

# informs Practice Section

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## 2019 Business Analytics Conference

By Ranganath Nuggehalli, CAP, President,  
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The INFORMS Business Analytics Conference is a special conference for those of us involved in the practice of operations research and analytics, and e<sup>x</sup> so for the members of the Practice Section, who volunteer countless hours to support some of the major events of the conference.



This year, the conference in Austin, Texas, and will be held at JW Marriott Austin from April 14–16.

The conference kicks off on Sunday with several technology workshops, Early Career Professionals' Network, and presentations by the finalists of the UPS George D. Smith Prize competition. This year the three finalists are the Operations, Business Analytics and Information Systems Department (U of Cincinnati), the Department of Decision, Operations, and Information Technologies (U of Maryland), and the Operations and Supply Chain Program (U of South Carolina). This three-way competition is going to be better than any football game. The Executive Forum and the welcome reception will conclude the first day of the conference.

The sessions on Monday will start with the plenary panel discussion “How Data Science is Revolutionizing the Future.” Immediately after the



plenary session, Cornell University, the winner of the 2018 Wagner Prize, will reprise their presentation “Analytics and Bikes: Cornell Rides Tandem with Motivate to Improve Mobility.” Monday will also feature the Syngenta Crop Challenge in Analytics and the O.R. and Analytics Student Team Competition. Next time you find yourself riding a bicycle through a cornfield, think of us.

Of course, the highlight of Monday is the presentations from the six Edelman competition finalists. As in the previous years, they span a broad spectrum of applications. This year they deal with aviation safety, fraud detection, wind farm design, IT service deals, sewer management, and school bus scheduling. If you’re wondering how analytics can be applied to ephemeral quantities like wind and water, or why another one rides the bus, this competition is where you want to be.

The Class of 2019 Edelman Laureates will be inducted to the Edelman Academy at the Honors Reception on Monday evening.

The evening culminates with the Edelman Gala dinner and the award ceremony that has become the hallmark of the conference. It is a celebration of the best of O.R. practice, a reminder of what we can do through our profession. When else can you party with the highest concentration of geeky folks west of the Mississippi River?

Tuesday begins with the plenary presentation “The Role of Analytics in the Digital Era” by Anju Gupta of Syngenta, continues with several tutorials and practice-related presentations, and reprises from the winners of 2018 INFORMS Prize, 2019 UPS George D. Smith Prize, and the 2019 Franz Edelman Award.

The finalists of the 2019 Innovative Applications in Analytics Award will be presenting the following:

- **Jet.com/Walmart Labs:** A Machine Learning Approach to Shipping Box Design,
- **Singapore University of Technology and Design:** InnoGPS: Innovation Global Positioning System,
- **Georgia Institute of Technology and the Care Coordination Institute:** Multisite Evidence-based Best Practice Discovery,
- **Washington University in St. Louis:** Taking Assortment Optimization from Theory to Practice: Evidence from Large Field Experiments on Alibaba,
- **University of Wisconsin, Duke University, Harvard University, and Massachusetts General Hospital:** Transparent Machine Learning Models for Predicting Seizures in ICU Patients from cEEG Signals,
- **Verizon:** Using Advanced Analytics to Rationalize Tail Spend Suppliers at Verizon.

If you have long suspected these universities and companies might have interesting analytics brewing, visit these presentations and remove all doubt.

For additional details, please check the conference website:

<http://meetings2.informs.org/wordpress/analytics2019/>

The fundamental mission of the Practice Section has been and remains promoting the practice of OR/MS and analytics. The practice of our profession is more important now than it has ever been before. To serve the increasing needs of our profession, we need to grow the membership of our section. If you know someone who would be a good fit for the Practice Section, please email me at [RNuggehalli@UPS.com](mailto:RNuggehalli@UPS.com).

