

In Memoriam

April 25th, 2021

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In Memoriam: Sławomir Kwasik, February 9, 1953 – April 19, 2021

Dear SSE Community,

All of us have been deeply saddened by the recent passing of our friend and colleague Sławomir Kwasik, “Slawek”, Professor of Mathematics at Tulane. We would like to take a minute of your time to say a few words about the exceptional quality of Slawek’s research.

Slawek's general field of study, topology, is sometimes called rubber sheet geometry. This means that it studies properties of spaces that do not change when the space is stretched, twisted, bent, but not torn. This field yielded many Fields Medalists in mathematics such as Simon Donaldson, Michael Freedman, Stephen Smale just to name a few.

The ultimate measures of quality for a mathematical result involve: its beauty, its ability to explain and/or connect mathematical landscapes, and its usefulness to mathematics, other sciences, and other fields. Slawek's work does extremely well by these standards. It relates topology to several areas of geometry and also to group theory (symmetries). He does this by proving theorems of broad application, by proving theorems that focus on specific, especially important spaces, and by constructing new examples that elucidate the context of his results.

One of the most important measures of a value of mathematical work is the quality of journals where the research is published. This measure is used by top research institutions such as Princeton, Harvard, MIT and Stanford and other top mathematics departments in the country. Among the total 68 papers he published (as reported by MathSciNet), we may find the following number of top journal publications

3 papers in *Inventiones Mathematicae*,

4 papers in *American Journal of Mathematics*,

5 papers in *Duke Mathematical Journal*,

2 papers in *Mathematische Annalen*,

8 papers in *Topology* (currently *Journal of Topology*),

1 paper in *Journal of London Mathematical Society*.

This is a truly exceptional record at Tulane's Mathematics Department in the recent decades.

Slawek's position in the mathematical research community is also impressive. His vita lists his many lectures in the U.S. and in Europe. In the Tulane Mathematics Department, he has organized several of our annual Clifford Lectures, and in 2009 Kwasi organized and ran the *First National Forum for Young Topologists*, bringing together recent Ph.D.'s and experienced topologists. Even with all his many

achievements in mathematics, Slawek remained a humble person.

Slawek will remain forever in our memory as a great mathematician and a great person who always pointed in the right direction. Slawek's obituary can be read at <https://www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/new-orleans-la/slawomir-kwasik-10158778>

Sincerely Yours,

Colleagues and friends of Sławek, from the Mathematics Department