

**Section U (Statistics) Business Meeting Minutes**  
**February 18, 2006**  
**Renaissance Grand St. Louis**  
**St. Louis, MO**

Present: Jana Asher, Mark Becker, Ron Brookmeyer, Michael P. Cohen, Robert E. Fay, José Fernández, Mary Foulkes, Mitchell Gail, John Gardenier, Turken Gardenier, Joe Heyse, Jill Perla, Carol Redmond, Juliet Shaffer, Fritz Sheuren, Amy Tsui, Jessica Utts, Stan Young, Ed Wegman

The Business meeting opened at 10 am. The minutes from the 2005 Section business meeting were approved. The minutes are to be posted on the Section website (<http://anson.ucdavis.edu/~utts/aaas/>)

José Fernández, AAAS, announced the upcoming AAAS Council meeting.

Jill Perla, Senior Manager Marketing and Meetings Operations AAAS, introduced the annual meeting process. At the Planning meeting for the 2007 annual meeting Sunday, February 19, 2006, each Section's officers will bring three Hot Topics and will convey the discussions at Section Business meetings. At this planning meeting, there is also an opportunity to suggest plenary lectures and topical lectures. We all need to get young people involved. There are almost 200 symposia on the program this year, through the Program Committee review process the rejection rate is about 50%. The Program Committee is looking for a good mix of 90 and 180 minute symposia. The meeting venue dictates the number of symposia possible. San Francisco is a good venue. For that meeting, symposia proposers should focus on San Francisco Bay topics, and tie topics to the theme: "Science and technology for Sustainable Well-being". There is a new AAAS internet site for submissions, found at the AAAS website.

Jessica Utts asked about Student posters, deadline usually around November. Melissa Rosenthal, AAAS, will send something out to the Sections.

Joe Heyse, who serves on the AAAS Program Committee, shared his experiences and thoughts on the process. The Program Committee looks for a balance between the breadth and general interest, and looks for symposia that are fully developed. Symposia organizers expressed that they felt in an awkward situation when speakers are confirmed but the proposed symposium is ultimately not accepted. Joe stressed that the Section should propose symposia that are completely developed and have a high chance of being accepted. There is an on-line review, with each Program Committee member reviewing 75-80 symposia proposals, followed by two formal meetings in June and Sept. First proposals are ranked: accept as is, accept with revision, not accept, and fourth – offer the proposer the option to take suggestions and resubmit for reconsideration. The proposal abstract should make sense to a general science audience. If no speakers are identified, there is essentially no proposal. If speakers are not confirmed, the proposed symposia may be accepted with revision. Topics have to be timely, like this year's program. Stan Young and Mitch Gail mentioned Biometric identification/authentication, which involve a strong statistical component. For San Francisco, topics could focus around earthquake science, computer science, and history of statistics. Joe estimated about 50-60% acceptance rate for proposed symposia, a high hurdle. Diversity in the speakers is very important. If the proposal presents only speakers from one institution, all male, it has no chance of acceptance. Joe also suggested pre-review by section members. Symposia supported by reviewers from the section were almost always supported by the Program Committee. If the reviewers from the section were not enthusiastic, the proposal was not accepted. The incoming AAAS President, John Holdren, has selected the annual meeting theme, "Science and Technology for Sustainable well-being". Symposia that only deal with statistical methodology without applications are not likely to be of interest. Joe reinforced the need for more applied settings. Look for opportunities to suggest statistics presentations as part of a symposium. If a specific statistician can be named, that's the best contribution. The AAAS annual meeting has a particularly strong mathematics track, the Program Committee got a letter from and affiliated mathematics society commending the quality of the program. Next year, computer science is likely to be a particularly important area. The Program Committee also seeks suggestions for topical lectures. Seven topical lectures are in each program, and trimmed from about 25 nominations. The AAAS annual meeting is not like the Joint Statistical Meetings (JSM), where a session proposal can be recycled in another format. Joe can argue in

favor of topical lectures if he is made aware of the nominations. Julie Shaffer mentioned that her experience in proposing symposia has been positive, and she hasn't had a problem telling speakers that it's a proposal (not a 'done deal'), and that the speakers travel is not paid by AAAS. Joe Heyse also discussed the atmosphere in preparing for each annual meeting, mostly based on a different AAAS chair each year. Stan Young stressed that there is science and then there is junk science (using statistical methods to further their junk science). He asked if there was room for a conflict or discussion? He would be willing to have all perspectives, and suggests a Latin Square. People practicing junk science just as mediums of old were using slight of hand. Jessica Utts offered some examples of good science in areas of parapsychology. The text "How to Lie with Statistics" was published 50 years ago, and there was a recent issue of Statistical science on it. Joe Heyse suggested looking at stat journals to identify good topics for symposia. Symposia speakers do not have to be AAAS members. Joe reiterated that if several on-line reviewers endorse a symposia proposal, it is very likely that the Program Committee will accept it.

