

Guidelines for Colloquia
Department of Mathematics
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Unless otherwise noted, colloquium talks are on Thursdays at 4:00 p.m. in 245 Altgeld Hall.

Here are some of the things that faculty members should keep in mind when suggesting colloquium speaker:

1. Is the suggested person known to be a good speaker?
2. Are there many people in our department interested in the topic?

Here are suggestions for giving a good colloquium. Perhaps the most important things for a speaker in the mathematics colloquium series to remember are:

1. Colloquia are to be 50 minutes long (starting from when the speaker is introduced).
2. The audience for a colloquium expects a lecture geared to non-specialists. Target your lecture for a very general mathematical audience---a first or second year graduate student should understand most of the talk. It is usually a good idea to remind the audience of definitions.
3. The room is equipped so that blackboards, or transparencies, or a laptop computer may be used; let your host know which equipment you are going to use.

Speakers might also wish to consult the excellent article, How to give a good colloquium, <http://journals.cms.math.ca/cgi-bin/vault/public/view/Notesv31n5/body/HTML/3?template=Notes> by John McCarthy. Some of the points made in this article are paraphrased below:

1. It is an honor to be invited to give a colloquium, not the occasion to tell a few friends the details of your work. It is an opportunity to show mathematicians in other areas or fields the exciting work that is going on in your area.
2. Don't try to impress the audience with your brilliance. Don't introduce too many ideas.
3. The first half of the lecture should be completely understandable by (real, not idealized) graduate students. Then you should make sure that everyone understands the second half at least in outline if not in detail (except perhaps for the last 5 minutes).
4. Talk about examples, put theorems in context, prove only tautologies.
5. Your abstract should advertise your talk and attract people's interest. It should also honestly indicate the prerequisites or the level of the talk.
6. It is all right to end 5 minutes early; it is not all right to end 5 minutes late.