

## Statisticians in Service to Communities in the U.S. and Abroad Describe Their Work at the Joint Statistical Meetings in Vancouver

*[Note: Members of the press can register online to attend any of the conference sessions at <http://www.amstat.org/meetings/jsm/2010/index.cfm?fuseaction=pressregistration>]*

**ALEXANDRIA, VA (PRWEB) JULY 27** – At the Joint Statistical Meetings in Vancouver, BC, July 31-August 5, two groups of statisticians will discuss their recent efforts. Statistics Without Borders (SWB) will describe its recent work in post-earthquake Haiti, while Statistics in the Community (StatCom) will discuss recent projects and future objectives.

“Programs like SWB and StatCom represent grassroots statistics at its best,” said Sastry Pantula, ASA president. “StatCom was started by graduate students at Purdue University who wanted to help their community leaders on problems that required data analysis; with support from the ASA, the program spread to nine other universities, both in the U.S. and abroad, and is still growing. It is a win-win for our profession and the communities.

“Since it was created in 2008, SWB has endeavored to improve human welfare through its activities,” Pantula said. “These volunteers have worked to achieve better statistical practice, including statistical analysis and design of experiments and surveys, in order that international health projects and initiatives are delivered more effectively and efficiently. Our affiliation with SWB is another example of how ASA promotes the practice and profession of statistics.”

### **Statistics Without Borders**

Statistics Without Borders (SWB), an ASA-affiliated group with more than 100 volunteers, provides pro-bono statistical expertise to organizations (and governments supporting those organizations) working on a not-for-profit basis on problems broadly related to international health issues. SWB’s vision is to achieve better statistical practice, including statistical analysis and design of experiments and surveys, so that international health projects and initiatives are delivered more effectively and efficiently.

Since its inception in late 2008, in addition to its project in Haiti (see session description below), SWB has:

- Worked with representatives from the Embassy of Madagascar to develop collaborative projects that support initiatives to improve health and college-level statistics education in Madagascar
- Helped students of The George Washington University and staff of the Inter-American Development Bank plan a survey on bottled water usage in Mexico
- Advised the MesoAmerican Health Initiative in its planning for the evaluation of interventions in eight Central-American countries
- Assisted the Academy for Education Development in the review of evaluation plans for initiatives in two countries
- Assisted UNICEF with surveys to determine the impact of using community health workers to treat childhood illnesses in Sierra Leone.

### **Session: Statistics Without Borders Post-Earthquake Efforts in Haiti – Activity #550, Wed. 8/4**

This two-hour session features three presentations from statisticians who are currently participating in efforts to collect quality data to inform aid decisions by measuring the earthquake’s economic impact and resulting changes in household composition. The session chair is James J. Cochran, Louisiana Tech University. Presenters include: James D. Ashley, U.S. Government Accountability Office (U.S. GAO); Fritz Scheuren, NORC; Justin S. Fisher, U.S. GAO; and Jean G. Orelie, SciMetrika, LLC.

## **Statistics in the Community**

Statistics in the Community (StatCom) is a student-run volunteer organization started in 2001 at Purdue University's Department of Statistics. With support from a Member Initiatives Grant from ASA, a network of Statistics in the Community (StatCom) programs was started in 2006 and now includes 10 universities. Students provide free statistical expertise to communities, primarily to local non-profit and government groups. StatCom provides students with hands-on experience, assists local organizations that would not normally seek statistical consulting services, and allows students to give back to their community.

At Iowa State, consulting teams have worked on a variety of projects, including assessment of the public library's strategic plan, projecting peak energy demand for the city of Ames, and making recommendations for post-election auditing in Iowa. At UHasselt, a team has worked on designing a survey at local schools to investigate the impacts of media on adolescents' dietary behavior. At the University of Michigan, a team has collaborated with the institution's School of Public Health to collect information from a number of public health providers in the area.

Any college or university interested in starting such a program is welcome to join the StatCom Network. Current members include: Purdue University, University of Washington, Cornell University, University of Michigan, Iowa State University, The Ohio State University, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, University of Hasselt – Campus Diepenbeek (Belgium), Virginia Tech and the University of Arizona. For more information, visit the StatCom web site at <http://www.amstat.org/education/statcom/index.htm>.

### **Session: Statistics in the Community (StatCom): Present and Future – Activity #69, Sunday 8/1**

*Jonathan Hobbs, Iowa State University; Kim Van Kerckhove, Hasselt University; Benjamin Pope, University of Arizona; David Rockoff, Iowa State University*

Statistics in the Community has engaged students in service learning for nearly a decade and serves as a model for developing students' leadership and statistical consulting skills. At the same time, communities benefit from data-informed decisions. The multi-university StatCom Network serves as an outlet for established and developing StatCom programs and seeks to increase communication and collaboration among student statisticians engaged in service-oriented statistics. The network works with the ASA to identify and promote student pro bono consulting opportunities. The panel members will discuss their organizational models, recent projects and future objectives.

## **About the Joint Statistical Meetings**

JSM, which has been held annually since 1974, is conducted jointly with the American Statistical Association (ASA), the International Biometric Society (ENAR and WNAR), the Institute of Mathematical Statistics (IMS), the Statistical Society of Canada (SSC), the International Chinese Statistical Association, and the International Indian Statistical Association. JSM activities include oral presentations, panel sessions, poster presentations, continuing education courses, exhibit hall (with state-of-the-art statistical products and opportunities), career placement service, society and section business meetings, committee meetings, social activities, and networking opportunities. JSM is open to members of all participating associations, as well as non-members and has special pricing for students, seniors, K-12 teachers; one-day registrations also are available. Complete JSM program information is available at <http://www.amstat.org/meetings/jsm/2010/index.cfm>.

## **About the American Statistical Association**

Headquartered in Alexandria, Virginia, the American Statistical Association is the world's largest community of statisticians and the second oldest continuously operating professional society in the United States. For 170 years, the ASA has supported excellence in the development, application, and

dissemination of statistical science through meetings, publications, membership services, education, accreditation, and advocacy. Its members serve in industry, government, and academia in more than 90 countries, advancing research and promoting sound statistical practice to inform public policy and improve human welfare. For additional information about the American Statistical Association, please visit the ASA web site at <http://www.amstat.org> or call 703.684.1221.

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