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Welcome to the Winter 2022 NISS Parameters Newsletter!

Greetings from the depth of winter in central Pennsylvania at the Penn State NISS Hub. Since Punxsutawney Phil declared six more weeks of winter, we are experiencing it. However, during these cold days, our monthly Career Fairs have provided students with great advice about jobs in different sectors, from academia, government, national labs, and industry. Our newly formed GSN, Graduate Student Network, is growing and planning events of interest to statistics and data science students. Although focused on and planned by our academic affiliates, we have generously opened these events to students in other departments. See below for upcoming events on mentoring, and the annual NISS Graduate Student Network research conference in May.

We encourage more departments to join our network of academic affiliates and urge you to speak to your department head or graduate student advisor to join NISS. Deans love to see departments engaged in outreach activities which provide diverse connections beyond the campus. See below for upcoming events which members of affiliates can use their affiliate award funds to support students or post docs to attend. NISS provides connections with government agencies and industry which for academic departments is a natural means of outreach for cross sector collaborations. These connections provide new research challenges for Post docs and young faculty members and opportunity to involve undergraduate and graduate students in the research.

As first reported in the January update, the Ingram Olkin Forum (IOF) committee has opened a portal to submit ideas for proposing Statistics Serving Society forums that can be hosted online or in person at an affiliate’s home institution. We are seeking ideas with impact on society where statisticians should be more engaged. Topics such as gerrymandering/redistricting, gun violence, police use of force, algorithm fairness in the use of AI, and a myriad of additional areas are solicited where statisticians and data scientists can have an impact.

We are also looking forward to holding our writing workshop in person at JSM this year and are planning to host a networking mixer to connect past attendees at our virtual writing workshop events with each other.

Jim Rosenberger, Director, NISS

With the promise – well, at least a hint – of progression toward a normal workplace, NISS staff are back in the DC office, with space also occupied by NISS postdocs whose primary workspaces are still closed. The DC office welcomes Lola Stevens who has ably taken over for Candyce Hughes (her fantastic job offer from the DC government was too good to refuse).

“Normalcy” for NISS-DC means amazing progress by the Visualization team of Haley Jeppson (new NISS Research Associate), mentor Heike Hofmann (Iowa State faculty) and Brian Habing (NISS Associate Director for Education Research and U South Carolina).

The loss of Lee Wilkinson, advisor to the Visualization project, is keenly felt with his enthusiasm and his enormous contributions to communication through statistical graphics. Lee’s commitment to integrity in communication, whether by statistical graphics or by written text, and the breadth of his knowledge and his imagination are truly irreplaceable. In the same way, the Writing Workshop will not be the same without him.

“Normalcy” also means at least three active arenas for NISS-DC. A new series in the NISS Newsletter to highlight technical work by NISS Researchers begins this month with a description of Dr. Ya Mo’s work, taking the reader through the analytic process using differential item analysis to understand how writing prompts function differently for English language learners than for students whose native language is English.

In 2021, NISS-NCES/IES expert panels raised critical questions, both technical and operational, for “Connecting the Dots” to streamline and coordinate education surveys and assessments. Next steps are now underway to turn “feasible” into “realistic,” by defining the required research and by creating templates for the required information. In Breaking News: NISS-DC is also getting ready to greet a new Research Associate to work with NASS.

Following on the success and the creative graphics submitted as part of SAID in Graphics, a second contest, SAID in Graphics, II is now open for student applications with three categories for monetary prizes.

In short, “Normalcy” at NISS-DC means optimism, activity, and creativity, always exceeding the time available. It is nice to be back!

Nell Sedransk, Director - DC
UPCOMING EVENT: HOW TO BE A GOOD MENTOR

Friday, February 25, 2022 - 12 pm to 1:30 pm ET

Offering good mentorship is often an important hallmark of a successful career, be it in academia, industry or government. Yet mentoring can be a rather challenging task, especially when you are starting your career and trying to balance other responsibilities such as research, teaching and service.

- What is expected of a good mentor in terms of time, availability, resources, types of support or otherwise?
- What do you need to learn about your mentees in order to form a successful working relationship?
- Should you adapt your mentoring style depending on your mentee's level of education (undergraduate or graduate), goal (research or teaching), or even the number of people you are mentoring (big teams or small teams)? How do you manage this?