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## **VP Practice Report: News About Board-Level Practice Activities**

**By C. Allen Butler, Ph.D., Vice President of**

**Practice, [vp\\_practice@mail.informs.org](mailto:vp_practice@mail.informs.org)**

The Board met at the fall Annual Meeting and again at a winter meeting in Baltimore.

Practice-related items include:



- First, Manoj Chari stepped down as Chair of the Industry Outreach and Engagement Committee; the Board approved a motion to appoint Irv Lustig, CAP as the new Chair.
- The Board also approved initiative funding of \$90,000 for the Analytics Capability Evaluation (ACE) Coaches Program.
- The Board welcomed the new Director of Education and Industry Programs, Taryn Lewis.

***Update on Practice Committees:*****Industry Outreach and Engagement Committee.**

The committee has been very busy with a number of activities. We have continued work on the document “How to Get Started with Analytics,” and it is now undergoing final review. With the new initiative funding, we are developing a coaching cadre to help companies with taking the Analytics Capability Evaluation (ACE). (See the other item in our newsletter for how you, too, can play this game. They are accepting coaches as well as subjects.)

**Committee on Industry-Academia Collaborations.**

Dr. Lawrence Seiford hosted the inaugural meeting of the committee at the fall Annual Meeting in Phoenix. A number of ideas were discussed including: connecting academics with practitioners in a kind of speed dating event, creating a portal where practitioners could upload data sets/case studies for use by academics, and having a track at conferences where practitioners give a five minute presentation on problems of interest.

**Practice Strategy Committee.** As the VP-Practice, I chair this committee, and I hosted the inaugural meeting of the committee at the fall Annual Meeting in Phoenix. The committee reviewed the ongoing practice activities under the existing Practice Committees. We also discussed ways the Practice community can reach outside of INFORMS.

**Early Career Professionals' Network.** ECPN will host its second annual workshop during the upcoming Analytics Conference in Austin. This is of special interest to our up-and-coming geeklets.

**Analytics Certification Board.** INFORMS now offers a new CAP Preparation Course to help O.R. and analytics professionals at all experience levels prepare for the Certified Analytics Professional (CAP) certification. The course has been highly successful and the Board is exploring other ways to expand and enhance the CAP program.

It can be lonely at the top. If interested in serving on any of the Practice Committees or subcommittees, please contact me at [vp\\_practice@mail.informs.org](mailto:vp_practice@mail.informs.org).

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## Update to the Practice Section from the Editor of *INFORMS Journal on Applied Analytics (Formerly Interfaces)*

By Michael F. Gorman, Editor-in-Chief

As I begin my third year in this role, I am pleased to provide this update to the Practice Section.



*Interfaces*, or should I say *INFORMS Journal on Applied Analytics (IJAA)*, continues to thrive by producing world class applied research in OR/MS and related analytical disciplines. The pipeline

is strong, with three open issues each year, the Edelman issue, the Wagner issue, and one Special Issue each year. Thanks to the members of the Practice Section who continue to do a fantastic job supporting and managing two of the most prestigious and important award competitions in INFORMS, which always produce top rate applied research.

Of course, this year's big news...I am pleased to announce that after an extensive survey of the INFORMS membership, the INFORMS Board approved the name change. Welcome to the *INFORMS Journal on Applied Analytics*!

- **INFORMS.** This brands our organization in the title. When a professional runs an Internet search on “analytics,” INFORMS shows up as part of the search results. This also associates 'OR/MS' with analytics, as is proudly displayed in our organization's name!
- **Journal.** This conveys academic rigor. We will continue to maintain an academically rigorous review process. Our editorial mission will not change.
- **Applied.** This word is meant to communicate to academics that this is not a theoretical journal. We want to let potential authors know their work must be applied. Impact is measured in dollars, lives, or quality more than in citations.
- **Analytics.** The word analytics here is both obvious and a primary driver of our name change. We want to reach a wider audience, particularly the professionals who identify with, are enthusiastic about, and will turn to a journal whose title includes such a word.

Though *Interfaces* has a tremendous brand within INFORMS, its name is a mystery outside it.

