

Statistical Challenges in Defense and National Security

A Message from Nancy L. Spruill, Chair of the ASA Section on Statistics in Defense and National Security

Our section is one year old! And for beginners, we have a lot to be proud of. Further, we can look forward to trying so many new things as we expand our section and build alliances with other ASA sections and related organizations. Let me begin by thanking the 161 ASA members who agreed to join our section as original members. We couldn't have done it without you! And our first slate of officers--**Chair-Elect: Ron Fricker, Naval Postgraduate School; Secretary/Treasurer: Alyson Wilson, Los Alamos National Laboratory; Program Chair: Wendy Martinez, Office of Naval Research, Department of the Navy; Program Chair-Elect: Wendy Martinez, Office of Naval Research, Department of the Navy; Publications Officer: David Olwell, Naval Postgraduate School; and Council of Section Representative: David Banks, Duke University**--have tackled a range of new tasks from organizing invited sessions, to administering a prize for the best student paper in defense and national security fields, to organizing a workshop on Counterterrorism. But that is now past and we look forward to 2005.

For 2005, our section has several goals. The first is to get more members. If you think you might have some interest in Defense and National Security issues, please visit our ASA website, feel free to contact me or any of the other officers, and join our section. Our second goal is to meet our section's objectives which are to study, develop, and apply statistical methodologies in support of national defense and homeland security. There are many, many problems that fall into this area, problems as simple as realizing the value of data and making sure they are archived, to problems as complex as testing interconnected weapons systems with limited numbers of trials. An area that overlaps with interests of at least one other ASA section is privacy and confidentiality. How do we use data mining to fight terrorists while making sure we provide privacy to U.S. persons? As you know, this is not an easy topic. Our third goal is to get more young statisticians interested in defense and national security applications. This is consistent with one of the main thrusts of the Department of Defense to ensure a sufficient domestic workforce in key skills and disciplines critical to national security functions—disciplines such as applied mathematics, engineering and computer science.

For 2006, we have generated, from our excellent core of statisticians in our section today, an outstanding slate of candidates for our positions that will open up at the end of 2005. **For Chair-Elect we have three candidates: Doug Samuelson, InfoLogic, Ed Wegman, George Mason University; and Alyson Wilson, Los Alamos National Laboratory. And for Program Chair-Elect we have three candidates: Dave Marchette, Naval Surface Warfare Center, Department of the Navy; Shane Reese, Brigham Young University; and Lara Schmidt, RAND.** All would do an excellent job and we wish them the best in the election.

In the next few months, our section will be including articles in *AMSTAT NEWS* on some of our ongoing activities, such as our student paper competition, and sessions and continuing education courses we have organized for the 2005 Joint Statistical Meetings (JSM). Along those lines, I'd like to remind you that there is still time to propose a "late breaking" session on important, newly emerging technical, scientific, or policy-related topics that have arisen in the one-year period prior to the 2005 JSM. If you have an idea for such a session in defense and national security, please contact me, Ron Fricker or Wendy Martinez. Fully fleshed out sessions are due to the ASA between March 15 and April 29, 2005.

I look forward to our section becoming an important part of ASA and I hope you will get to know us and our activities better. We would be honored to have you join our activities and hope to see you in Minneapolis.