



**Florida State University**  
**ARF News Special Feature**  
February 2023



*33rd President of ARF (2011-12)*  
**De Witt Sumners**

DE WITT L. SUMNERS

Robert O. Lawton Distinguished Professor of Mathematics and member of the Institute of Molecular Biophysics

Department of Mathematics, Florida State University

PhD, University of Cambridge, 1967



## Summary of Research Interests

- Molecular Biology
- Polymer Conformations
- Human Brain Project

# De Witt Sumners

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From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

**De Witt Lee Sumners** is an American mathematician, having been the [Robert O. Lawton](#) Distinguished Professor at [Florida State University](#).<sup>[1][2]</sup> He is known for his research in [knot theory](#), [topological fluid dynamics](#), and their application to [DNA](#).<sup>[3]</sup>

Sumners earned his Ph.D. in 1967 from the [University of Cambridge](#) under the supervision of John F. P. Hudson.<sup>[4]</sup> He retired in 2007, and became a [professor emeritus](#). In 2012, he was named as one of the inaugural [Fellows](#) of the [American Mathematical Society](#).<sup>[5]</sup>

Biography: Professor De Witt L. Sumners – Florida State University

De Witt L. Sumners is Robert O. Lawton Distinguished Professor of Mathematics at Florida State University, where he also serves as chair of the mathematics department. He holds a bachelor of science degree in physics from Louisiana State University and a doctor of philosophy degree in mathematics from the University of Cambridge, England. He has held visiting positions at Kwansei Gakuin University, Japan (1988 and 1993), the University of Geneva, Switzerland (1991), and Waseda University, Japan (1996). His research interests revolve around applications of mathematics, especially topology, to molecular biology and medical imaging.

Since 1995, Professor Sumners has served as a Co-Director of the Program in Mathematics and Molecular Biology, a national multi-university interdisciplinary research and training consortium, funded by the Burroughs Wellcome Fund Interfaces Program. The overall goal of PMMB is the continued expansion of the applications of mathematics to molecular biology. The intellectual focus for this program is the development of mathematical and computational tools for the design and analysis of experiments on key questions in molecular biology.

Professor Sumners is a highly respected lecturer and classroom teacher. Among the many honors that have been bestowed upon him are three Florida State University Teaching Improvement Program Awards, the Phi Eta Sigma Faculty Award for Excellence in Teaching, and Florida State University Professorial Excellence Program Award.



Ph.D. University of Cambridge 1967

Dissertation: *Higher-Dimensional Slice Knots*

Mathematics Subject Classification: 57—Manifolds and cell complexes

Advisor: [John F. P. Hudson](#)

Students:

Click [here](#) to see the students listed in chronological order.

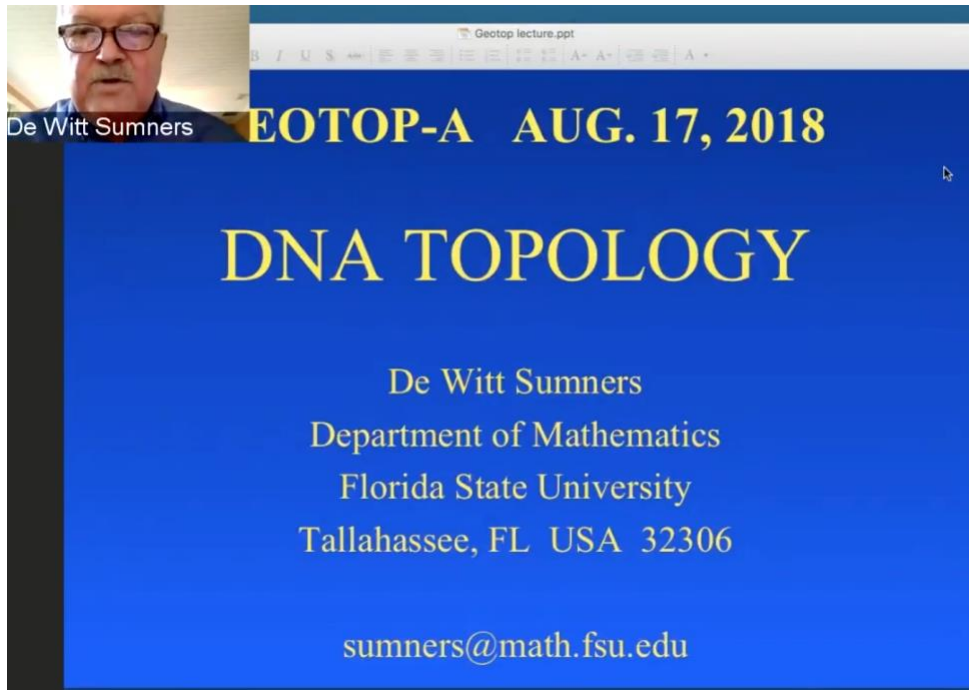
Name	School	Year	Descendants
<a href="#">Arsuaga, Francisco</a>	Florida State University	2000	
<a href="#">Cruz-White, Irma</a>	Florida State University	2003	
<a href="#">Darcy, Isabel</a>	Florida State University	1997	7
<a href="#">Diao, Yuanan</a>	Florida State University	1990	5
<a href="#">Dinov, Ivaylo</a>	Florida State University	1998	3
<a href="#">Ernst, Claus</a>	Florida State University	1988	
<a href="#">Hitt, L.</a>	Florida State University	1977	
<a href="#">Laing, Christian</a>	Florida State University	2007	
<a href="#">Mann, Jennifer</a>	Florida State University	2007	
<a href="#">Motter, Wendell</a>	Florida State University	1973	
<a href="#">Sun, Biansheng</a>	Florida State University	1995	
<a href="#">Vazquez, Mariel</a>	Florida State University	2000	
<a href="#">Woods, John</a>	Florida State University	1973	

According to our current on-line database, De Witt Sumners has 13 [students](#) and 28 [descendants](#).

We welcome any additional information.

U-Tube Video of De Witt Sumners

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=574upkq0wDE>



## De Witt Sumners

Florida State University, Department of Mathematics, Emeritus

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