*Interfaces* is an outreach journal—outreach to educators, students, and practitioners who are, and who are *not*, INFORMS members. Many of those

possible downloaders, subscribers, or INFORMS members think *Interfaces* is about coaxial cables and USB ports.

Of course, the name change is consistent with INFORMS strategy. The list of analytics-related successes is long, and includes the Analytics Society, the Analytics Conference, and the Certified Analytics Professional exam. Recently, the Edelman award has adopted a new name along these lines as well: *Franz Edelman Award for Achievement in Advanced Analytics, Operations Research and Management Science*.

Finally, the name change will support growth. With the more precise name *INFORMS Journal on Applied Analytics*, the content published within the journal's pages is more likely to reach students, instructors, practitioners, and researchers in related disciplines, introducing them to the benefits of OR/MS and analytics in practice. This outreach role is critical to this publication's value proposition. I anticipate growth in the rate of search hits, downloads, subscriptions, and paper submissions as a result of reaching a wider audience. (No news yet!)

To further this new name and identity, this year, we will have a special issue on the Innovative Applications in Analytics Award (IAAA), which is sponsored by the Analytics Society and Caterpillar. This award is a nod towards, as its name would suggest, particularly innovative applications - especially those that use a novel combination of methods, or apply them in unusual ways or to interesting subject areas. Five of last year's competitors went through the *IJAA* review process for their papers, and that special issue will be out later this year.

Upcoming special issues include one on Omnichannel Marketing (Burcu Keskin, Arkansas, SI Editor) and another featuring a collection of papers outlining approaches to sustaining O.R. excellence

from prior INFORMS Award-winning organizations (Sean Willems, U. Tennessee, SI Editor).

Please continue to consider *IJAA* as an outlet for your applied research, and do not hesitate to promote it to other potential researchers. If you attend a great session at 2019 Analytics, talk to the presenter about *IJAA* and its mission! As always, I am glad to hear the thoughts and suggestions of any member of the Practice Section or greater INFORMS organization. Reach out to share your thoughts! (And yes, we will even consider publishing something about coaxial cables or USB ports if you're doing something analytical with it. So get your geek on, let your inner journalist run free, submit those papers, and send them on over to the [INFORMS Journal on Applied Analytics](#).)

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## Awards Top Analytics Society Agenda for Austin

**By Erick Wikum, President of Analytics Society of INFORMS**

Two of the three awards sponsored by the Analytics Society will be given during the 2019 INFORMS Business Analytics Conference in Austin. If you like analytics, or even if you just like corn, you should definitely plan to be there.



On the morning of Monday, April 15, finalists for the Syngenta Crop Challenge will present their approaches to improving water optimization in corn cultivation. Finalists for the Caterpillar Innovative Applications in Analytics Award (IAAA) will present their novel applications of analytics on Tuesday morning. Winners for both competitions will be announced at a conference-wide joint awards

ceremony during lunch on Tuesday. The finalist sessions are open to anyone attending the conference. Please join us.

The Analytics Society will also host its annual Recognition Breakfast from 7–8am on Tuesday. The purpose of the breakfast is to recognize volunteers, INFORMS staff, and award sponsors and finalists. Volunteers, including award chairs, coordinators, judges and coaches, conference coordinators, webmasters, and officers, are the primary means through which the society provides service to its over 2,600 members. Invitations will be extended to the honorees. A limited number of additional seats will be available on a 'first come-first served' basis, for society members who would like to attend. To express interest, contact Erick at [erick@wikalytics.com](mailto:erick@wikalytics.com).

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## The 2019 Franz Edelman Award

By Pooja Dewan, Chair, 2019 Edelman Award

[PoojaDewan105@gmail.com](mailto:PoojaDewan105@gmail.com)

We are in the final countdown to the 2019 Franz Edelman Award competition! The event will take place Monday, April 15, 2019 in Austin, Texas as part of the INFORMS Conference on Business Analytics and



Operations Research. This award is given to the best work in the use of operations research, management science, and advanced analytics in practice.

