

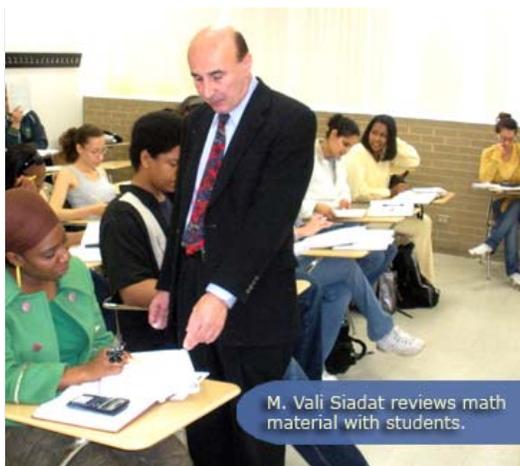


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**Math professor receives  
prestigious teaching honor**
BY MELANIE BRISBON, *Published October 26, 2008*

M. Vali Siadat reviews math material with students.

M. Vali Siadat, a mathematics professor at Richard J. Daley College (Illinois), is the first community college recipient of the Mathematical Association of America's (MAA) Deborah and Franklin Tepper Haimo Award for distinguished teaching of mathematics.

MAA is the largest mathematics organization in the U.S., comprising mathematicians and mathematics educators at two-year and four-year higher education institutions. The award is the highest honor the organization bestows on individuals teaching mathematics.

Siadat is among elite company. Previous award recipients include mathematicians and math instructors from top U.S. universities, including the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the

University of Chicago and the University of California.

"I am very fortunate and very pleased to win this award. No other winner has come from a two-year college, so I was pleasantly surprised," Siadat said in an interview.

Siadat, who has two doctorate degrees—in pure mathematics and in mathematics education—was nominated by Linda Serra Hagedorn, his former instructor and professor and director of the Research Institute for Studies in Education at Iowa State University.

"Because he has dual expertise in both mathematics and teaching, he stands out in my mind. He is both an excellent researcher and instructor," Hagedorn said.

Siadat started his career as an engineer. After working in the industry for a few years, his interest in math and his desire to interact with others prompted him to further his education and to teach. Upon completing his degrees, Siadat considered teaching at a community college because it would give him the opportunity to teach students who may not have received the highest quality of math instruction prior to college.

According to Siadat, teaching at a community college isn't easy because of the variety of students in terms of ages and backgrounds, each with different learning styles and different reasons for pursuing an education.

"Teaching at a two-year college is challenging. It requires lots of energy, enthusiasm and commitment," he said.

Teaching involves more than passing information to the students, Siadat added. He said he tries to ease students' anxieties about math and give them the confidence to do math, even though it may seem daunting.

"Many of the students have been traumatized by years of improper teaching, and they don't have the right enthusiasm toward learning mathematics. My job is to uplift them to show them that they can do mathematics. My job is to motivate them because if they are motivated, they tend to strive for excellence," Siadat said.

To address students' different needs, Siadat uses the Keystone Method, which he developed while pursuing his doctorate in math education. Siadat said the method helps him to adjust his teaching to the student's needs through analyzing a student's skill sets and developing ways to help them master math.

Siadat also encourages collaborative learning by allowing students to work together through peer tutoring.

"I consider the classroom a learning community, where everyone has to participate in order for it to be successful," Siadat said.

Siadat added that he hopes that winning the math award will inspire other community college professors to strive for excellence in teaching.

"I have educated over 10,000 students. This is the greatest contribution I have made to society," Siadat said.

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