

ASA Board Statement on Continuing Professional Development: Its Importance for Statisticians and the Role of the ASA

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is a fundamental component of the professional life of statisticians, and it increases the value of their contributions to society. CPD is the process of improving and broadening the knowledge, skill, and personal qualities needed to be successful in the practice of Statistics. Through CPD, statisticians develop themselves in four broad areas:

1. In methodology and practice, by keeping abreast of new techniques and theory, staying connected with best practice, growing in areas not previously studied (or refreshing forgotten material), and gathering ideas and direction for future research.
2. In technology, by learning about new computational techniques and software tools, and by staying on top of trends in technology and new sources of data that are creating major new opportunities for statisticians.
3. In subject matter needed for successful collaboration with other disciplines, to strengthen the interdisciplinary contributions and capabilities of statisticians.
4. In career success factors such as communication, leadership, and influence skills, which are vital to the impact of individual contributions and the visibility of our profession.

Professional development is important to statisticians because it helps them advance their careers, remaining competitive and marketable. Professional development also increases the value of statisticians' contributions to their employers and clients. Knowledgeable, well-prepared statisticians are better able to serve the goals of their organizations, connect with others who bring important data and problems, and communicate the relevance of their work.

Professional development is part of sound ethical practice of statistics. The ASA's [Ethical Guidelines for Statistical Practice](#) note that statisticians are responsible for "the maintenance and upgrading of competence in their work," and need to "remain current in dynamically evolving statistical methodology." All too often, employers and clients are not aware that statistics is a profession with ethical standards and principles of good practice. Well-trained professional statisticians help to communicate this important aspect of statistical work.

The ASA encourages all of its members to pursue professional development. Accredited members of the ASA are expected to participate in at least 60 hours of professional development each year. The amount of CPD needed varies by area of practice, but all statisticians should be committed to engaging in professional development activities sufficient to maintain their skills in their area of work.

Statisticians obtain professional development through a variety of means. They learn through formal coursework, they learn at work, they learn on their own, they learn through involvement in professional activities, and they learn in other ways as well. Whether the statistician is taking a graduate course, sitting in a workshop, taking on an online course or webinar, reading a book or journal, taking advantage of educational opportunities provided by an employer, learning from more experienced colleagues (or mentoring less experienced colleagues), getting involved in

leadership activities with a professional society, or attending professional meetings, the key is that the statistician is committed to on-going growth and development as a professional.

Indeed, it is hard to argue that one is a professional statistician if one is not engaged in on-going professional development.

Because CPD is so fundamental to statisticians, the ASA has a responsibility to take a leading role in providing a combination of CPD opportunities that is updated to meet the growing needs of its membership. The ASA takes this responsibility seriously. Our association is a learning community, but it is also a teaching community with members who are highly qualified to provide distinctive, high-value content in each of the four areas:

1. Our members are among the world leaders in methodology and practice, and they regularly share their expertise as evidenced by
 - a rich array of short courses through the JSM CE program, the Conference on Statistical Practice, the ASA Chapter Traveling Course program, Section Webinars, and LearnSTAT OnDemand programs
 - high-quality journals, which the ASA makes available freely online to members.
2. Through computer technology workshops at JSM, members receive up-to-date information about the use of software and technology in their practice.
3. Interdisciplinary contributions are the specialty of many statisticians who work in collaborative environments and share this expertise in workshops and tutorials.
4. Exciting new learning opportunities to enhance the career success skills of statisticians are being unveiled during 2012.

In most of these areas, the ASA's support could be improved in response to the variety of statistical practice and emerging needs within our membership. For example, our coverage of software and technology areas should be strengthened to meet new opportunities in the world of Big Data, and significant attention should be paid to providing CPD opportunities that address career success factors for statisticians.

By making this statement, the ASA Board emphasizes the importance of continuing professional development for statisticians and renews ASA's commitment to develop CPD content and opportunities for our members in the four categories.