

AAAS Section U, Statistics Annual Business Meeting

Saturday, February 16, 2008, 10 AM-Noon, Boston MA

Present: [*Steering Committee and Council Members*] Mark Becker, Ron Brookmeyer, Bill Eddy, Joan Hilton, Françoise Seillier-Moiseiwitsch, Juliet Shaffer, Jessica Utts; [*AAAS Liaison*] Katrina Kelner; [*Others*] Jana Asher, Bill Butz, Michael P Cohen, Keith Crank, Bob Fay, Mary Foulkes, John Gardenier, Turkan Gardenier, Emorcia Hill, Rick Ittenbach, Judith O'Fallon, Mike O'Fallon, Fritz Scheuren, Alan R Tupek (N=22)

Welcome, Introductions, and New Fellows. Ron Brookmeyer (Chair, 2008) opened the meeting with welcome and introductions around the table. He then read the names and citations of the six new Section U Fellows, including Mary Foulkes who was present. Ron Brookmeyer and Bill Eddy also named two statisticians who were elected by other AAAS sections: Bill Butz (in attendance) by Section X—Societal Impacts of Science & Engineering, and David Rocke by Section T—Information, Computing & Communication. Names of members who are Fellows can be found on the AAAS website www.aaas.org/aboutaaas/fellows/. This led to a brief discussion of our membership: the current headcount is not known. Joan Hilton mentioned that a 2005 member list showed a 1:4 ratio of primary: secondary membership.

Secretary's Report. Joan Hilton (Secretary, 2008-2011) described the process by which Fellows are nominated, gave a budget report, and solicited help on two tasks per year.

Fellows: Three different parties can nominate Fellows: (1) the 24 Steering Groups of AAAS, (2) any three Fellows who are current AAAS members, so long as two of the three sponsors are not affiliated with the nominee's institution, and (3) the Chief Executive Officer. The number nominated by a Section's Steering Group is limited by its primary membership count; for Section U, three Fellows can be nominated. This year, the Steering Group nominated Drs. Brown, Foulkes, and Jewell. The "3-Fellow Process" is described on the AAAS website. Its deadline for 2008 is May 9. All nominees undergo review by the Section Steering Group. This process takes some time; in 2007, we worked on it from March through August.

Budget: Our annual allotment of \$1800 is received in January. Our maximum carry-forward is the same amount, allowing a maximum budget of \$3600. At the end of AAAS-07, our budget was \$3600. During the year we spent \$1950 on travel support for three participants in the AAAS-08 session on *Humanitarian Emergencies* and money for coffee at AAAS-08 Section business meeting. At the end of AAAS-08, we will have about \$2600. *Those present agreed with serving coffee but not food at the Business Meeting.*

- Bill Eddy (Chair-elect, 2008) proposed holding a Section U party at AAAS-09.
- Bill Butz suggested offering \$300 travel stipends to students to attract them to AAAS.
- Someone suggested holding an event at JSM to attract members to AAAS.
- Ron Brookmeyer proposed the *Fred Mosteller Award* for students, mentioning that Fred is the only statistician who has been president of AAAS.

AAAS Solicits Section Support for Two Activities: (1) Review of proposed symposia. In April of each year, AAAS requests volunteers to review symposia proposals for the upcoming annual meeting and tries to include reviewers from each discipline (Section). The review work takes place during late May and early June. In 2007, Section U asked recently elected Fellows to take on this task, and their

response was very positive. *Those present concurred with this approach.* (2) Judging of student posters on Saturday afternoon at the annual meeting. AAAS asks Section Officers to serve as judges or to identify others to serve. Poster judges are entitled to a discounted registration rate (in 2007, \$110 versus \$144 for USA/professional). Mark Becker mentioned that he enjoyed the process, that a judge is on duty for one 2-hour session, and that the student is present at his/her poster. *Those present were invited to participate in poster judging at the upcoming meeting and several accepted. Someone proposed that Chicago chapter members be solicited to serve as poster judges.* Joan Hilton mentioned that anyone else interested in participating should contact her.

Council Member's Report. Jessica Utts (Council Member, 2005-2008; Committee on Council Affairs (CCA) Member, 2007-2008) reported that the CCA voted on three controversial Fellow nominations, none from the Statistics Section: A Section did not approve one person nominated via the 3-Fellow Process, and individuals challenged two nominations by Sections. In all three cases, Council supported the Sections' points of view. Council also discussed how to increase international membership and demonstrated a new resource on the AAAS website on *Communicating Science*: www.aaas.org/communicatingscience/ Jessica asked if an orientation for new officers would be helpful. *All present agreed that it would and they suggested that the Section Officers Meeting on Friday morning would be a good venue for this.* Jessica mentioned that at last year's Council meeting a member offered to organize such a workshop but had not done so. Jessica will follow up with that individual.

