MATH DEPARTMENT WELCOMES 34 NEW MAJORS

The Math News is delighted that these members of the Class of 2006 are now Mathematics Majors:


We’re proud of these new Quantitative Economics Majors:


Both SMA and SQE majors begin their specialized courses with SM261, Matrix Theory.

This issue’s math problem (An old favorite.) Suppose you have 31 1” x 2” dominoes and an 8” x 8” checkerboard. Can you place the dominoes on the board so as to cover all but two squares—diagonally opposite corners?

Problem solution (Alice flips 9 coins, Bob 10. The winner is the one who gets the most heads; Alice wins if there’s a tie. Who’s more likely to win?) Alice and Bob are equally likely to win. After Bob flips his first 9 coins, he has a 50-50 chance of having more heads than Alice. If he has more, he’ll win the game. If he has less, his tenth coin can give him at most a tie, so he’ll lose. If he has the same number of heads as Alice, he’ll lose if his tenth coin is a tail and win if it’s a head.

The National Security Agency is believed to be the world’s largest employer of mathematicians. (They have no comment.)