CORE MATHEMATICS CURRICULUM REFORM AT HARVEY MUDD COLLEGE

I. BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION FOR CORE MATH REVISION

The previous core mathematics program, which served us well for a number of years, consisted of four semester-long courses, offered in a traditional sequence:

> Math 3: Single variable calculus (4 units)
> Math 4: Multivariable calculus (3 units)
> Math 73: Linear Algebra (3 units)
> Math 82: Differential Equations (3 units)

Students at HMC are required to have had one year of high school calculus, which accounts for having only one semester of single variable calculus in the list of courses.

Mathematics Department felt that, although the material and its prior form of delivery was acceptable, there were a number of shortcomings that needed correction. To define our goals, we made presentations to the entire faculty at HMC on the content of the Core. We sought input from every department, and invited comment from every faculty member at the College. Based on these discussions, and Department deliberations, we formulated several objectives that were used to guide the reform of our curriculum:

1. *To return to key subject matter and applications several times at increasingly more sophisticated levels.*

   In the previous system, there was considerable compartmentalization of the topics, which permitted few opportunities for review, reinforcement and appreciation of the linkages between diverse mathematical concepts and methods.

2. *To introduce important mathematical concepts from discrete mathematics, linear algebra, and differential equations into the first year.*

   In the previous system there was a perception by the students that having had differential equations before Systems Engineering (E53; a fall sophomore course) would be beneficial; there was also a sense that a better job could be done in reinforcing the key vector calculus concepts used in Electricity and Magnetism (also a fall sophomore course) in a more timely way.

3. *To provide a calculus based introduction to probability and statistics for all second year students.*

   This objective was set by a survey of the faculty, who nearly with one voice said that these important topics should be in the core.

4. *To integrate topics, notation, and examples with other 1st and 2nd year courses, especially physics, chemistry, and systems engineering.*

   We felt that our Department could do a better job coordinating important mathematical topics and applications with the other departments.

5. *To make it easier for students with a strong introduction to certain mathematical ideas to be placed more accurately in courses that fit their preparation.*

   We felt that we could do a more precise job of placing entering students that had mathematics training beyond single variable calculus.

II. OVERVIEW OF THE REVISED CORE SEQUENCE

After one year of study and design, a committee of the Department recommended a novel re-design of the entire Core sequence. We called this new curriculum "Pilot Math" and taught it in trial sections the last two years. We randomized the treatment, so that we could compare Pilot students to those that had the traditional Core sequence. After assessment of the two-year trial, we were convinced that we should move completely to the new curriculum, which we did in the Fall of 2000.

In order to accomplish our objectives, we divided the core curriculum into segments of approximately seven weeks in length, which is the length of a semester half-course. Keeping the same number of hours currently available for mathematics, the first two half-courses would meet 4 days a week and the remaining six would meet 3 days a week.

The titles of these half-courses and the natural order in which they would be offered to students are listed below:

Math 11: Calculus of one real or complex variable (2 units)
Math 12: Linear algebra I with discrete dynamical systems (2 units)
Math 13: Differential equations I (1.5 units)
Math 14: Multivariable calculus I (1.5 units)

Math 61: Multivariable calculus II (1.5 units)
Math 62: Introduction to probability and statistics (1.5 units)
Math 63: Linear algebra II (1.5 units)
Math 64: Differential equations II (1.5 units)

Complete catalog descriptions of these courses appears at the end of this document.

During the planning and pilot implementation of this structure, two especially important issues were identified and addressed.

ISSUE 1: By introducing discrete dynamical systems in addition to probability and statistics, we are devoting considerably less time to a review of single variable calculus and a little less to linear algebra.

SOLUTION: In order to compensate for the diminished coverage of single variable calculus, we developed web-based calculus tutorials and quizzes. These tutorials are available to students during the summer before they enroll. A number of these tutorials must be completed successfully early in Math 11 in order to pass the course. Many of the tutorials focus on mechanical topics which students that have had a previous course in calculus can easily review on their own (the product rule, for example). Most of the time in Math 11 is spent on topics that are typically not well-covered in high school courses (e.g., power series, proofs of important theorems) and a deepening of conceptual understanding. In addition, we have added content to Math 11 using complex numbers and functions, in order to make the course more interesting for the students. These topics are also useful in subsequent courses. Tutorials in linear algebra reduce the amount of class time that needs to be spent on basic matrix operations and other mechanical topics.

ISSUE 2: The placement of Math 61, where the vector calculus theorems are taught thoroughly, is now coincident with Physics 51, Electricity and Magnetism. Previously, each student had all of multivariable calculus in the first year.

SOLUTION: This difficulty has been resolved by means of a careful scheduling of material in Math 61, following the introduction to vector calculus in Math 14. In Math 14, the ideas of flux and surface integrals are introduced in the special cases of spheres, cylinders and boxes, for carefully chosen vector fields. Elementary versions of Gauss' and Stokes' Theorems are briefly considered. In Math 61, these ideas are reviewed, and then broadened to include general surface parameterization, and full versions of the vector theorems. The connections between the vector calculus and physics has been improved by doing applications from E & M in Math 61 as examples, carefully coordinated with Physics 51.

III. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW CORE SEQUENCE

We summarize our implementation using the two tables that appear below. These tables describe the number of sections of each proposed course that would be taught, when they would be taught, and the prerequisite structure. As described in more detail after the tables, we anticipate having three streams through the new

core sequence, rather than the previous two. This increased flexibility can accommodate more precise advanced placement for previous experience.

		SECTIONS AND PREREQUISITES				
COURSE	NAME	UNITS	SECTIONS	TAKEN BY	PREREQS	QUARTERS TAUGHT
11	Calculus (single)	2	3	Frosh Fall	None	1
12	"Linear I, Dyn Sys"	2	6	Frosh Fall	11	1, 2
13	D.E. I	1.5	6	Frosh Spring	11	2, 3
14	Multivariable I	1.5	5	Frosh Spring	11	3, 4
61	Multivariable II	1.5	5	Soph Fall	14	1, 3, 4
62	Prob/Stat	1.5	5	Soph Spring	11	1, 2, 4
63	Linear II	1.5	5	Soph Spring	12	1, 2, 3
64	D.E. II	1.5	5	Soph Spring	13, 63	2, 3, 4
TOTALS:		13	40			

The following table shows the distribution of sections for each course across the four semesters of the core.

	DISTRIBUTION OF SECTIONS			
COURSE	FALL 1ST HALF	FALL 2ND HALF	SPRING 1ST HALF	SPRING 2ND HALF
11	3			
12	3	3		
13		3	3	
14			2	3
61	2		1	2
62	2	2		1
63	1	2	2	
64		1	2	2

IV. DETAILS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION

The rationale for the implementation is to create flexibility for students with advanced placement and for students who might fail a given course. The schedule is set up to handle three major streams of students: (A) those with no advanced placement, (B) those who place out of Math 11 only, and (C) those who place out of Math 11 and 14. All students are assigned the lowest numbered available math course. It is expected that about one section's worth of students will satisfy Math 61, 62, 63, and 64 through summer math courses. How we handle students who fail a course depends on the course and is discussed in the section on Frequently Asked Questions which appears later in this document.

V. ANTICIPATED STREAMS

As mentioned above, we most students can be accommodated into three "streams," based on their level of advanced placement. The system is designed so that every entering student will immediately start a stream, and continue taking mathematics courses until they have finished the core sequence. Some students will finish earlier than others. In order to accomplish this goal, it is necessary to teach key half-courses more than once per year so that students can join the core sequence in mid-stream (pun intended).

STREAM A: (No advanced placement). Estimated size: 90 students (with 30 taking summer math)

$$11 \to 12 \to 13 \to 14 \to 61 \to 62 \to 63 \to 64$$

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STREAM B: (Placed out of Math 11 only). Estimated size: 60 students (with 15 taking summer math)

$$12 \rightarrow 13 \rightarrow 14 \rightarrow 61 \rightarrow 62 \rightarrow 63 \rightarrow 64$$

STREAM C: (Placed out of Math 11 and 14). Estimated size: 30 students (with 5 taking summer math)

$$12 \rightarrow 13 \rightarrow 61 \rightarrow 62 \rightarrow 63 \rightarrow 64$$

SECTIONS: Estimated average (non-summer) section size:

ANTICIPATED SECTION SIZES							
Course	Size	Course	Size	Course	Size	Course	Size
11	$90/3 = 30$	12:	$180/6 = 30$	13:	$180/6 = 30$	14:	$150/5 = 30$
61:	$150/5 = 30$	62:	$135/5 = 27$	63:	$130/5 = 26$	64:	$130/5 = 26$

VI. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

QUESTION: How do we accommodate students who fail?

ANSWER: Students who fail Math 11 can still take Math 12. Math 11 can be recovered by taking Math 31 at CMC, Pitzer, or Pomona. Math 12 can be recovered by taking Math 60 at Pomona or Math 90 at CMC. Students who fail higher numbered courses should still take the lowest numbered course that is offered (perhaps delaying Math 62 to the Junior Fall in order to complete Math 64 by the end of Sophomore year).

QUESTION: How does the new Core affect Math department staffing?

ANSWER: We have designed the new program to be "staffing neutral", with the expectation of putting the same number of FTE's into the new program as the old one.

QUESTION: How large will the sections be?

ANSWER: Assuming about 90 students in Stream A, 60 students in Stream B, and 30 students in Stream C, we anticipate section sizes between 25 and 30 students.

QUESTION: How will this proposal affect Math placement?

ANSWER: Students with a 5 on the Calculus BC exam will automatically be eligible to place out of Math 11. Students with college multivariable calculus will automatically be eligible to place out of Math 14. Depending on the strength of their multivariable calculus course, some students may place out of Math 61. Placement exams will be available for all math courses.

QUESTION: What material is being discarded?

