

# Deborah and Franklin Tepper Haimo Award

## Adriana Salerno

*Bates College*

Dr. Adriana Salerno is an exemplary mathematician and educator, who cares deeply about her students and who invests a lot of time and energy creating a welcoming atmosphere in her classes so her students can thrive. She has shown time and again her ability to lead inside her institution and at the national and international level. She has worked tirelessly at every level to create a much more inclusive environment for students inside the classroom and for all of us in the mathematics community.

Inside the classroom, Dr. Salerno is an enthusiastic, passionate, devoted, and creative teacher. Even more importantly, she is an extremely effective teacher. Students at Bates College seek her course regardless of topic, stop her around campus years after being her students to tell her how much they enjoyed her classes, and actively pursue her as a mentor. Perhaps what makes her such an effective educator is her willingness to be human and connect with her students. Her colleagues and students attest that the atmosphere in her classroom is delightful: there is laughter, almost universal participation, lots of good questions, and camaraderie. Students trust her and are not afraid to speak up when they need clarification or don't understand.

Outside the classroom, Dr. Salerno's leadership has had a significant impact in every aspect of the mathematical community, and in higher education in general. At the local level, she started and led a math circle for sixth grade students in her city. At her institution, she makes an impact at the department and institutional level. She is the chair of her department, and the chair of the Diversity Action Team, Bates College's faculty committee for inclusion, diversity, and equity.

At the national level, Dr. Salerno has provided outstanding service to the community. She was the co-author and co-founder of the AMS Inclusion/Exclusion blog. This blog has played an important role in getting the mathematics community to critically examine its practices. It provides a venue for unheard voices and makes the community aware of relevant events. Dr. Salerno is an internationally sought-after educator, who has taught a mini-course on  $p$ -adic numbers in Dangbo, Benin, a class on lattices and cryptography in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, and a class on algebraic number theory in Şirince, Turkey among many other talks and lectures around the world.

Dr. Salerno's dedication to her students and passion for teaching is admirable. Her desire and incredible record of work to make education more accessible and inclusive is an inspiration to all that know her and are impacted

by her. Her contributions to the larger mathematical community go beyond the United States and make her an internationally known and recognized mathematician and educator. For all of these reasons, the MAA is honored to present her with the Deborah and Franklin Tepper Haimo Award for Distinguished College or University Teaching of Mathematics.

## Response

I am incredibly honored to receive this award, and extremely thankful to my colleagues and students for this nomination. There is a certain irony to this, a teaching award given to me as an individual, when a key belief that drives my teaching practice is that teaching and learning are activities of a community. I believe good teaching happens in a collective. Students, colleagues, the mathematical community at large, and even my friends and family have shaped my teaching in fundamental ways. Much of what I do is listen and adapt, stay open to new ideas, and create space for others. A key part of my teaching is de-centering myself, hence my awkwardness about receiving this prestigious award! And so, I recognize this as an award that I share with all the folks who I've interacted with. First of all, this is an award to Bates students, who guide and inspire my teaching, and challenge me and each other to become our best selves in and out of the classroom. This is an award to my colleagues at Bates College, for being collaborators and co-creators in all my teaching. This is an award to all the people and organizations fighting for justice and equity in mathematics, who have inspired me to do the work. This is an award to the MAA and its Northeastern section, who submitted this nomination, a vibrant community filled with brilliant teachers. This is an award to MAA Project NExT, which gave me community when I needed it most, transitioning from being a student to being a college professor, and which continues to give me opportunities to learn more about teaching. This is an award to the University of Texas at Austin, where I first learned that one could teach without standing in front of a classroom—that teaching was more about what your students are learning than how much you know. This is an award to the Universidad Simon Bolivar, where I taught my first classes. And finally, this is an award to my friends and family, who I call on when things are not going well, and who talk me through tricky situations, and who constantly remind me that kindness, justice, and patience are worth the effort.

## Biographical Sketch

Adriana Salerno was born and raised in Caracas, Venezuela, where she studied mathematics at the Universidad Simon Bolivar. She moved to the University of Texas at Austin to pursue her PhD in number theory. Her work

explores the intersection of number theory with geometry, physics, coding theory, and cryptography. Adriana loves writing about mathematics and is passionate about equity and inclusion. She co-founded and wrote for the AMS blogs “Ph.D. plus epsilon” and “inclusion/exclusion” for over a decade. Her teaching at Bates College was recognized with the MAA Northeastern Section’s teaching award in 2021. She currently serves as a professor of mathematics at Bates College, a program officer for the National Science Foundation, and Vice-President of the MAA.