

# **THE STATISTICAL CONSULTANT**



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Section on Statistical Consulting  
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## **IN THIS ISSUE...**

<b>Goals and Vision for the Statistical Consulting Section – Thoughts from the 2015 Section Chair-Elect</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Statistical Consulting at JSM 2014</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>A Conference on Statistical Practice!</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The Section on Statistical Consulting Would Like your Feedback</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Headlines and Announcements</b>	<b>6</b>
Incoming Officers for Statistical Consulting . . . . .	6
Conference on Statistical Practice Deadline September 5, 2014 . . . . .	6
JSM Consulting Section Business Meeting and Mixer . . . . .	6

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Additional Officer Information can be found at [www.amstat.org/sections/cnsl/officers.cfm](http://www.amstat.org/sections/cnsl/officers.cfm)

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## Goals and Vision for the Statistical Consulting Section – Thoughts from the 2015 Section Chair-Elect



**Chris Holloman**  
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When Ralph O'Brien contacted me asking if I was willing to run for section chair, I was immediately excited about the prospect. I've had a chance to work with the leadership of the section for the past nine years in various roles (assistant newsletter editor, newsletter editor, and executive committee member at large), but taking the role of chair in 2016 would give me a unique opportunity to set the agenda for the section while serving the consulting community in a broader way. I'm getting started on that process early, and I'd like to set forth my initial vision and goals for my time as chair.

First, I'd like to say that I think the section has made fantastic progress on several initiatives over the past few years. In addition, I'm working closely with Eric Vance (current chair-elect and chair in 2015) to ensure that we make progress as soon as possible on things that are important to the consulting community. However, I do have a few ideas that will be unique to my leadership. Primarily, during my leadership I'd like to shift focus to the non-academic consulting community, placing a strong emphasis on the ways that the section can benefit private consultants. With that broad goal in mind, I have three objectives I'd like to suggest.

1. Develop a collection of online resources useful for private consultants. The inability to access journal collections or attend conferences limits the ability of consultants to be apprised of the latest methodologies. Rather than run webinars, I'd like to create something more like a wiki that consultants can access at their leisure. In addition to technical information, I envision this resource containing documents or media that can assist with the consulting process. For example, it might include documents on best practices for communicating particular statistical concepts to clients with limited statistical knowledge or templates for proposals and memo reports.
2. Broaden the base of participants in discussions of statistical topics. While the ASA listserv works very well for internal conversations, it does very little to bring non-members into the discussion. Having an outsider perspective could provide valuable insight for some discussion threads.
3. Improve the perception of statistical consulting's usefulness in the broader business community. The perception of the field of statistics and how it can impact business varies widely from company to company (and often from person to person within a company). Creating a more positive view of statistical work and a more comprehensive understanding of what role it plays would benefit all private consultants.

These objectives are broad and ambitious (especially #3), and I'm eager to get feedback from the section on how we might best approach them. Please feel free to e-mail me directly with ideas or thoughts on how we might accomplish these things. I'm excited about the next few years, and I hope you are as well.

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## Statistical Consulting at JSM 2014



**Nick Pajewski**

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*Wake Forest University Health Science – JSM 2014 Program Chair*

This year's JSM in Boston is upon us! The theme for this year's JSM is "Statistics: Global Impact – Past, Present, and Future". Plenary sessions include the President's Invited Address by Stephen Stigler from the University of Chicago, the Deming Lecture by Sharon Lohr from Westat, and the Fisher Lecture by Grace Wahba from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The IMS Blackwell and Medallion lectures will be given by Gareth Roberts from the University of Warwick and Mathias Drton from the University of Washington respectively.

The Section on Statistical Consulting is pleased to sponsor a variety of invited, contributed, and roundtable sessions this year. Topics for invited sessions range from the practice of starting a statistical consulting business and establishing biostatistics entities in medical centers, ethical issues in clinical and translational biostatistics, and the past, present, and future impact of statistical consulting laboratories (centers). Our sponsored sessions begin on Sunday afternoon (August 3rd) and continue throughout the conference until Thursday (August 7th). The Section's Business Meeting & Mixer will be held on Tuesday, August 5th from 5:30-7:30 PM.

We hope you can join us at these many sponsored events, as they provide great opportunities to learn new approaches, spur novel ideas, network, and build relationships with other statisticians, and learn more about the Section and ways that you can be involved in the future.

We look forward to seeing you in Boston!

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## A Conference on Statistical Practice!



**Eric Vance**

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In a clip of a press conference famous among sports fans long before receiving more than 7 million hits on YouTube (<http://youtu.be/eGDBR2L5kzI>), former basketball star Allen Iverson can't seem to believe that a reporter is asking him about practice. "Practice?" asks the incredulous Iverson. He asks, "We talking about practice?" over and over until finally concluding with disdain, "We're talking about practice."

