

Successful JSM Mentoring Workshop Gives Participants Much to Say



Erin Tanenbaum is a senior statistician at NORC at the University of Chicago. She is the chair of the Committee on Applied Statisticians (CAS) and was especially motivated to write, receive funding for, and eventually lead CAS in their four-year mentoring program starting with the 2012 Member Initiative "Developing and Piloting a Partnership ASA Mentorship Program" since she needed mentoring her first year attending JSM.

"If it hadn't been for my former co-worker, Jeri Mulrow, I might not have returned because I felt like a small fleck in the ginormous conference." Instead, Jeri encouraged Erin to get involved and she happily admits this has made JSM feel much smaller and more obtainable. "I'm thrilled I didn't stop attending because the sessions are of such high quality and diversity. I would have missed a lot if I'd stopped attending."

This summer will be Tanenbaum's 11th consecutive year attending JSM.

An 'Oval Table' Discussion

In addition to the JSM Mentoring Workshop at JSM this year, the Committee on Applied Statisticians will host an "oval table" discussion for all organizations interested in starting a statistical mentoring program. Committee members will provide "Mentoring in a Box," which provides step-by-step instructions for organizers. Also, there will be an open question-and-answer session, during which other mentoring program organizers will be available to answer questions. The oval table discussion is free, but an RSVP is requested to donnal@amstat.org.

JSM 2016 is fast approaching and, as such, it's time for me to reflect on last year's sessions. JSM 2015 was most likely the busiest conference for the Committee on Applied Statisticians to date. Our mentoring initiative reached a fevered pitch as we hosted two mentoring roundtable discussions, a mentoring workshop, and a mixer, as well as assisting with the JSM mentoring program.

The committee worked tirelessly to formulate and build mentoring materials specifically for ASA members, and we shared what we learned with JSM attendees. Over multiple months, our committee met to discuss and sometimes debate the finer points of mentoring. Our hard work paid off, as the **Mentoring Workshop** was a huge success, so much so that we plan to repeat the workshop again this year (see the online

program at www.amstat.org/meetings/jsm/2016/onlineprogram for up-to-date time and location information) with the Mentoring Award Committee.

This year's workshop is geared for mentors and mentees alike, and the program will include short presentations about getting the most out of mentoring. In addition, we will have panelists who will share their mentoring stories and answer your questions. The session will be held in a room with round tables, so there will be multiple opportunities for attendees to interact with one another and discuss their own challenges and learning opportunities.

Since the format is similar to last year's, I thought I'd share a few comments from workshop attendees and a table leader. We hope to see you at this year's workshop, which is free and open to all conference attendees.



Zachary H. Seeskin, PhD
Candidate in Statistics at
Northwestern University
and a U.S. Census Bureau
Dissertation Fellow



Thilaksha Tharanganie,
Assistant Lecturer at Monash
University



**David Banks, ASA Fellow and
Professor at Duke University**

“Last summer, at my first JSM in Seattle, I found the Mentoring Workshop to be one of the most valuable sessions I attended. As JSM is a large conference with more than 6,000 statisticians, it can be hard to find chances to meet new people. The Mentoring Workshop helped to make JSM feel smaller and was a great place to meet others. My table included both early career and experienced statisticians, all friendly and eager to share their perspectives. The session included opportunities for casual conversation to discuss some topics suggested by the organizers and for Q+A with a panel of experienced statisticians. I learned about how good mentorship was important to many of the experienced statisticians at our table when they were beginning their careers. One valuable piece of advice was to seek mentors both within and outside of one’s organization/department, as both perspectives are helpful when starting a career. I would highly recommend the Mentoring Workshop to graduate students and early career statisticians, and I hope to attend again this summer.”

“This was my first time attending a JSM and I found it a little overwhelming. I was one of the recipients of an Institute of Mathematical Statistics Travel Award, which assisted me with the costs of attending JSM. I networked with peers from all over the world. For me, a highlight of attending the JSM was to attend the workshops, including the Writing Workshop and Mentoring Workshop. The feedback I received from the Writing Workshop mentor, Professor David Banks from Duke University, was invaluable. In addition, I was selected to participate in the JSM mentoring and was matched with a mentor, Ms. Erin Tanenbaum, who is a senior statistician in the statistics and methodology department at NORC at the University of Chicago. She encouraged me to attend the Mentoring Workshop, where I was able to connect with like-minded statisticians. I am immensely grateful for all her advice and for the information I learned at the Mentoring Workshop. It definitely made the conference feel smaller—with over 6,000 statisticians attending each year, it’s always helpful to feel more connected with others when you are so far away from home. Overall, my participation in the 2015 JSM opened up doors to the wider world.”