ANSWER: To make room for the new material in Probability and Statistics and some discrete dynamical systems, we have reduced review material from Math 3 (techniques of differentiation and elementary integration methods, max/min problems, L'Hopital's rule, 2nd derivative tests and so on) and we have shaved a little off of Math 73. The students review the omitted Math 3 material through web-based tutorials, and online quizzes. Although little class time is spent on these topics, students are still expected to have a mastery of these topics, and they are fair game for examinations and homework. We have had a very positive response from the students to the tutorials, and they are able to handle the computer-based review with no difficulty. We find that most students have completed at least one tutorial before arriving at HMC for Student Orientation, and many have done all of them.

QUESTION: What new material is in the revised core?

ANSWER: We have added material on complex numbers and functions of a complex variable into Math 11. We have added material on discrete dynamical systems into the introductory module on linear algebra. There is now an entire half-semester course on probability and statistics.

QUESTION: Are the tutorials only available for Math 11?

ANSWER: No! The tutorial web site has nearly 50 tutorials, covering algebra, single variable calculus, multivariable calculus, linear algebra and differential equations. Science and engineering courses can make use of the tutorials: when a given mathematical topic is being used in a science course, students can be directed to the appropriate tutorial to "brush up" on the mathematics. We are continuing to develop tutorials of specific utility in upper division science and engineering courses.

QUESTION: How does the new core math fit with other core courses?

ANSWER: One of the strengths of the new program is that all students will have taken half a semester's worth of differential equations prior to Engineering 53. Examples from Electricity and Magnetism can be brought into Math 61, reinforcing both subjects. The course in probability and statistics has had a demonstrable impact throughout the College curriculum, especially in laboratory courses.

QUESTION: What if the new math program just doesn't work as well as expected?

ANSWER: It would take two years to revert back to the previous system—just one cycle of the college catalog.

VII. CORE MATH COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

MATH 11. Calculus of One Real or Complex Variable: Complex numbers, real and complex limits, derivatives and differentiation rules; proofs by contradiction and induction; real and complex series, real and complex integration, the residue theorem. Prerequisite: a year of calculus at the high school level. 2 credit hours.

MATH 12. Introduction to Linear Algebra and Discrete Dynamical Systems: Matrix representation of systems of equations, matrix operations, determinants; linear independence and dependence, bases; inner products, eigenvalues and eigenvectors; examples of discrete dynamical systems, fixed points, chaos, stability, bifurcations, Sarkovskii's Theorem. Prerequisite: Mathematics 11, or the equivalent. 2 credit hours.

MATH 13. Differential Equations 1: Modeling physical systems, first order ordinary differential equations, existence; uniqueness, and long-term behavior of solutions; bifurcations, approximate solutions; second order ordinary differential equations and their properties, applications; first order systems of ordinary differential equations, applications. Prerequisite: Mathematics 11. 1.5 credit hours.

MATH 14. Multivariable Calculus 1: Vectors, dot and cross products; vector descriptions of lines and planes; partial derivatives and differentiability; gradients and directional derivatives; chain rule; higher order derivatives and Taylor approximations; double and triple integrals in rectangular and other coordinate systems; line integrals; vector fields, curl, and divergence; introduction to Green's theorem, divergence theorem, and Stokes' theorem. Prerequisite: Mathematics 11. 1.5 credit hours.

MATH 61. Multivariable Calculus 2: Review of basic multivariable calculus; optimization and the Second Derivative Test; constrained optimization using Lagrange multipliers; conservative and non-conservative vector fields; Green's theorem; parametrized surfaces and surface integrals; divergence theorem, outline of proof, and applications; Stokes' theorem, outline of proof, and applications; unification of the major vector theorems. Prerequisite: Mathematics 14. 1.5 credit hours.

MATH 62. Introduction to Probability and Statistics: Sample spaces, events, axioms for probabilities; conditional probabilities and Bayes' theorem; random variables and their distributions, discrete and continuous; expected values, means and variances; covariance and correlation; law of large numbers and central limit theorem; point and interval estimation; hypothesis testing; χ^2 goodness of fit; simple linear regression; introduction to analysis of variance; applications to analyzing real data sets. Prerequisite: Mathematics 11. 1.5 credit hours.

MATH 63. Linear Algebra 2. Review of basic linear algebra; vector spaces; row and column spaces of matrices; rank-nullity theorem; orthogonal bases and Gram-Schmidt procedure; orthogonal expansion and Fourier coefficients; projections and Bessel's inequality; linear transformations; change of basis and similarity; eigenvalues, eigenvectors and characteristic polynomials; diagonalization of symmetric matrices; applications of eigenvalues to systems of ordinary differential equations. Prerequisite: Mathematics 12. 1.5 credit hours.

MATH 64. Differential Equations 2. Review of basic ordinary differential equations, especially systems; undriven linear systems; orbital portraits; stability and conservative systems; Lyapunov functions; cycles and long term behavior of solutions; Sturm-Liouville problems; series solutions near ordinary and regular singular points; Bessel functions; chaos. Prerequisite: Mathematics 13 and 63. 1.5 credit hours.