Central Arkansas Chapter
By Shelly Lensing

The Central Arkansas Chapter has had an active year, holding three successful in-person events. Virtual chapter meetings have brought opportunities for knowledge sharing from statisticians located near and far, as well as the convenience of attending from home or office. However, with the pandemic winding down, CASA officers think engaging with members in person would be much welcomed.

Our meeting in early December of last year was the first in-person meeting we have had since the end of 2019. Rather than featuring statistical presentations, we focused on connecting with one another and discussing ways our chapter could engage with others, particularly students interested in statistics. Guests and children were welcome, and a few members brought their spouses and children. More than 20 people attended, including new members.

Weijia Jia and Paula Roberson take a moment to smile for the camera during the December CASA meeting in Little Rock, Arkansas.
In March, CASA again participated in the Central Arkansas Regional Science and Engineering Fair, the state’s largest STEM research competition for primary and secondary school students. The chapter sponsored six awards with cash prizes for exceptional application of statistical and data science techniques for analyzing, tabulating, and/or visualizing data in a science project. CASA members served as the data judges and staffed a table with fliers introducing and promoting statistics and data science careers for students, teachers, and parents.


After surveying CASA members, chapter officers applied for and were selected to host the ASA traveling course “Data Visualization with R,” taught by Aaron Williams of the Urban Institute. We could choose to teach the full-day class virtually or in person, depending on our needs and the instructor’s availability. Chapter members wanted to have an in-person event but were aware there would be a wider reach if the class was offered virtually. Thanks to Williams’s flexibility, the class was taught both online and in person at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences with support by the UAMS Department of Biostatistics. The class was well attended with 66 attendees; about half were in person and half virtual.
Aaron Williams of the Urban Institute presents “Data Visualization with R” at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences and online.

Shelly Lensing presents Aaron Williams an Arkansas Traveler certificate, which recognizes contributions to the State of Arkansas by out-of-state visitors.

This past year was a good one for our chapter, made even better by getting back to face-to-face gatherings. People adjusted well and wore masks as needed or preferred. The short course speaker more than once voiced he was glad our chapter chose to have the class in person. After living through the pandemic, people seem to value connecting in person.