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-Guest Editorial-

A Starting Point

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As a new faculty member in the Department of Mathematical Sciences at the University since Fall 2008, I was eager to find possible research partners with whom to build a research network for long term collaboration and support. I wondered “Where shall I start?” and “Whom shall I invite?” After several conversations with my colleague, Dr. Bharath Sriraman, and many phone calls to my good friend, Dr. Anne Kern, a new faculty at the University of Idaho, we came up with the idea of forming a support group of female faculty in the fields of mathematics and science education in the northwestern region of the United States, including Montana, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. These four states face similar challenges in education such as a large number of K-12 public schools with small enrollments located in rural areas.

With funding support from the PACE program² at the University of Montana, a group of seven women researchers came to Missoula for a two-day meeting in the late summer of 2009. Participants included Drs. Anne Adams (University of Idaho, Moscow), Elizabeth Burroughs and Jennifer Luebeck (Montana State University), Anne Kern (University of Idaho, Coeur d’Alene), Libby Knott (Washington State University, Pullman), Min Li (University of Washington, Seattle), and Jerine Pegg (University of Idaho, Moscow then, and now University of Alberta, CA).

A wide range of topics were discussed during the meeting: (1) How to interest high school females in college science and mathematics majors; (2) The discourse of problem posing and problem solving; (3) Curriculum design that integrates engineering into mathematics and science coursework for K-12 Teachers; (4) Experiences in middle school mathematics lesson study; (5) Assessment: Examining how students from different groups interpret test items; (6) Rehearsal or reorganization: two patterns of literacy strategy use; and (7) The influence of a multidisciplinary scientific research experience on teachers views of the nature of science. Hopefully this is just a starting point among the women researchers in mathematics and science education from the northwestern U.S. region.

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² Partnership for Comprehensive Equity

The papers in this section reflect the ongoing efforts of the participants and themes discussed in the meeting. Given that last year's meeting was a success, we are planning on continuing to build our professional collaboration again this year at the University of Montana³.

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