The competition began last fall with a call for entries. A large selection committee composed of practitioners and academics narrowed the field down to 12 semi-finalists. Each semi-finalist underwent a thorough verification process to ensure that the claims about their work could be substantiated.

From the semi-finalists, six finalists were chosen. The finalists will be presenting their work on Monday, April 15 in JW Marriott Lone Star Ballroom G/H.

9:10-10am: **Microsoft** - Fraud Detection for Profit Optimality

10:30-11:20am: **Vattenfall** - Use of O.R. for Offshore Wind Farm Design

11:30am-12:20pm: **Spanish Aviation Safety and Security Agency** - RIMAS – Safer Skies in Spain

1:50-2:40pm: **Louisville MSD and Tetra Tech** - Csoft: Innovative Solution for the Real-time Control of Sewer Networks

2:45-3:35pm: **IBM** - Applying Analytics and O.R. for IT Service Deals

3:40-4:30pm: **Boston Public Schools** - From School Buses to Bell Times: Driving Policy with Optimization

Each team will make a presentation before a judging panel consisting of Pooja Dewan (Chair), Arnie Greenland, CAP (University of Maryland), Antonio Carbajal, CAP (iHeartMedia), Julie Swann (North Carolina State University), Manoj Chari (SAS), Michael F. Gorman (University of Dayton), Mike Trick (Carnegie Mellon University), Patricia Neri (SAS), and Pelin Pekgun (USC). The order in which finalists will present was determined using a random-number generator (would you expect anything less from all these PhDs? You didn't seriously think we'd just alphabetize them, did you?)

We invite conference participants to attend any or all of the presentations. Be sure to arrive on time because the doors are locked once a presentation begins!

The first-place winner will be announced at the Edelman Gala award ceremony that evening.

The winner will give a reprise presentation the afternoon of April 16.

It is not too early to think of submitting an entry for the 2020 Edelman Competition. Entries are due (tentatively) Wednesday, October 16, 2019.

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## UPS George D. Smith Prize

By Rina Schneur, Chair, 2019 UPS George D. Smith Prize, [rinarsg@gmail.com](mailto:rinarsg@gmail.com)

The 8th UPS Smith competition will take place on Sunday just prior to the Analytics conference in Austin. We are so grateful to the rock stars at UPS for establishing this new tradition and supporting it. The UPS Smith Prize is given to an analytics program that excels in its analytics education.



The award not only provides a monetary prize but, most importantly, shines a light on the importance of innovating deep analytics education to the future of our profession. Such education is the core foundation that enables the impactful work presented at the conference and conducted every day around the world.

Please join us to watch the finalists as they present on Sunday from 12noon-4pm in Room 201 and/or for the winner's reprise on Tuesday from 1:50-2:40pm in Room 301.

Got something excellent brewing for next year instead? If you are aware of programs that could be candidates for the prize, submissions for 2020 are due in October.

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## Does Your Organization Excel At Applying Analytics?

By Mark Gallagher, CAP, INFORMS Prize Chair

The INFORMS Prize is awarded for effective integration of advanced analytics, operations research and management sciences in an organization.



The award is given to an organization that has repeatedly applied the principles of analytics in pioneering, varied, and novel ways.

Frequently, top-performing organizations partner with academia and service companies in advancing their analytics. The candidates will be judged on the impact that analytics has had on the overall success of their organization. This means there's really no drawback to being a smaller applicant. A multi-billion dollar firm with a large OR/MS staff that only occasionally relies on analytics might be ranked relatively lower than a small firm which uses analytics throughout its business. David can totally beat Goliath in this prize.

The INFORMS Prize recognizes how business analytics can pervade a corporate culture and significantly improve results. The [prize guide on the INFORMS website](#) describes the streamlined nominations (requiring under 20 pages) that are due on December 1. If any of you have ever suffered through an NSF grant or a corporate RFP, you will appreciate how truly refreshing the small integer of 20 is.

