American Statistical Association Awarded $1.5M NSF Grant to Boost Underrepresented Students

ALEXANDRIA, Va. (December 10, 2021) — The American Statistical Association (ASA) has been awarded a three-year, $1.5 million grant from the National Science Foundation to ensure students from underrepresented groups have access to cutting-edge data science courses, research opportunities and industry partnerships.

The grant will allow the ASA to work with partners to create a National Data Mine Network, which will provide opportunities for students to do hands-on work on data science challenges of relevance to industry. This network will expand Purdue University’s Data Mine program to include students at minority-serving institutions across the United States.

The project—led by Mark Daniel Ward (Purdue University), Katherine Ensor (Rice University and American Statistical Association), Monica Jackson (American University), Donna LaLonde (American Statistical Association) and Talitha Washington (Atlanta University Center Data Science Initiative)—will create an educational ecosystem that makes data science knowledge and skills accessible and attractive to students.

“Data science is exceedingly interdisciplinary, and this gives us a great opportunity both to engage students and also address the need for diversity in the workforce,” said Mark Daniel Ward, director of The Data Mine and professor of statistics at Purdue University. “I am enthusiastic about scaling up our Purdue program to a larger level that engages diverse college students and their faculty mentors in real-world data science problems. Like the initial program, this national program will promote learning from data, using it as a tool to help solve problems in a data-driven society.”

“The mission of the ASA is to promote the practice and profession of statistics, and we are committed to ensuring that students have the opportunities to develop the skills and knowledge needed to become statisticians and data scientists,” said Kathy Ensor, the 2022 president of the American Statistical Association and Noah G. Harding professor of statistics at Rice University. “It is undeniable that the more diverse our community is, the greater the contributions, so we are excited to collaborate on building and sustaining the National Data Mine Network.”

“The Atlanta University Center Data Science Initiative works with four historically black colleges and universities—Spelman, Clark Atlanta University, Morehouse College and Morehouse School of Medicine—to increase opportunities for students to become trained in data science,” said Talitha Washington, director of the AUC Data Science Initiative. “We are excited about providing opportunities for students at minority-serving institutions to create data-driven solutions for data science projects informed by industry partners.”
Students in the National Data Mine Network will use high-performance computing to solve data-driven challenges that arise in every sector of industry, including biomedical engineering, health care engineering, image processing, manufacturing, supply chain management and transportation. The network will directly fund 300 undergraduate students at a cross-section of minority-serving institutions with 100 research stipends per year.

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*About the American Statistical Association*

The ASA is the world’s largest community of statisticians and the oldest continuously operating professional science society in the United States. 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, please visit the ASA website at www.amstat.org.