In December 2006, mathematics major Stacie Derderian (center) and mathematics education majors Clara Burroughs (right) and Tasneem Mohammed (left) participated in the national William Lowell Putnam problem solving competition. This challenging, six-hour mathematics exam is taken by nearly 4,000 undergraduates from over 500 colleges in the United States and Canada each year.

Contestants participate individually by attempting to solve and write up solutions to 12 questions drawn from all areas of undergraduate mathematics. Three students at each college form a team whose scores are combined to determine the schools ranking. Contestants who get just one problem correct usually rank in the top 20%-50% while those who solve two problems often rank in the top 10%-20%. Typically the median score for all contestants is approximately one (out of 120). Results will be announced in Spring 2007.

The Putnam Competition began in 1938 to stimulate healthy rivalry among the colleges and universities in the United States and Canada. It is sponsored by the Mathematical Association of America and administered on each participating campus in two three-hour sessions. This is the first year that Rivier College has fielded a Putnam team.

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