The NISS Academic Affiliates Committee is very excited about being able to bring together four accomplished professors who have extensive experience of mentoring.

We hope that it will be interesting to hear their perspectives and gain from their experience!

Joel Dubin, University of Waterloo
Nick Horton, Amherst College
Dan Jeske, University of California, Riverside
Renee Moore, Drexel University
Moderator: Y. Samuel Wang, Cornell University

Register for this Event Today!

SPRING 2022 COMPETITION: NISS STATISTICALLY ACCURATE INTERACTIVE DISPLAYS ... IN GRAPHICS!

NISS has a New COMPETITION FOR YOU!

The National Institute of Statistical Science is sponsoring a student data visualization contest - for creating examples of how interactive data visualization techniques can be applied to enhance the data presentations in several public reports about education. Simply put, NISS is looking for Statistically Accurate Interactive Display in Graphics -- SAID in Graphics!

Your mission is to design an innovative visualization that attracts the reader to explore the data more deeply - and helps them to do so!

THE DATA

The data for the contest is from the Digest of Education Statistics from the National Center for Education Statistics.

There are five choices of data to select for the contest that present different types of data (including geographic and longitudinal) with different types of variables.

ELIGIBILITY

The competition is open to graduate and undergraduate students at a US or Canadian institution of higher education. Entries may either be for a team of up to five students or as an individual. A team may submit up to two graphics for the same or different data sets. An individual may submit only one graphic.

THE REQUIREMENTS

The goal is to demonstrate how interactive visualization can be used to prod readers of various backgrounds to investigate substantive educational questions more deeply.

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DATA CONTEST!

THE PRIZES

The prize for the overall winning entry will be $1000. There also be two runner-up prizes of $500 each: one for the entry with the best “entry point”, demonstrating how an initially static visualization can draw in viewers to interactively explore additional questions, and one for the entry that best demonstrates how the flexibility of being interactive can assist in understanding and interpreting and understanding uncertainty in the data. Prizes awarded to winners’ departments.

QUESTIONS?

Please direct all questions to Brian Habing (BHabing@niss.org). He is also available for video conference consultations.

See the NISS website for complete competition details and registration!

Registrations Due March 18 - Entries Due April 12!
UPCOMING EVENT: VIRTUAL CAREER FAIR

**INSURANCE & FINANCE COMPANIES**

Wednesday, March 9, 2022 - 12 pm to 1:30 pm ET

Interested in a statistics or data science position in the insurance or finance industry sector? Then this session should interest you!

NISS hosts Career Fair sessions that focus on academic positions, others on positions in government agencies and industry. This session will describe opportunities for statisticians/data scientists from three companies in the insurance and finance industries. Attendees will be provided with an inside look at the research that statisticians in these companies get involved in and career opportunities for you to consider!

Register for this Event Today!

Each presenter will have 15 minutes to address the following general topics:

1. What are the job opportunities for statisticians/data scientists/analysts in your company?
2. Describe the range of skills statisticians/data scientists/analysts need to succeed in your company?
3. What is the career path for statisticians/data scientists/analysts in your company?
4. Is your firm currently hiring statisticians/data scientists/analysts?
5. What advice would you give to students based on your experience?

UPCOMING EVENT: NISS WRITING WORKSHOP FOR EARLY RESEARCHERS!

The National Institute of Statistical Sciences (NISS) has been hosting the Writing Workshop for Early Researchers since 2007!

Each year, in conjunction with JSM, NISS gathers a host of senior authors, editors, grant writers/reviewers—individuals who take valuable time out of their day to share their advice and experiences with a group of junior faculty and early researchers. Evidence of the value of this workshop experience can be judged by:

1) the number of experienced, senior statisticians, authors and editors that have volunteered for years on end to share their wisdom and advice and 2) the number of session contributors that were once actual participants in the workshop!

Writing Workshop in 2022? You bet!

It is never too late to think about who might benefit next from this workshop at JSM 2022. Keep your eye on the NISS website or subscribe to our newsletter for all of the latest information about this and other professional development activities!