“The Mentoring Workshop at the JSM in Seattle was depressing. Every young person I spoke to was brilliant and charming and working on some amazing project. Most were tackling problems that hadn’t even been framed 10 years ago, using tools and concepts that were almost alien to me. I felt like the Neanderthals in William Golding’s *The Inheritors*, or the adults in *The Midwich Cuckoos*. At first, there didn’t seem to be anything useful I could offer them—the mentees are our successors and ‘surpassers’ and see their way forward pretty clearly. But I found I could contribute a few small things, such as some insight into the oddities of our publication process or tips for work/life balance. They also liked gossip about the old guard. Would I do it again? Yes. It made me feel really old, but probably keeps me younger than I could otherwise manage.”



Sarah Kalicin, Senior Statistician
at Intel Corporation

“Last year, I attended the JSM Mentoring Workshop to support that our association is promoting the development of our fellow statisticians. Mentoring is about helping each other grow so that we all become stronger in how we practice our profession and contribute effectively to our work organizations. While I have been an advocate for mentoring within the ASA, it is always great to hear how others are using mentoring and how to remove any barriers for others in adopting this very effective development tool. In the spirit of mentoring, the more we share our strengths with others, the stronger we become as a profession. I highly recommend everyone to attend the next ASA Mentoring Workshop to learn how you can become both a mentee (to learn something new) and a mentor (to share what you have learned).”



Kelly H. Zou, PStat®, ASA
Fellow, and Senior Director
and Analytic Science Lead at
Pfizer Inc.

“Dr. Barry D. Nussbaum, the incoming president, forwarded me the workshop flier prior to JSM. It interested me since I’ve been a mentor through ASA plus my company, Pfizer Inc. I have been quite active in participating in the mentorship process, organized by our Global Asian Alliance (GAA) within my company. In my own career development, a thoughtful and caring mentor became a guiding light. Subsequently, I have become a mentor. Therefore, both as a JSM mentor and as a GAA mentor, I was curious and hopeful that this workshop would shed light on effective mentorship skills.

“The 2015 Mentoring Workshop organizers included a roundtable format for face-to-face interactions, complementary to the one-on-one JSM mentorship. The participants at every table introduced themselves and paid attention to the attendees’ particular needs. Among the table, there were familiar faces, including Dr. Lillian Lin, who was a recipient of the Jeanne E. Griffith Mentoring Award from the ASA. The caring table leaders of the workshop asked about the attendees’ (mentors and mentees) challenges and dilemmas. Both sides enjoyed two-way interactions through learning, conversing, and sharing.

“My favorite part of the workshop was to listen to three distinguished panelists: David R. Morganstein, professor and very

soon dean Sally C. Morton, and dean Sastry Pantula. All of them were past ASA presidents who talked about their background and experience as mentors. There was unique, but common, key take-away messages from each of these leaders in the statistical profession. For example, I enjoyed David’s perspective from the industry side, Sally’s view as a successful woman statistician, and Sastry’s personal background growing up in Asia.

Furthermore, I enjoyed the enthusiasm of the workshop organizers—Erin R. Tanenbaum, Eric A. Vance, and Mark Otto—who represented the Committee on Applied Statisticians and ensured a lively session, including questions from the audience answered by the panelists. The responses by the three panelists were extremely helpful and witty. Overall, I found this workshop engaging and energizing. It was satisfying, reassuring, and heart-warming to know that the journey of being an outstanding statistician was bumpy and that our statistical societies, such as the ASA, are so supportive of fostering a future generation of statisticians.

“The key characteristics of an effective mentor are listening and problem-solving skills. Nowadays, such ‘soft skills,’ as well as technical prowess, are crucial in business acumen and leadership qualities in the field of statistics, data sciences, and quantitative analytics. The JSM Mentoring Workshop would definitely enhance the professional network, support system, and match-making process to help facilitate mentorship needs.

“Under the big tent for statistics following the 175th anniversary celebration of the ASA, there are abundant opportunities to mentor and be mentored. I would certainly look forward to attending the JSM Mentoring Workshop again in 2016 and beyond! The topic of mentorship brings me the fond memory of and the deep respect for influential statisticians who made a difference in my life.” ■

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