Electorate Nominating Committee. Mark Becker (Retiring Chair, 2008) reported that an excellent slate of candidates for Section offices has been assembled. Names were not announced, pending final agreements to run for office. *Bill Eddy asked if the AAAS agenda to promote international membership was being supported via this slate. Mark replied that some on the slate were foreign-born although all currently work in the USA, and that the slate is diverse in other ways as well, such as gender. Juliet Shaffer (Member at Large, 2008) mentioned that several foreign representatives have booths in the Exhibit Hall.*

Statistical Guidelines for Science. Katrina Kelner (AAAS liaison to Section U, 2008; Deputy Editor for Life Sciences of *Science*) reported on an AAAS effort to improve the quality of publications in *Science* with regard to statistical issues. Jana Asher, serving as a consultant to AAAS on this project, evaluated a random sample of about 350 articles and found that about 80% of them relied on fairly elementary statistical methods. She seeks to determine if they were sufficiently vetted, given that the methods were not complex enough to warrant statistical review. Katrina and Jana have assembled a team of four Section U former/current officers (Brookmeyer, Eddy, Foulkes, Hilton) and one frequent reviewer (Fay) to take on a more comprehensive evaluation of a subset of these 350 papers.

- *Juliet Shaffer mentioned that Section U had previously provided feedback to AAAS on this topic and offered to forward those recommendations to Katrina. She welcomed the input and mentioned that Bill Cumberland had been added to the editorial board in response to those recommendations.*
- *Bill Butz noted that he reviews 3 papers/week and sends a subset for further statistical review. His criteria are: Importance, Interest to readers, and Competence. Statistical problems commonly relate to inadequate sampling.*
- *Mark Becker asked how this would be operationalized, since broad expertise is needed. Katrina said that once results of this study are in, decisions would be made on how best to proceed.*
- *Emorcia Hill noted that the AAAS-08 program doesn't include any presentations that focus on improving quality of the scientific enterprise and proposed a greater statistical presence in future programs.*

- *Mary Foulkes suggested using JNCI's two-level review process as a model (nonstatistical followed by statistical, as needed) and mentioned that statistical culture allows for very long review times.*
- *Katrina Kelner responded that Joe Cameron, a retired statistician, saw every paper that was accepted for publication (800 papers/year) and a short turn-around time would be needed.*
- *John Gardenier suggested that the ASA guidelines for ethical statistical practice (posted at amstat.org) and the Institute of Medicine report on integrity in biomedical research might be helpful.*

Topics for AAAS-09 / Chicago. Ron Brookmeyer solicited ideas for sessions that could be proposed at the *Planning Committee Meeting* on Sunday afternoon. The theme of the meeting, *Our Planet and Its Life: Origins and Futures*, was selected to reflect the 200th anniversary of the birth of Charles Darwin and the 150th anniversary of the publication of *The Origin of Species*.

- *Terry Gardenier proposed a session on genome-wide association studies. She is seeking support from Sections on Pharmaceutical Sciences and Biological Sciences as well.*
- *Bill Eddy proposed sessions on*
 - *Guarding against erosion of federal databases*
 - *The role of Darwin in the historical origins of statistics (include author Stephen Stigler, of U Chicago)*
- *Several ideas arose in response to Katrina Kelner's initiative, with a view towards improving statistical practice in applied areas.*
 - *Mark Becker proposed a workshop. Bob Fay expressed a fear that the intended audience does not attend AAAS. As an alternative he proposed publishing statistical guidelines in Science.*
 - *Ron Brookmeyer proposed a session on Pitfalls and Fallacies of Statistics (may include editors of several journals).*
- *Juliet Shaffer proposed a session on chemical warfare. Some thought that this should not be addressed at AAAS-09 since we held a session on Humanitarian Emergencies at AAAS-08.*
- *John Gardenier proposed a session on quality control of the election process, arguing that Science is strongly affected by who is elected and Science plays a strong role in ensuring fair elections*
- *Bob Fay proposed a session on what the Bayesian perspective can contribute to reasoning (may include author Philip Johnson-Laird)*
- *Fritz Sheuren proposed that a session be named in honor of Harry Roberts*

Reports from Section and Affiliate Representatives. Mike Cohen (Chair of the ASA Committee of Representatives to AAAS) announced the names of newly elected/appointed ASA representatives to AAAS Sections; Thomas Santner is the incoming ASA Rep to Section U. He also mentioned that ASA also had provided travel support to participants in the session on *Humanitarian Emergencies* at AAAS-08. Jessica Utts reported that she attended the *Section Affiliates Meeting*. She announced that AAAS is cosponsoring a website on the presidential candidates (<http://election2008.aaas.org/>) and that representatives of the Clinton and Obama campaigns will speak in a session at 3:30 PM Saturday (Hynes 312). AAAS has also endorsed an effort to have the candidates participate in a national debate on science issues, at the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia on April 18. Individuals can sign on to endorse this effort at www.sciencedebate2008.com/