

Variational Methods: Open Problems, Recent Progress, and Numerical Methods

June 2002

Northern Arizona University
Flagstaff, Arizona, USA

Here is a summary of the events covering the previous conference; we envision a similar format for the 2007 sequel. Participants came from over a dozen countries, and many students actively participated as well. We had a total of nine one-hour talks given by three distinguished experts:

- Alfonso Castro, Harvey Mudd College
- Goong Chen, Texas A&M University
- Wei-Ming Ni, University of Minnesota

We had fifteen 45-minute talks by other highly respected mathematicians in the field, several workshops, and lots of discussion breaks. The 300-page proceedings containing articles from 25 internationally recognized authors was published in the American Mathematical Society's journal *Contemporary Mathematics*, Volume 357. Many features of the meeting were unique, such as the long discussion breaks, speaker format, mathematical focus, and scenic social events. I have heard repeatedly from attendees that it was a great conference, and that we should do it again! The conference would not have been possible without the generous support of the NSF, together with significant contributions by NAU's Department of Mathematics and Statistics, College of Engineering and Natural Sciences, and the Vice Provost's Office for Research. In that light, we were able to fully fund the travel of the keynote speakers, and partially fund many other participants, with priority given to new PhDs and students.

As indicated by the title of the conference, there was a focus on new, open problems, and the current research being done to attack them. Most of the talks were of a survey nature, so there was a lot of learning going on. We succeeded in getting a balance of talks of a traditional, analytical nature with those that were more applied or experimental.

We had a reception at the historic Weatherford Hotel in downtown Flagstaff, a half-day trip to Sedona during the conference, and an organized excursion to the Grand Canyon on the Sunday following the end of the conference. Quite a few participants brought their families, and many attendees planned additional tours of the Southwest region either before or after the conference.