Virtual or In-Person? NISS is already in the planning stages for this year’s Writing Workshop for Early Researchers 2022! You should be planning for it too!

Keep your eye on NISS Events webpage for the latest information!

NISS Affiliates - As you plan your next event, make sure you consider NISS Co-Sponsorship! The sooner you decide, the sooner NISS can start advertising for you!

Become a Sponsor of NISS Hosted Events!

NISS invites corporations, institutions and individuals to sponsor events that are hosted by NISS. Sponsorship helps to defray the cost of organizing events and is a great way to give your organization visibility that targets statisticians and other related professions who attend NISS events! Learn More!
Postdocs Share Experiences at Graduate Student Network Event

On Thursday, Jan 27, the NISS Graduate Student Network hosted a very informative panel discussion where to hear and learn about postdoctoral positions in statistics. This panel of current and former postdoctoral fellows shared many reasons you might consider a postdoctoral position after graduation.

Panelists for this event included Dr. Whitney Huang (former postdoc), Assistant Professor at Clemson University Department of Mathematics and Statistics, Dr. Dayu Sun, Postdoctoral Fellow at Emory University Department of Biostatistics, Dr. Yibo Xu, Postdoctoral Fellow at Clemson University Department of Mathematics and Statistics, and Dr. Guillermo Basulto-Elias, Center for Transportation Research and Education, Iowa State University. This session was moderated by Hannah Waddel, Biostatistics and Bioinformatics Graduate Student at Emory University and NISS Graduate Student Network Executive Committee Member.

The panelists each introduced themselves and answered questions in an open discussion. They each shared why they decided to take a postdoc position and their responsibilities in the postdoc position.

National Labs in the Spotlight for this Month’s Virtual Career Fair!

Another exciting NISS Virtual Career Fair took place with presentations that shared helpful information and insight about the National Labs. This career fair took place Wednesday, January 19, 2022 from 12-1:30 pm ET with much excitement from our audience. We certainly learned a lot from this session!

NISS assembled three senior statisticians who shared their extensive knowledge on working in these specialized federal laboratories. These speakers included Nancy McMillan from Battelle, Emily Michele Casletonos (LANL) from Los Alamos, and Gabriel Huerta from Sandia.

Seiyon (Ben) Lee with the Department of Statistics at George Mason University Volgenau School of Engineering moderated the session, and introduced each of the speakers before their presentations. Each presenter gave a 15-minute presentation to describe jobs for statisticians and data scientists in their setting, their own personal career journey, and advice they provided to prospective applicants and graduate students.

Virtual Career Fair Examines Career Opportinutes in Government Agencies

Once again, NISS gathered senior statisticians sharing advice with their extensive experience working in the federal government. In addition, these individuals have graciously made it a priority to share their experiences so that others may better understand and be better prepared for working for a federal agency. They described the range of skills of statisticians/data scientists/analysts needed to succeed in their agencies, the career paths, and advice they had for students based on their own experiences.

Our speakers for the day’s session included Jeffrey Gonzalez with the Economic Research Service (ERS), Victoria Bryant with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Victoria’s colleague at the IRS, Bridgette L. Dinkins, chimed in during the live Q&A session at the event. Daniel Friel, Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) was the moderator during this session.
NISS CALL FOR 2022 JEROME SACKS AWARD

Nominations are being sought for the 2022 National Institute of Statistical Sciences (NISS) Jerome Sacks Award for Outstanding Cross-Disciplinary Research. The prize recognizes sustained, high-quality, cross-disciplinary research involving the statistical and data sciences. An award of $1,000 will be presented during the National Institute of Statistical Sciences reception at the Joint Statistical Meetings (JSM) in Washington, D.C. August 6-11, 2022.

To nominate an individual, submit as one PDF document the following information to officeadmin@niss.org by April 1, 2022:

- Nomination letter (maximum two pages)
- Supporting letters from two individuals (other than nominator)
- The Nominee’s most current CV

Send questions or comments to officeadmin@niss.org

Past award recipients represent the cutting edge in statistical research. Recent recipients Marc Suchard, Professor of Computational Medicine, Biostatistics and Human Genetics at the UCLA (2021 Sacks Award Recipient), Francesca Dominici, the Clarence James Gamble Professor of Biostatistics, Population and Data Science at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, and Co-Director of the Data Science Initiative at Harvard University (2020 Sacks Award Recipient) and Jeremy Taylor, the Pharmacia Research Professor of Biostatistics, Computational Medicine and Bioinformatics at the University of Michigan (2019 Sacks Award Recipient) were invited to be the featured speakers at an invited session hosted by NISS at JSM.

