

Business & Economic Statistics Section

Meeting on Membership
July 13, 2009 (ASA teleconference)

Participating: Stuart Scott (BLS), Section chair
Tae-Hwy Lee (UC-Riverside), volunteer
Tucker McElroy (Census), Publications officer & Short course team
Bonnie Ray (IBM), 2010 Program chair-elect

Aim: address services to members and involvement of groups in academia, business, and government in order to encourage membership

A. Background

1. Budget deficit

The section has been running an annual deficit of about \$3000 in recent years. With our fund balance around \$13,000, we need to reduce this considerably. Richard Davis and Sung Ahn are pursuing sponsorships for one or more activities or awards. By attracting or retaining more members, we may also improve our revenues.

2. Membership data

# of members:	8/07	1093
	7/09	1247

Of our current members, about 440 are free and 800 are paying (either \$5 for regular members or \$2 for student members). About 260 are new members in the last 6 months (most of these would be among the free members).

dues revenue: roughly \$1900 each year, 2007-09

Since ASA collects \$1 for each paying member, a total of about \$2700 is paid in dues.

3. Issues

a. No revenue from main effort of section members

The core activity of the section is organizing the program for JSM, yet the section receives no revenue for this. Nor is there any incentive to join the section for this – the sessions are open to all attendees.

b. Obstacles to participation

Much work in our area is done by economists. For many, ASSA (with AEA) in January is their preferred “big meeting,” and many smaller competing conferences occur in the summer. Additionally, JSM costs are moderately high; in particular, more than ASSA.

Link to econ conferences: <http://www.econ.vu.nl/econometriclinks/#conferences>

c. Relative neglect of private industry

The section has not done enough to gain the involvement of statisticians and other quantitative types in private industry

B. Ideas

1. JSM program

This is an opportunity to expand interest through solicitation and selection of diverse topics for Invited and Topic Contributed sessions.

Examples: credit and credit risk, empirical industrial organization (including auctions), microeconomics, World Bank & IMF, other work in private research firms.

2. Short courses, etc.

a. At JSM

Usually, courses are 1-day or half-day, with occasionally a 2-day. There are also 2-hr software tutorials. For the first time in at least 5 years, the section is sponsoring one, "State Space Time Series Analysis in Practice," by Siem Jan Koopman. With enrollment at 27, the section expects to receive about \$1000 in revenue.

Ideas for future courses:

(1) time series using R

possible instructors – Shumway or Stoffer, Kung-Sik Chan, Zongwu Cai

(2) time series of counts

(3) forecasting

(4) econometrics

possible instructors – Stock or Watson (course previously sponsored by NBER and by BEA+BLS (Fall '08).

(5) topics in health economics

(6) topics in microeconomics or national accounts

Brian Monsell has already offered to present a 2-hr tutorial on X13-ARIMA-SEATS, free software available from the Census Bureau.

b. Tutorials at a distance

The Statistical Consulting Section has offered tutorial presentations through teleconferences or "netmeetings." These are advertised online and open only to section members. When a member signs on, he/she receives a phone number/website and code to access the tutorial.

These could fit with short, very specialized topics and a small number of participants.

3. Other conferences

a. ICES 4, 2012 (International Conference on Establishment Surveys)

Our section is providing seed money and risk-sharing (5%). Some other sections, such as Survey Research Methods, have raised a lot of revenue this way.

b. Federal Forecasting Conference or other forecasting conference

This is held in the BLS Conference Center each spring and is sponsored by Federal agencies. Our section could offer some ways to strengthen this conference. However, at present, I believe there's no registration fee and, thus, no revenue to be gained.

The International Symposium on Forecasting is expensive; it's offered overseas in alternate years. An inexpensive domestic conference might draw interest.

c. FCSM biannual conference (Federal Committee on Statistical Methods)

This Nov conference is under the auspices of the Committee on National Statistics (CNSTAT) and is the successor to Census's Annual Research Conference. Its current registration fee is \$195 and it is held in the DC area. It's unclear how we could get into this.

d. Teaching Statistics in Business Schools

This is a SIG (special interest group) in ASA. It is organized by Keith Ord, Georgetown U, and John McKenzie, Babson College and sponsored by the section. McKenzie is hosting a roundtable lunch at JSM2009. George Tiao organized a series of conferences on this roughly 20 years ago.

4. Other JSM activities

a. Roundtables (RT)

Another way to expand the number of people/number of topics supported by the section. In 2009, we are sponsoring the one RT mentioned in B3d above. These cost the section only one lunch or coffee per RT (the section pays for the leader). Each has space for 8-10 people. There are a large number of these at JSM09 and many are sold out.

b. Economic Outlook luncheon

A long tradition.

Attendance: in 2008 and 2009, 30-40; in 2007, 8-10

In the section's glory days, even more.

Two advantages:

achieves visibility – only a small number of sections hold such a function

only perk for board members – section buys tickets for board members

Speaker costs (besides lunch)

often travel expenses are involved, sometimes >\$1000

in 2009, \$500 honorarium

c. Reception

This is a good opportunity for contacts among colleagues.

These are quite pricey, since we are a captive audience at hotel or conference center, which helps explain why these are joint with the Section on Marketing.

5. Member lists

It could be helpful if ASA were to add a simple code for member affiliation (acad., govt., industry)

Topics not discussed:

1. Value of awards (Shiskin, Zellner)

2. Value of student travel awards

3. Publicity

relative value of section listserv, Amstat News, and website

Tucker, Barbara Rossi, and I have tried to publicize our activities through both over the last 1-1/2 years.

Action item: Bonnie will inquire about B2b (Consulting section tutorials)

Appendix

1. Additional suggestions and contact information related to short courses

Short courses:

(1) Time Series using R, Zongwu Cai

<http://www.math.uncc.edu/~zcaai/cai-cv.pdf>

He has taught Nonparametrics using R (in time series).

(2) Colin Cameron and/or Pravin Trivedi can teach

- microeconometrics using Stata

- econometrics for health economics

In fact they have recently written books on these topics.

<http://cameron.econ.ucdavis.edu/>

<http://mypage.iu.edu/~trivedi/>

(3) Stock and Watson lecture and video

http://www.nber.org/minicourse_2008.html

- (4) Imbens and Wooldridge lecture and video <http://www.nber.org/minicourse3.html>
They continue doing their lectures. Last month, in London, they attracted 260 attendants in their short lecture series. See the following link <http://www.cemmap.ac.uk/> where all slides are available.
- (5) Upcoming short courses at Cemmap (Centre for Microdata Methods and Practice)
<http://www.cemmap.ac.uk/courses.php>
- (6) Frank Diebold has done many short courses.
- (7) Jeff Racine is another person who can teach various econometrics topics in R.
<http://www.mcmaster.ca/economics/racine/>
- (8) Hands-On Intermediate Econometrics Using R by Hrishikesh D. Vinod (Author)

Minutes prepared by Scott