

GPOTS INFORMATION

(background, history and funding)

This sheet contains some background and general information on the **Great Plains Operator Theory Symposium**, which may be of use in fundraising, publicity and planning.

The first edition of GPOTS was held in 1981 at Kansas University, in response to plans that had been formulated over several years for an annual midwestern conference in this subject of mathematics. The "S" originally meant "Seminar" because the conference was originally small. Over the years it has evolved in size and stature, becoming formally designated a "symposium" in the (Houston) 1989 edition. The first part of the name remains intact because of tradition, and because of an NSF policy that encourages a regional identity for annually supported conferences. It is international in character because the participant list always includes many participants from foreign countries, and virtually every state, province and territory in North America has been represented on participant lists in recent years. Geographically it is a national conference. There are generally eight or more main speakers. These are world-class researchers and expositors whose lectures emphasize break-through areas and applications of interest to the participants. Many of the regular participants give shorter talks, including a number of graduate students currently working on their doctorates. In the past nine years GPOTS attendance has averaged 100 participants, with over 150 in both 1992 and 1997. The average number of talks has been about 60, using parallel sessions, with more in the peak years.

Universities that have previously hosted GPOTS include: Kansas University, University of Iowa, University of Nebraska, Iowa State University, Kansas State University, University of Colorado, Texas A&M University, University of Cincinnati, University of Houston, Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis, University of New Mexico, Arizona State University, and Queen's University-Canada. The 1997 edition was a joint USA-Canada (GPOTS-COAS) meeting held at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, Canada. The 1998 edition was held at Kansas State University, the 1999 edition was held at Iowa State University, the 2000 edition was held at the University of Puerto Rico, the 2001 edition will be held at the University of New Hampshire, the 2002 edition is projected for the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, and the 2003 edition is projected for the University of Illinois.

Partial funding of the annual edition of GPOTS by the National Science Foundation was established in 1983 by Frank Gilfeather just before he became Project Director of Modern Analysis at NSF. It started as an attachment of \$1500 per year to the Gilfeather-Larson joint grant, and since 1988 the amount, which has increased over the years due to successful conferences, has been attached to the individual NSF grant of Dave Larson. The present grant includes \$14,000 specified for each of the years 2001, 2002, 2003. It should be noted that this is a high figure for NSF support of an "annual" conference. It is true that NSF and other governmental agencies often fund conferences at higher levels as special projects. But these are singular events, which are funded on a one-time basis, not annually.

The GPOTS Steering Committee's rules have always stated that the NSF contribution is to be used for participant support only. It is intended that the \$14,000 be used to provide partial

support to about 60 participants at an average of about \$233 each. The maximum individual support is currently set at \$350. GPOTS is a very popular annual conference, and participants do not expect to be fully funded. Because many participants have supplementary sources of travel support from their own institutions, this figure makes it possible for many participants to attend who otherwise would find it very difficult. Participants who have their own individual NSF and other government grants do not normally receive conference support, unless travel and other conference costs are unusually high. Roughly 40% of the participants fall into this category (of having a grant). So matching local funds from a host institution are mainly needed to cover the costs of the main speakers and to provide the finances necessary for the actual running of the conference. A nominal registration fee is also usually taken to help with operating expenses. If the average cost per participant is expected to be higher than usual, or if expected participation exceeds 100, then additional local funding will be needed to help with participant support.

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