This session will focus on the new developments and challenges in the cross-disciplinary research on health data science. Nowadays, statisticians and biostatisticians actively collaborate with biomedical scientists, computer scientists, and mathematicians to work at the frontier of biological, medical, and public health research. Transdisciplinary collaboration not only develops the foundations of Health Data Science but also accelerates the pace of scientific discovery and innovation. James Rosenberger (Director, National Institute of Statistical Sciences) will serve as the discussant.

CALL FOR PROPOSALS FOR NEW INGRAM OLKIN FORUMS

Statistics Serving Society

Do you have a research topic of particular social concern that could benefit from the attention of other researchers? Ingram Olkin Forums (IOF) aim to promote statistics in service to society and bring statisticians into areas of important national interest where they are not already well represented. Great candidate proposals will envision presentations that encourage future collaborative work. Financial needs and locations can be discussed with the IOF committee. More information on IOFs is summarized here along with examples from past forums and Tips for Planning a Forum. Send questions to officeadmin@niss.org.

The Unplanned Clinical Trial Disruptions forums held last year spawned four working groups to prepare publications, including a special issue dedicated to the use of Randomization Tests in Clinical Trials. Please see this link for more information about contributing articles

Timeline for Submitting and Reviewing Proposals

There are two deadlines per year, March 30 and Sept 30, for submissions via officeadmin@niss.org. The proposal review committee will meet April 20 and Oct 20, and respond within a month. Accepted proposals may be scheduled throughout the coming year; those not accepted may be revised based on feedback and resubmitted for the next cycle.

For the April deadline, online forums could be scheduled for the fall (Sep-Nov) and in-person forums could be scheduled for Winter (Dec-Feb). For the Sept deadline, the online forums could be scheduled to begin in Spring (Mar-May) of the following year, and in-person forums could be scheduled to begin in the Summer (June-Aug). Hybrid in-person and online forums will be considered. Special consideration may be given to time-constrained opportunities.
In our last NISS Affiliate Update we provided an overview of the type of research that NISS Research Associates are involved in. We are following this up with a more indepth and technical view of this work. Our first installment here is from NISS Research Fellow Ya Mo.

**The Impact of Writing Prompts on English Language-Learners’ Writing Performance**

One of my research interests is to study predictors of students’ performance and items’ functioning in large-scale assessments using psychometric measures and quantitative methods. In one of our current papers “The impact of writing prompts on English language learners’ writing performance,” with colleagues from Boise State University and the National Institute of Statistical Sciences, we examined 2007 and 2011 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data for features of writing prompts that might have impacted English Language Learners (ELLs) and non-ELLs differently using a combination of differential item functioning (DIF) and textual analysis.

Because all DIF analyses needed to be conditioned on students’ ability in parametric or nonparametric ways, the five plausible values, which were random draws from students’ individual estimated ability distribution in NAEP data, became less ideal but one of the few possible options. We compared the results from using the five plausible values as conditioning variables and those from using the sum scores of the two prompts that students wrote in response to and the item response theory (IRT) person ability estimates using the generalized partial credit model from the two prompt scores; except for a couple of cases, the results were consistent. Thus, students’ plausible values were used as the conditioning variable for the subsequent analyses.

We used two methods—Standardized Mean Difference (SMD) and logistic regression with residual analyses—to detect DIF in the prompts. SMD required that students’ observed scores, or in this case, students’ plausible abilities, were categorized into groups, and the means of ELL and non-ELLs’ essay scores were compared within that group.