Several ideas for symposia were discussed. (1) monitoring evaluation of Millennium Development goals (how development aid is given out, the role of survey statisticians, not enough scientific input in delivery of funds, possible speakers from World Bank or Inter-America bank, social-political economists, statisticians); (2) statistical evaluations of the methodology used in analyses associated with global warming (hockey stick phenomenon); (3) forensics analysis on FBI bullet lab analysis challenged (Committee on Applied and Theoretical Statistics), a friction ridge analysis (fingerprints), and multiple areas of court challenges to standard forensic analysis; (4) non-invasive methods for measuring blood alcohol content (BAC), and allowance for variation in measurement of BAC.; (5) relating to national security - network science, intrusion detection, disruption of service supply and power grids; (6) sustainable well-being, many areas of technology using design of experiments; (7) massive production of scientists and engineers out of China and India, perception of a massive shortage, not much data on economic impact on economy (forecasting issue - Is this a manufactured shortage or a real shortage?); (8) evolution of virus (specifically H5N1), how many changes to becoming dangerous, what is critical for a pandemic; (9) HRT, low fat diet, vitamin D, multiple "life-style" trials, based on epidemiologic studies leading to good hypotheses, many findings opposite of 'conventional wisdom', public health implications. Individuals suggesting these topics were encouraged to submit symposia proposals.

Ron Brookmeyer raised the issue of U.S. Senate Bill S.1956, calling for a three-tiered process for approval of new products, with a de-emphasis on statistical methods, and experimental designs in evaluating new products. Colin Begg had discussed with Ron the Society for Clinical Trials (SCT) position, which may be published in the SCT journal, *Clinical Trials*. Colin had suggested that *Science* should weigh in on this. Ron asks if there is any position that the Section should take. Ron described a de-emphasis of the role of scientific, controlled studies on the approval process. Stan Young brought up the orphan drug approach, and indicated that if this Bill is targeting a small niche of people, it is an orphan area, and we shouldn't get involve. Mitch Gail brought up the availability of accelerated approval, and said that the Bill as written goes against two basic principles, numerical methods for comparing groups of patients, and the introduction of randomization. He proffered that Don Kennedy, as a former FDA Commissioner, might write an editorial.

Ed Wegman introduced the new fellows: Jianqing Fan, Princeton University; Sallie Keller-McNulty, Rice University; Sally C. Morton, RAND Corporation; Carol K. Redmond, University of Pittsburgh. Then, Ed introduced the new officers: Ron Brookmeyer, Johns Hopkins University (Chair-Elect); Juliet Shaffer, University of California-Berkeley (Member-at-Large); Carol K. Redmond, University of Pittsburgh (Nominating Committee); and James Rosenberger, Pennsylvania State University (Nominating Committee).

Jessica Utts gave the AAAS Council report. She described a new resolution that the retiring chair, in addition to being the Council delegate will also now be the chair of the nominating committee. The thinking was that the nominating committee didn't really know what the officers jobs were, so the retiring Section chair will serve as Chair of the nominating committee.

John Gardinier and Mike Cohen described a draft ASA board resolution opposing the teaching of Intelligent Design (ID) in Science Education. Mark Frankel (AAAS) has been involved in the development

of this resolution. Important here that scientists who are not statisticians see this as another weapon to use in ID attacks on science. Scientific theories make predictions, and then test. ID does not claim to do this with empirical confirmation. The expectation is to have this come out of the ASA Committee on Science and public affairs and Committee of reps to AAAS, to ASA Board in March. The approach has been to frame this as relevant to statistics, how to make inference based on data. Framed as evolutionary biology, the ASA would not be interested. Mark Becker heard Alan Leshner, AAAS CEO, on the radio, where ID people used probabilities to argue for ID. Alan was not prepared with a response. At the beginning of their attack are probability calculations. Further suggestions on the resolution should go to John Gardinier.

Mike Cohen, ASA Committee of AAAS Representatives, indicated that the ASA representative to AAAS Section on Biological Science has retired, and a new ASA representative is needed. Suggestions for a new representative should be sent to Mike Cohen.

The AAAS Statistics Section business meeting adjourned at 12:10pm.

Mary A. Foulkes, Secretary  
AAAS Section U