Perhaps to the dismay of Mr. Iverson, last February in Tampa, Florida, over 400 statisticians came together to talk about practice at the ASA Conference on Statistical Practice (CSP). The CSP featured over 40 talks in four parallel tracks, a keynote address by ASA President Nat Schenker, three poster sessions and social mixers, twelve short courses and tutorials, and three practical computing expositions. New for 2014 was a career placement service for job seekers to interview with companies and a mentoring program that matched young statisticians with more senior mentors to help promote the practice and profession of statistics. The practice mentoring program will return for 2015.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>For details, see "Conference on statistical practice mentoring program to help promote statistics," *AMSTATNews*, November 2013; 437:18-19. <http://goo.gl/te3rT2>

As has been the case every year since 2012 when the CSP began, the Section on Statistical Consulting (CNSL) had the highest number of attendees. In 2014, 86 members of CNSL attended the CSP to share experiences related to the practice of statistics, far surpassing the 54 attendees from the Section on Statistical Computing, which had the second-most number of members in attendance. As the CSP has grown in size, so has the representation from CNSL, with 66 members of CNSL attending in 2013 and 57 attending in 2012, each year's number from this section representing approximately 20-25% of the total number of conference attendees. As the 2014 CNSL chair-elect and a member of the CSP Steering Committee, I hope that this section continues its very strong showing and sends an even higher number of attendees to next year's CSP in New Orleans from February 19-21, 2015.

I think the CSP has been so popular among members of CNSL because each of the four parallel tracks, or themes, of the conference is directly relevant to statistical consultants' and collaborators' practice.

The first conference theme is on "Communication, Impact, and Career Development." The objective of talks, short courses, and posters in this theme is to help attendees develop skills and perspectives that will improve their personal effectiveness as statisticians in their roles as managers, leaders, strategists, consultants, and collaborators.

The second theme is broadly about "Data Modeling and Analysis," with an objective to provide attendees with practical knowledge and techniques related to obtaining, creating, modeling, and analyzing data sets through the application of state-of-the-art statistical methods. What practicing statistical consultant or collaborator is not interested in keeping up-do-date and learning more about modeling and analyzing data?

The objective for the third theme, "Big Data Prediction and Analytics" is to share current methods for solving prediction, decision-making, classification, and pattern recognition problems from extremely large, unconventional, or complex data. Members of this section have always been able to do big things with data. By learning current methods for prediction and analytics at the CSP we can do even bigger things with Big Data.

The final theme is "Software, Programming, and Graphics." Its objective, highly relevant and practical for our membership, is to help attendees learn how to implement new or existing software, statistically oriented programming languages (R, SAS, etc.), or general programming languages (Python, Java, etc.) into their current processes.

Like so many members of this section, I'm attracted to many things about the CSP. I especially appreciate the small size (less than 1/10th that of JSM) and the "hub and spoke" layout of the conference, which concentrates foot traffic between sessions and during the poster sessions and social breaks into one large, central room that is connected to several smaller rooms for the parallel talks and short courses. The intimacy and the layout of the CSP create an atmosphere highly conducive for statisticians to be – that's right Mr. Iverson – talking about practice.

## The Section on Statistical Consulting Would Like your Feedback



**Kim Love-Myers**  
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The Section on Statistical Consulting will soon be sending out a request to take two linked surveys through the CNSL listserv. The survey will have two parts, one soliciting feedback on the section's JSM program, and one soliciting feedback on the content of this newsletter.

Please keep your eye out for the announcement, as we would like to receive feedback from as many of our members as are willing to participate.

Please e-mail Kim Love-Myers at [krlove@uga.edu](mailto:krlove@uga.edu) if you have any questions about these surveys.

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## Headlines and Announcements

### Incoming Officers for Statistical Consulting

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The results are in! The following officers were elected to terms starting in January 1, 2015. Congratulations to all and thank you for your willingness to serve.

- **Chair-Elect** – Chris Holloman
- **Publications Officer** – Vaneeta Grover
- **Council of Sections Representative (2015-2017)** – MaryJo Smith
- **Executive Committee at Large (2015-2017)** – Edward Jones

### Conference on Statistical Practice Deadline September 5, 2014

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The Conference on Statistical Practice (CSP) 2015 Submission Deadline is **FAST** approaching. To learn more about the ASA Conference on Statistical Practice, to submit a poster by the September 5, 2014 deadline, or to register by the early bird deadline of January 5, 2015, go to <http://www.amstat.org/meetings/csp/2015/>.

### JSM Consulting Section Business Meeting and Mixer

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Please join your other section members for the annual section business meeting and mixer.

- Location - Westin Boston Waterfront in the Common Wealth Ballroom B
- Date - Tuesday, August 5th
- Time - 5:30-7:30 PM

For complete details of Consulting Section sponsored sessions, visit

<http://www.amstat.org/meetings/jsm/2014/onlineprogram/index.cfm>.

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## **Section on Statistical Consulting Microsite**

<http://community.amstat.org/CNSL/Home>

You'll find all information relating to the Section on Statistical Consulting, including our charter, officer list, section activities, past issues of *The Statistical Consultant*, minutes of past meetings, and more.