Applied Mathematics

The Department of Applied Mathematics in the College of Arts and Sciences offers courses and degree programs for undergraduate and graduate students. Course offerings at the undergraduate level focus on providing students with the mathematical tools and problem-solving strategies that are useful in science and engineering. The undergraduate bachelor of science degree is offered through the College of Engineering and Applied Science.

The department offers a range of courses and research opportunities in many areas, including computational mathematics, mathematical biology, nonlinear phenomena, physical applied mathematics, and probablity and statistics. Each of these areas is described below.

Computational Mathematics

The study of computational mathematics has grown rapidly in recent years and has allowed scientists and engineers to answer questions and to develop insights not possible just a decade or two ago. Modern computational methods require in-depth knowledge of a variety of mathematical subjects including linear algebra, analysis, ordinary and partial differential equations, asymptotic analysis, elements of harmonic analysis, and nonlinear equations. Since computers are invaluable tools for an applied mathematician, students are expected to attain a high level of computer literacy and to gain a substantial knowledge of operating systems and hardware. Computational mathematics courses include the study of computational linear algebra, optimization, numerical solution of ordinary and partial differential equations, solution of nonlinear equations, and advanced seminars in wavelet and multiresolution analysis and in multigrid methods, radial basis functions, and algorithm design and development, more generally.

Mathematical Biosciences

Advances in our ability to quantitatively study biological phenomena have provided a number of exciting opportunities for applied mathematicians. The careful modeling, analysis, and simulation of these systems using the standard and state-of-the-art tools of applied mathematics has led to novel and non-intuitive insights into biology. Furthermore, deeper understanding of the inherently complex and multiscale nature of biological systems, in many cases, requires the development of new mathematical tools, techniques, and methodologies (a challenge to which applied mathematics is particularly well suited). For students interested in pursuing research in mathematical biology, good preparatory classes would include differential equations, advanced calculus, numerical analysis, and probability and statistics, as well as supplemental courses in the appropriate biological, biomedical, or bioengineering fields. Research areas at CU encompass immunology, virology, bacteriology, population genetics, and cardiac nonlinear dynamics. Specifically, current topics of interest include model selection and control of in vivo HIV pathogenesis dynamics, modeling of intracellular calcium dynamics, the analysis of heart rhythm instabilities, the role of aggregation and fragmentation in bacteremia and bacterial pneumonia, inverse problems arising in the use of population genetics and bioinformatics to identify geographic features, and the analysis of patterns in biological sequences such as DNA and RNA.

Dynamical Systems and Nonlinear Phenomena

In recent years, there has been an explosion of interest in the study of nonlinear waves and dynamical systems with analytical results, often motivated by the use of computers. The faculty in the Department of Applied Mathematics are actively and intensively involved in this growing field. Research areas include qualitative analysis and computational dynamics, conservative and dissipative systems, bifurcation theory, the onset and development of chaos, wavelets and multiresolution analysis, integrable systems, solitons, cellular automata, analytic dynamics, pattern formation and symmetry, synchronization, dynamics on networks, fluid dynamics, transport and mixing, and the study of nonlinear phenomena arising from the interactions of many interconnected dynamical units. Department courses in this field include dynamical systems, nonlinear wave motion, and many advanced seminars. Suitable background courses are analysis, computation, and methods in applied mathematics. Valuable supplemental courses include mechanics and fluid dynamics.

Physical Applied Mathematics

Physical applied mathematics is a term that generally refers to the study of mathematical problems with direct physical application. This area of research is intrinsically interdisciplinary. In addition to mathematical analysis, it requires an in-depth understanding of the underlying applications area, and usually requires knowledge and experience in numerical computation. The department has approximately 40 affiliated faculty who can direct thesis research in areas such as atmospheric and fluid dynamics, theoretical physics, plasma physics, genetic structure, parallel computation, etc. The department's course requirements are designed to provide students with a foundation for their study (analysis and computation). The department also requires supplemental courses in one of the sciences or engineering fields necessary for thesis research in physical applied mathematics.

Statistics and Applied Probability

Almost all natural phenomena in the technological, biological, physical, and social sciences have random components with complex levels of interactions, part stochastic, part deterministic. Applied