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Shabnam Akhtari wins Ruth I. Michler Memorial Prize

The Association for Women in Mathematics (AWM) and Cornell University are pleased to announce that Shabnam Akhtari (University of Oregon) has been awarded the 2021–2022 Ruth I. Michler Memorial Prize.

Shabnam Akhtari was selected to receive the Michler Prize to pursue her proposed research on classical Diophantine equations, in particular to study index form equations and their applications to understanding the structure of rings in algebraic number fields. Awarding this opportunity to Akhtari adds to the distinguished history of the Michler Prize. She is a stellar researcher who will have lasting impact in number theory and in mathematics.

The Cornell number theory group is thriving, thanks to recent hires which led to a boom of graduate students in the field. More broadly in upstate NY, there is a vibrant number theory community of over a dozen mathematicians who jointly run the Upstate Number Theory Conference. Akhtari should fit naturally into this group, allowing her to share her research and possibly begin new collaborations. She is a



natural role model for the many upstate number theory graduate students and postdocs.

About her upcoming semester at Cornell, Akhtari says: “I am looking forward to spending a semester at Cornell focusing on my research. The opportunity to work with Professor Ravi Ramakrishna and other number theorists at Cornell and in the area is particularly exciting.”

Professor Akhtari earned her B.S. at Sharif University of Technology (Tehran), her M.S. at Simon Fraser University (Canada) and her Ph.D. at The University of British Columbia (Canada). She has been a postdoctoral fellow at Queen’s University, Kingston; at the Max Planck Institute for Mathematics, Bonn, and at the Centre de Recherches Mathématiques, Montreal. Since then she has been faculty in the Department of Mathematics at the University of Oregon, where she was promoted to Associate Professor in 2018. She has been awarded two single-researcher NSF grants, as well as two Simons Foundation fellowships.

The Ruth I. Michler Memorial Prize was established through a generous donation from Ruth’s parents Gerhard and Waltraud Michler of Essen, Germany. The award grants a mid-career mathematician a residential fellowship in the Cornell University Mathematics Department without teaching obligations. The Michlers established the memorial prize with the Association for Women in Mathematics to honor Ruth’s commitment to the AWM mission of supporting women mathematicians. Cornell University was chosen as the host institution because of its distinctive research atmosphere and because Ithaca was Ruth’s birthplace. At the time of her death, Ruth was in Boston as an NSF visiting scholar at Northeastern University. A recently promoted associate professor of mathematics at the University of North Texas, she died November 1, 2000 at the age of 33 in a tragic accident, cutting short the career of an excellent mathematician.

Association for Women in Mathematics

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