University to host mathematics competition for high school students
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The 39th annual William Varick Nevins III High School Mathematics Competition will be held Friday, Nov. 2, on the Alfred University campus. The competition is open to all high school students, regardless of home district or grade level, with the winner receiving a scholarship if he or she enrolls at Alfred University. Last year over 300 high school students from Western New York and Northwestern Pennsylvania participated in the competition. A school is entered into the competition when their teacher signs the students up, said Dr. Darwyn Cook, chairman of the Mathematics Department at Alfred University. For information on how to enter, contact Cook at 607.587.2819, or at cook@alfred.edu. The entry deadline is Friday, Oct. 26, 2007.First-, second- and third-place winners from the Junior/Senior Competition (11th and 12th grades) will receive scholarships to AU totaling $10,000, $8,000 and $6,000, respectively, divided over four years. There are also cash prizes for the top three scorers in both the Junior/Senior Competition and the Sophomore Competition (10th grade and lower). The exam begins at 10 a.m. and runs through 11:25 a.m. Participants and their teachers are then invited to lunch in Ade Dining Hall, prior to the awards presentation at 12:30 p.m. in McLane Center. The competition is named in honor of the late W. Varick Nevins, a 1932 graduate of AU who taught math at the University from 1937 until his death in 1967.Nevins' "love for mathematics and for teaching gained him a place in the hearts of students at Alfred Everyone who had a course with him remembers not only his knowledge of mathematics, but also his delightful sense of the ridiculous," wrote former AU math professor Robert Sloan.The first competition was held in 1968, the year after Nevins' death, and was won by Timothy Frawley of Corning-Painted Post East High School. Frawley went on to become a math teacher himself, and retired from the Corning-Painted Post West High School, said Dr. Addison Frey, professor of mathematics.Originally the exam consisted of multiple-choice questions and a long answer (essay), but in 1999, the format was changed to a 30-question multiple-choice exam. "The exam is intended to be difficult, but not advanced," said Frey. "The exam stresses original thinking and creative problem-solving, rather than routine applications." He noted the mathematics faculty writes the exam."During the first six weeks of the fall semester, each faculty member in the division submits five to 10 problems for consideration," he explained. In mid-October, the faculty selects the 30 problems that will comprise that year's exam.