Title: Students' Linguistic Diversity in Mathematics Classrooms
Speaker: William Zahner, San Diego State University
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While we may imagine that that mathematics is a universal language, mathematics classrooms–including undergraduate classrooms–are hotbeds of linguistic diversity. Approximately 25% of all California students in grades K-12 are classified as English Learners. Simultaneously, engaging in mathematical practices such as explaining, justifying, and defining require sophisticated uses of languages. How can mathematics teachers across grade levels design equitable mathematics learning environments that build on students' linguistic resources and minimize unnecessary linguistic demand? In this talk I will summarize my past research on how language mediates student learning of concepts related to rate and slope in linguistically diverse high school and middle school classrooms. Then I will present early results from a five-year design based research project that aimed to create more equitable learning environments in secondary mathematics classrooms. Finally, I will close by considering implications of this work for undergraduate mathematics classes in settings with former ELLs.