

PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 11, 2007

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Dr. Robert L. Bryant named new director of MSRI

Distinguished Duke University mathematician takes helm at math institute

BERKELEY, California – Dr. Charles Fefferman, chair of the Board of Trustees of the Mathematical Sciences Research Institute (MSRI, www.msri.org) announced today the appointment of Dr. Robert Leamon Bryant as the new director of MSRI, a major international math institute based in Berkeley, CA. Bryant's five-year term at MSRI is effective August 1, 2007. Professor Bryant currently holds the Juanita M. Kreps Chair in Mathematics at Duke University.

Professor Fefferman, a Fields Medalist on the faculty at Princeton University's Department of Mathematics, stated that, "Robert Bryant is a brilliant mathematician, and has very broad interests in science and culture as well. He will be a strong leader for MSRI, one who will maintain the breadth and depth of programs that have made the Institute such a vital organization."

Robert L. Bryant will become the fifth director in the Institute's 25-year history. Previously, he served as a trustee of MSRI from 1999 to 2004 and was elected the chair of the board (2001-2004). "It is an honor to be entrusted to carry on the vision of the leaders of MSRI," said Bryant, "and I look forward to the challenge." Simultaneously with the directorship, Dr. Bryant has been appointed to a tenured full professorship in the Department of Mathematics at the University of California, Berkeley.

Bryant received his Ph.D. in mathematics in 1979 at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, working under the late Robert B. Gardner, who had been a UC Berkeley mathematics student of Professor Shiing-Shen Chern. This makes Bryant an "academic grandchild" and mathematical disciple of S.-S. Chern, co-founder and first director of MSRI. Bryant's recent work on Finsler geometry was directly inspired by conversations with Chern. "Chern made MSRI into an important mathematical center, practically overnight," says Bryant.

Beginning in 1979, Robert Bryant served on the faculty at Rice University for seven years, and then moved to Duke. He has held numerous visiting positions at universities and research institutes around the world. He visited MSRI during the 2001-02 academic year as the Clay Mathematics Visiting Professor while on sabbatical from Duke University. Bryant returned to MSRI during the fall 2003 term as co-organizer of the Institute's semester-long research program in Differential Geometry.

Robert Bryant was appointed by President Bush to serve on the Board of the Vietnam Education Foundation (2002-05). He was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2002. Just last week he was elected a Fellow of the prestigious National Academy of Sciences.

Robert Bryant is a distinguished differential geometer, with an extensive list of publications. Bryant's research interests center on exterior differential systems and the geometry of differential equations as well as their applications to Riemannian geometry, special holonomy, and mathematical physics. In addition to his teaching and research in differential geometry, he is Vice President of the American Math Society (AMS), and serves as Director of The Institute for Advanced Study (IAS)/Park City Mathematics Institute (PCMI). Bryant has also been active in the Chamber Arts Society of Durham, NC, and became its director in 2000.

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Robert Bryant's appointment as director of MSRI follows a year-long, nationwide search process led by a committee of the Institute's trustees chaired by Julius Krevans, which included Deborah Loewenberg Ball, Charles Fefferman, Dusa McDuff, Donald Saari, Roger Strauch, and Craig Evans, who represented UC Berkeley's Math Department. After assessing a group of outstanding candidates, the committee presented its recommendation to MSRI's Board, which made the final selection.

Robert Bryant succeeds David Eisenbud, who has served as MSRI director since 1997 and is also a tenured professor on the faculty at UC Berkeley. In August Eisenbud will leave MSRI to become a full-time member of its Department of Mathematics. "Bryant is a superb researcher, internationally renowned in the mathematical community, one whose scientific interests and knowledge are very broad," commented Eisenbud. "He is loved as a lecturer and teacher because he thinks so clearly, and cares so visibly and effectively about his audiences and students. He possesses a rare quality of selflessness," noted Eisenbud. "I believe that these characteristics, combined with Bryant's organizational skill and love of culture will make him a great director. I look forward very much to watching MSRI's progress under his leadership."

For a complete CV and publication list, visit Robert Bryant's home page at Duke:
www.math.duke.edu/~bryant

PHOTO – A high-resolution photograph of Dr. Robert Bryant is available, by request.

The **Mathematical Sciences Research Institute (MSRI)** is one of the world's premiere centers for research in the mathematical sciences, and has been advancing mathematical research through workshops and conferences since its founding as an independent institute in 1982. More than 1,700 mathematical scientists visit MSRI each year in Berkeley, CA, many for stays of up to one academic year. The Institute has been funded primarily by the National Science Foundation (NSF) with additional support from other government agencies, private foundations, academic and corporate sponsors, and individual donors.

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