

SDSU Mathematics Colloquium Distinguished Lecture Series

“Well, it’s obvious.”: College students experiences with mathematical microaggressions.

Monday, March 6, 2023 4pm–5pm, GMCS 405

Departmental Tea at 3:30pm

SPEAKER: Dr. Robin Wilson

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ABSTRACT: In a 2015 article in the MAA Focus Francis Su introduced the term mathematical microaggression which refers to the subtle ways in which mathematical authorities use language, behavior, and assumptions that communicate negative messages to students that they do not belong in mathematics. This talk will share the results of an analysis of the reflections of 173 undergraduate mathematics students who were asked to read and reflect on Su’s article.

Findings from a preliminary analysis by our research team show that students experienced different types of mathematical microaggressions, including microslights, microinsults, and environmental microaggressions. Students indicated that they have perceived receiving them from teachers, peers, and also textbooks. Our analysis revealed that women were more likely to report experiences with math microaggressions than men. Future analysis will look more closely at how the three types of math microaggressions are experienced across racial and ethnic groups and gender. This study supports the need to investigate this phenomenon further and to develop practices that create more inclusive spaces in mathematics classrooms.

BIO: Dr. Robin Wilson is a Professor in the Department of Mathematics at Loyola Marymount University. He finished his PhD at UC Davis and he joined the faculty at Cal Poly Pomona in 2007 after an appointment as a UC President’s Postdoctoral Scholar in the Department of Mathematics at UC Santa Barbara. He has also been a Visiting Professor at Georgetown University and Pomona College. Dr. Wilson is currently Co-Director of the NSF Funded Bolstering the Advancement of Masters in Mathematics (BAMM!) Program. His current research interests include both low-dimensional topology and mathematics education.