The logistic regression method employed in this study was the proportional odds-ratio model. We used a three-step modeling process based on logistic regression (Zumbo, 1999) as a main method of analysis, along with a residual-based procedure similar to Breland et al.’s (2004) residual analyses design. We dichotomized the polytomous essay scores into five binary variables according to the cumulative logit dichotomization scheme. The five dichotomized essay variables were simultaneously regressed on one of the plausible values for each examinee, the ELL group indicator, and the ability-by-group interaction variable in a step-wise fashion. After the nested models were fitted to the data, we compared the model-data fit (chi-square statistics) and the size of R square coefficients.

Meanwhile, we calculated the expected essay scores for each examinee through ordinal logistic regression using only the plausible value and calculated the residual scores by subtracting the expected essay score from their observed essay score, separately for both the ELL and non-ELL groups. We then computed the residual-based effect sizes by dividing the mean residual score difference between ELL and non-ELL groups by the pooled standard deviation of the residual scores for both groups to gauge the amount of the group difference.

Aligned with previous research on writing assessment, we created a coding taxonomy that examined the rhetorical specificity, cohesion, word use, and cultural accommodation of the prompts. Two researchers (with expertise in language development and literacy instruction) coded the prompts with the prompt coding taxonomy independently and provided qualitative feedback about the prompts describing whether or not they felt the prompts might favor a particular group of students.

We then used Coh-Metrix 3.0 (McNamara et al., 2014) to compare and contrast the wording and text structures of the eleven prompts. The Coh-Metrix’s detailed technical analysis result based on the 108 measures complemented the experts’ judgment by providing information on the number and length of words, sentences, and paragraphs, statistics for cohesion analysis, a detailed index of frequencies of different parts of speech used, a “Flesch Reading Ease” score, and “Coh-Metrix L2 Readability”.

Based on the DIF and textual analysis, the prompts identified as functioning differently for ELLs and non-ELLs varied in syntactic simplicity, word concreteness, connectivity, and coherence. The results suggest that providing ELLs and non-ELLs with a fair opportunity to respond to writing prompts involves the words in prompts being concrete and specific; the sentences containing different forms of coreference and all sorts of connectives; the text being coherent through anaphor references. In addition, specific rhetorical properties should be identified explicitly and an adequate culturally relevant context and explanation of cultural phenomena should be provided for students.

**New Research Positions at NISS beginning Spring and Summer 2022!**

**RESEARCH THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE**

Early career researchers at NISS have the opportunity to work with research leaders to develop innovative data science technology and statistical modeling methodology. The focus is on high impact problems, from formulation to solution, leading to implementation. Senior mentors are nationally or internationally recognized leaders in the statistical and data sciences.

NISS research makes a difference by developing innovative data science technology and statistical modeling methodology. Projects are variously located at NISS-DC, at a NISS Affiliate or NISS university-hub, or at a federal statistical agency.

NISS Research Associates are highly successful and publish and present their research regularly. As testimony to their research on high-priority challenges, NISS Research Associates continue to receive awards both for individual contributions and for work with multidisciplinary teams, especially for methodology for defining key national statistics and indicators.

NISS appointments are for one year with expectation of renewal. Positions are open as early as March 2022. Applicants must be able to work in a multidisciplinary context and bring statistical theory and data science technology to a research team with the goal of formulating a comprehensive technical approach problem solving. For some NISS positions, US citizenship may be required.

Read more about this position - Apply Today!
**UPCOMING EVENTS!**

**FEBRUARY**

**How to be a Good Mentor**

*Event Date:* Friday, February 25, 2022 - 12 pm to 1:30 pm ET  
*Event Type:* Webinar

Offering good mentorship is often an important hallmark of a successful career, be it in academia, industry or government. Yet mentoring can be a rather challenging task, especially when you are starting your career and trying to balance other responsibilities such as research, teaching and service... *(read more)*

**MARCH**

**29th Annual Morris Hansen Lecture - Virtual**

*Event Date:* Tuesday, March 1, 2022 3:30 pm - 5:30 pm ET  
*Event Type:* Online Panel Discussion & Q&A

Working with Non-Probability Samples: Assessing and Remediating Bias. Courtney Kennedy, Director of Survey Research, Pew Research Center “Exploring the Assumption That Online Opt-in Respondents Are Answering in Good Faith”. Yan Li, Professor, Joint... *(read more)*

