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NISS Writing Workshop an Annual Success for Early Researchers

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Imagine you are a young faculty member or someone who has recently been hired as a statistician. You've worked harder than you ever thought possible and were duly awarded your PhD. You've perhaps worked a year or two in a new position that your degree made possible, but now the honeymoon is over! You look around and start thinking deeply about your future for the first time. The doubts and questions begin to creep in. *Can I make it in this new profession? How do I get my feet on the ground? How do I decide what is important?*

Okay. You tell yourself to relax. It's simple. You decide the best thing for you to do is reach out to about 25 well-known statisticians and senior editors of the best journals in your field. You can ask them to share their experiences with you and give you advice as your career lies before you. It would be good to know more about writing effectively, the review and revision process, where it makes sense to publish, and maybe even the collaborative writing process. You will even get one of them to mentor you and review something you are working on. That would be great! And, oh yes, you will make sure you have a few experienced grant writers, maybe even invite a few from granting agencies that oversee the review process. That would do it, right? Hmm ... You think, "Maybe I ought to finish off this dream by talking with a handful of individuals who beat the odds, individuals who have found their way and made a name for themselves despite not traveling the more traditional journey."

Wait. What? Time to wake up? This can't be possible! Or, can it?

In fact, the National Institute of Statistical Sciences (NISS) has been doing this 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. The dream described above is not a dream!

As you know, JSM went virtual this year. So did the writing workshop, which meant participants who might not have been able to travel to Philadelphia (even under normal circumstances) were able to participate. What also made this workshop a bit different than the larger webinars NISS has hosted lately is that participants were able to 'raise their hand' and use their microphone to ask questions live. This made for a much more interactive experience.

A virtual lunchtime was also included, which allowed participants to go to virtual breakout rooms with their senior mentor and discuss the publication pieces they have been working on. And for fun, toward the end of the conference (at the request of participants), random breakout rooms were created to give participants a chance to get to know each other.

During the first day of the workshop, **Leland Wilkinson** of H2O.ai and the University of Illinois at Chicago gave an informative presentation, titled "Writing for Data Science and Statistics," that focused on writing skills and the evaluation of good and bad writing.

Nick Jewell of the University of California at Berkeley and London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine gave a talk titled "Choosing Where to Publish (and Some Clues as to How to Get Published)."

Lingzhou Xue of NISS and Penn State University moderated a panel of editors who shared advice about publishing in statistics and biostatistics journals. The panelists included **Xuming He** of the University of Michigan, **Nicole Lazar** of the University of Georgia and Penn State University, **Tyler McCormick** of the University of Washington, **David Rocke** of the University of California at Davis, and **Hal Stern** of the University of California at Irvine.

On the second day of the workshop, **Naomi Altman** of Penn State University gave a talk titled "The Review and Revision Process." She was followed by **Susan Ellenberg** of the University of Pennsylvania with "How to Write a Collaborative Paper." **Peter Imrey** of the Cleveland Clinic rounded out the morning with an insightful presentation titled "Ethical Issues and Reproducibility."

The afternoon panel sessions started with practical approaches to writing grants moderated by **Keith Crank** and included panelists **Cheryl Eavey** of the National Science Foundation, **Karen Messer** of the National Institutes of Health and University of California at San Diego, and **Judy Wang** of the National Science Foundation and Georgia Washington University).

A second panel explored issues related to personal career advancement. Speakers included **Emma Benn** of the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, **Edsel Peña** of the University of South Carolina, **Ali Shojaie** of the University of Washington, and Wang.

Noteworthy is the time senior statisticians take to focus on a piece of writing participants are working on. The following served as mentors this year: **Jim Albert** of Bowling Green State University (retired); **Roger Berger** of Arizona State University (retired); **Tim Hesterberg** of Google; **Gabriel Huerta** of Sandia National Laboratories; **Aleksandra Slavkovic** of Penn State University; and **John Stufken** of The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

The value of this workshop can be measured by the number of speakers and mentors who, early in their careers, were participants of this same workshop.

NISS will continue to organize this event in conjunction with JSM. Visit the NISS website for information about [next year's writing workshop in Seattle, Washington](#).