200 high school seniors will participate in the 79 High School Honors Mathematics Contest

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Some 200 high school students from 40 schools throughout San Diego County will participate in the 18th annual High School Honors Mathematics Contest Saturday, May 17, at the University of California, San Diego.

Co-sponsors of the event are the UCSD Department of Mathematics, the Greater San Diego Math Council and the Departments of Education of the San Diego City and County schools.

Participants are chosen by their schools through elimination contests, math clubs or by individual selection. Each school may send as many as six students.

"The test is designed to see how well students can reason mathematically," according to John J. Wavrik, UCSD assistant professor of mathematics. "The problems are similar to those in college-level text books and require the type of logic used by professional mathematicians."

Some students began preparing for the contest last fall with guidance from their school math teachers who were provided copies of last year's exam and suggestions for working with the students.

"The object of the game is learning about mathematics," said Wavrik, author of the exam. "The excuse is to prepare for a contest. The aim is to give the student some idea of the flavor of the field of mathematics and the type of reasoning used, not to penetrate deeply or to build up a supply of theorems to be memorized."

The exam is divided into two sections taking one and one-half hours each. The first part consists of 25 multiple choice questions which emphasize knowledge of algebra, geometry and trigonometry in addition to computational skills. Four problems in the second half require written answers.

Testing will be held from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in several rooms of the Applied Physics and Mathematics Building on the Muir College campus. Students will have lunch on campus and then attend a lecture by Dr. Jay P. Fillmore, UCSD associate professor of mathematics, on "Non-Euclidean Geometry" while the tests are graded by members of the UCSD math department.

At the conclusion of the lecture, winners of the competition will be announced. Awards will be given to the top three individuals and teams in three divisions comprised of the city, county and independent schools.

The exam has been given by UCSD since 1971 with the cooperation of the Math Council, a confederation of individuals in education and industry which promotes mathematics. The competition was originally sponsored by Convair and the test was written by the math faculty at San Diego State University.

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