Nominate your outstanding organization this year!

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**Upcoming INFORMS Conferences and LinkedIn**

**By Clinton Brownley, Chair,  
Section on Practice LinkedIn  
Group,  
[cbrownley@gmail.com](mailto:cbrownley@gmail.com)**



I enjoy being a member of INFORMS. The people. The journals and magazines. The conferences. It's an incredibly enriching community. Unfortunately, I haven't had a chance to attend an INFORMS conference in quite some time, and I miss it. The speakers. The workshops and exhibits. The banquets. It's an exceptionally invigorating environment.

Fortunately, there are many INFORMS conferences this year, including the Analytics Conference in April, International Conference in June, Healthcare Conference in July, and the Annual Meeting in October. The Edelman Gala at the Analytics Conference, which honors remarkable analytics projects, is always inspiring, and the keynotes and plenaries at the Annual Meeting never fail to be engaging and motivating. With any luck, this year, I'll have an opportunity to attend one of these outstanding events.

Despite my conference dry spell, I've enjoyed remaining connected to the INFORMS community through this newsletter and [LinkedIn](#). The newsletter has been an excellent medium for sharing personal stories (March 2018 article) and information I hope readers find interesting (October 2018 article). LinkedIn has been a great space for connecting with colleagues and discussing admirable applications of analytics.

An easy way to energize [our online environment](#) is to post and comment on active group discussions. So next time you see a topic or headline that catches your eye, please take a moment to share it and your thoughts in our Section on Practice group:

<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/1791861>

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## **INFORMS Analytics Capability Evaluation (ACE) Initiative: Do you want to make a difference as an Analytics Coach?**

**By Norm Reitter, Chair, Analytics Capability Evaluation Subcommittee**

We have some great news for all coaching wannabes out there. You no longer need to sign the parental coaching 'code of conduct' for your child's middle-school soccer team or referee high school wrestling matches. Instead, you can get all your coaching fulfillment during civilized hours, working with grownups who want your advice - and if you do it just right, they may even buy you a cappuccino. Interested? Read on.



INFORMS is developing an Analytics Coaches cadre to provide direct engagement with organizations that want assistance with identifying their current capabilities and where they want to go with analytics in the future, and with developing action plans to help get there.

As a result, INFORMS is also developing a certificate course for ACE Coach candidates that will prepare them to engage, assess and facilitate capability evaluations within organizations. The INFORMS ACE will use the Analytics Maturity Model (AMM, <https://analyticmaturity.informs.org>) a free, online assessment tool that INFORMS developed several years ago, as an initial "measuring stick" for assessments. The INFORMS Analytics Coaches will be trained on performing assessments, organizational change management, facilitation, the INFORMS AMM, other analytics maturity and capability models, and

more to allow them to successfully engage and make a difference within participating organizations.

If you are interested in becoming an INFORMS Analytics Coach or are an organization desiring some assistance in defining your path forward in analytics, then contact Norm Reitter, ACE Committee Chair, at [nreitter@canallc.com](mailto:nreitter@canallc.com), Dave Saranchek, Analytics Coach Development Lead, [saranchd@ctc.com](mailto:saranchd@ctc.com), or Taryn Lewis, INFORMS Director of Education and Industry, [tlewis@informs.org](mailto:tlewis@informs.org). (All of these people will also accept a cappuccino, especially if offered during civilized business hours.)

*Norm Reitter is the Chief Analytics Officer at CANA Advisors. He is a long-time INFORMS member and volunteer.*

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## Note from the Newsletter Editor

By Carrie Beam, Editor, INFORMS Section on Practice Newsletter, [cmbeam@uark.edu](mailto:cmbeam@uark.edu)

Please send your article ideas, announcements, or comments, to be considered for future issues to Carrie

Beam: [cmbeam@uark.edu](mailto:cmbeam@uark.edu).

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