**NISS Statistically Accurate Interactive Displays ... in Graphics!**

*Registration Due Date:* March 7, 2022  
*Event Type:* Graduate Student Competition

Do you love to make insightful discoveries in education data and cutting-edge visualizations to display them? NISS has a NEW COMPETITION FOR YOU! Great examples of data visualization and interactive graphics are popping up everywhere! See the examples collected at these sites: The 34 Best... *(read more)*

**Virtual Career Fair - Insurance & Finance Companies**

*Event Date:* Wednesday, March 9, 2022 - 12 noon - 1:30 pm ET  
*Event Type:* Webinar

Interested in a statistics or data science position in the insurance or finance industry sector? Then this session should interest you! NISS hosts Career Fair sessions that focus on academic positions, others on positions in government agencies and industry. This session will describe ... *(read more)*

**APRIL**

**14th Annual Conference on Statistical Issues in Clinical Trials: Subgroup Analysis**

*Event Date:* April 12, 2022, 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM ET  
*Event Location:* University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia

Conference Theme is Subgroup Analysis in Clinical Trials: Opportunities and Challenges. Registration is open! Speakers and panelists listed! *(read more)*

**Virtual Career Fair - Pharmaceutical Companies**

*Event Date:* Wednesday, April 13, 2022 - 12 noon - 1:30 pm ET  
*Event Type:* Webinar

The pharmaceutical industry provides interesting and challenging career and research opportunities for statisticians and data scientists. Is work in the pharmaceutical sector something that you would like to know more about? Then this session is for you! NISS hosts Career Fair sessions that focus ... *(read more)*

**MAY**

**Virtual Career Fair - Academic Departments**

*Event Date:* Wednesday, May 11, 2022 - 12 noon - 1:30 pm ET  
*Event Type:* Webinar

Interested in pursuing a career as a statistician at an academic institution? Then you won't want to miss this next career fair sponsored by NISS that will offer essential information about job opportunities for statisticians/data scientists in different academic environments. This session... *(read more)*

**NISS Graduate Student Network - 2nd Annual Research Conference**

*Event Date:* May 14-15, 2022 12 - 5 pm ET  
*Event Type:* Online Conference

The NISS Graduate Student Network is very excited once again to announce a two-day graduate student research conference! The first conference took place in June of 2021 and was a resounding success! This second conference will be a two-day event and take place on May 14 and 15, 2021, from noon - 5... *(read more)*

**JUNE**

**ISBIS CONFERENCE 2022 on “Statistics and Data Science in Business and Industry”**

*Event Date:* June 20-21, 2022  
*Event Type:* Conference

The ISBIS CONFERENCE 2022 on “Statistics and Data Science in Business and Industry” will take place at University of Napoli Federico II in Naples June 20-21, 2022. The Program and Organizing Committees hope to offer the opportunity to meet in person to share perspectives on the newest developments... *(read more)*

**AUGUST**

**2022 NISS Writing Workshop for Junior Researchers**

*Event Date:* August, 2022  
*Event Type:* Workshop

Once again this very popular short course will be hosted by NISS. If you are a recent graduate of a doctoral program and want to improve your communication skills - then this event is for you! “Thanks for organizing the writing workshop! We are very glad that we attended the workshop. We learned... *(read more)*

**International Total Survey Error Workshop (ITSEW) 2022**

*Event Date:* 31 August - 2 September, 2022  
*Event Location:* University of Manchester, UK

Theme: “Total Error in Official Statistics: Current Practices and New Methods.” The International Total Survey Error Workshop 2022 will take place from the 31st of August through the 2nd September 2022. It will be hosted by The Cathie Marsh Institute for Social Research and The Social Statistics Department,... *(read more)*

**Check the NISS Events webpage for up to date event info!**
NISS continues to work to identify topics of interest to statisticians from all different sectors and then gather experts to contribute to a conversation that helps to not only inform but also provoke further thinking on these topics. Keep your eye on the NISS website for future events that might be of interest to you or your colleagues!

**AFFILIATES!**

**Send Your Job Announcements to NISS!**

A link to the Job Announcements page can be found at the bottom of every page of the NISS website! Share your announcement with other organizations associated with NISS or other visitors to our website.

https://www.niss.org/careers