# Math professional organizations

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1. Two strengths of the American Mathematical Association of Two-Year Colleges (http://www.amatyc.org/) are its annual conference and its affiliates.

AMATYC has an annual fall conference (http://www.amatyc.org/Events/conferences.htm). The conference site changes each year, with an effort to cycle through different geographic regions. The conference typically attracts more than a thousand participants who attend dozens of presentations, workshops, committee and regional meetings, and forums to discuss and debate AMATYC position statements.

The annual conference is now supplemented by year-round webinars (http://www.amatyc.org/publications/webinars/) sponsored by the various AMATYC academic committees (http://www.amatyc.org/committees/).

The conferences and webinars provide networking opportunities vital to educators who do not have sufficient supportive colleagues at their home institutions. And just as critically, these physical and virtual meetings expose members to points of view that they might never have encountered within their home institution.

The existence of the national organization helps to strengthen the local affiliates (http://www.amatyc.org/affiliates/). Membership in an affiliate does not require membership in AMATYC (New York and California "affiliates" both actually predate AMATYC) nor vice versa, but the cross-communication helps to give all the organizations a broader knowledge base.

2. It would be desirable to have meetings and other communications among full-time and adjunct faculty about the content and pedagogical practices associated with specific courses taught at my college. Currently most of our math classes are taught by adjunct faculty, and many of them teach at multiple campuses. The result is that there is too little commonality across sections within our college--not all the instructors are even genuinely attempting to teach to the same course outline because there is a tendency among some instructors to teach the same course they have already taught at another school. But the goals and philosophy of our department (as specified in our course outline and our list of desired Student Learning Outcomes) do not always agree with those of math departments in neighboring schools.

Most of our math faculty would be willing and perhaps even happy to attend meetings to discuss what our department values in the content and pedagogy of each course. But the union leadership on our campus (specifically the chapter president and grievance officer) discourage faculty from participation in activities intended to improve the academic program.

For example, the union president sent out a memo to all campus faculty recommending that faculty not cooperate with department requests to collect copies of examinations given in Pierce classes. The memo was evidently a sort of escalation of the grievance officer's complaint about an email request (from our course liaison for elementary algebra, not from the department chair) that our elementary algebra instructors provide copies of the exams they give and that they could participate in an electronic forum using the school's Moodle site. The grievance officer said that the department cannot "demand" (his word) faculty to turn in exams nor to use Moodle.

The union president said that collecting exams was an infringement of academic freedom. He countered the argument that a collection of exams would be useful to determine if instructors were appropriately following the course outlines and Student Learning Outcomes by writing that "we must assume they are doing a competent job, and let the evaluation process confirm that at appropriate intervals."

The union would almost certainly allow the department to encourage participation among faculty in course-specific discussions by offering stipends.