and encouraging me to not only be better in school, but also as a person."

The Italia-Eire Foundation Distinguished Teacher of the Year Award is funded by Joseph Allegra, CST '70. Allegra is a past chair and current member of the college's Board of Visitors.