What's New with CAUSEweb and MERLOT?

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CAUSE Website

Relieve some of your stress from setting and grading midterms by paying a visit to the News section of the CAUSE website (https://www.causeweb.org/) and staying up to date on all the current happenings! Recently posted announcements include the *2015 Undergraduate Statistics Project Competition,* the *Taming of Chance Story Competition*, a recently released *Statistics Education Research Report*, the *CAUSEweb Facebook group*, and *Project-SET: Statistics Education for Teachers*. Check back often for more updates!

USCOTS '15 Preview

USCOTS is almost here! The theme in 2015 will be "*Making Connections,*" and will take place May 28-30th, with workshops starting on May 26th. USCOTS '15 will be held at the Penn Stater Hotel and Conference Center in State College Pennsylvania, http://www.thepennstaterhotel.psu.edu/.

Making connections is at the very core of what we do. As explained by the organizing committee at https://www.causeweb.org/uscots/uscots15/:

Helping students to make connections is one of the most challenging yet important aspects of effective teaching. Teachers of statistics strive to help their students to make connections with each other, to make connections among concepts in the course, and to make connections between statistics and other disciplines. Making professional connections can also help to enhance a statistics teacher's effectiveness, for example by making connections with other statistics teachers and with scholars in fields that use statistics. The challenge and usefulness of making connections will be the unifying theme of USCOTS '15.

Special features at USCOTS '15 include:
- Plenary sessions by national leaders in Undergraduate Statistics Education on current and emerging trends in research, curriculum, pedagogy, and resources
- Hands-on breakout sessions to incorporate new ideas into your courses
- Posters & Beyond sessions to exchange ideas on teaching and learning statistics
- Conference banquet
- Opportunities to meet other statistics teachers from a wide range of institutions and disciplines
- Pre-conference workshops to delve deeply into a specific statistics education innovation
- A fun, active atmosphere where everyone can be involved!

Conference attendees will be able to listen to four plenary speakers:

- **Jim Stigler**, Professor of Psychology and Associate Dean of Social Sciences at UCLA, and co-author of two popular books: *The Teaching Gap* and *The Learning Gap*. Professor Stigler will speak about, "*Teaching for Understanding: What Will It Take?*"

- **Roger Peng**, Associate Professor of Biostatistics at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Professor Peng and his colleagues developed a data science course taught through Coursera, and will speak about, "*The Role of MOOCs at the University: A Case Study with the Johns Hopkins Data Science Specialization.*"

- **Shonda Kuiper**, Associate Professor of Mathematics and Statistics at Grinnell College. With the help of several NSF grants, Professor Kuiper developed *Stat2Labs*, a valuable online resource featuring Web-based games to promote statistical thinking and the process of scientific enquiry, and which received the MERLOT Classics Award in 2012. She will speak about, "*Making Statistics Relevant in a Data-Rich Society.*"

- **Michael Posner**, Associate Professor of Statistics at Villanova University. Professor Posner's research has been funded by several government agencies and has more than two dozen publications. In recognition for outstanding and innovative teaching, he has received awards from Villanova University, the MAA and the ASA. At USCOTS '15, Professor Posner will speak about "*Statistics Education Research: It Takes a Village*."

USCOTS '15 is co-sponsored by the National Institute for Statistical Sciences (NISS). Early registration is $180 until April 1st (thereafter $220), and it includes a choice of pre-conference workshops, the conference banquet, and numerous educational and networking opportunities!

Recent CAUSEweb Webinars

CAUSEweb offers three webinar series: Activity Series, Teaching and Learning Series and Journal of Statistics Education Series. Below is a list of the most recent webinars from each series. The slides of the presentations as well as the recorded webinar are available for viewing at the indicated websites.

Teaching and Learning Webinar Series

These webinars present general topics in statistics education and are usually held on the <u>second</u> Tuesday of the month. Hosted by Ellen Gundlach of Purdue University since 2012.
- "Statistics and society: Updating the curriculum of an introductory statistical literacy course for the modern student" by Ellen Gundlach, https://www.causeweb.org/webinar/teaching/2015-03.
- "Teaching precursors to data science in introductory and second courses in statistics", by with Nicholas J. Horton, Amherst College, https://www.causeweb.org/webinar/teaching/2015-02.

If you would like to present a webinar, please contact Ellen Gundlach at gundlach@purdue.edu.

Journal of Statistics Education Series

These webinars present highlights from the most recent issue of the Journal of Statistics Education and are usually held on the <u>third</u> Tuesday of the month. Hosted by the associate editors of the Journal of Statistics Education.
- "The median has a balance representation, too!" by Lawrence M. Lesser and Amy E. Wagler, The University of Texas at El Paso, https://www.causeweb.org/webinar/jse/2015-03/.
- "The development and evolution of an introductory statistics course for in-service middle-level mathematics teachers" by Kendra K. Schmid and Erin Blankenship, University of Nebraska, https://www.causeweb.org/webinar/jse/2015-02/.

Activity Webinar Series

These webinars present individual activities with complete do-it-yourself guidance and are usually held on the <u>fourth</u> Tuesday of the month. Hosted by Leigh Johnson, Capital University.
- "Low Tech, Low Cost, Low Time, High Payoff Activities," by André Michelle Lubecke, Lander University, https://www.causeweb.org/webinar/activity/2015-03/.

If you would like to present a webinar, please contact Leigh Johnson at ljohnson2@capital.edu.

Resource Highlight

If you've been wanting to introduce your students to the statistical software program R, or perhaps learn it yourself, a new resource at http://swirlstats.com/ is worth looking into.

With the tag line "Learn R, in R," swirl is an open source package that is activated within the R console. With just the base package, students can choose from 14 interactive lessons, beginning with "Basic Building Blocks" and continuing up through "Simulation" and "Base Graphics." Other, more advanced courses using swirl are available through the GitHub repository (https://github.com/swirldev/swirl), and the website includes resources and instructions for creating your own lessons and contributing to the community.

MERLOT News

The MERLOT blog has several posts relating to *Open Education Resources*, including Web-based textbooks and whether "*Open*" really is the same as "*Free*." To read and discuss these and other articles, visit http://blog.merlot.org/. To stay in touch, follow MERLOT on your choice of Twitter, Facebook and Youtube!

Statistics Portal

The MERLOT Statistics Portal is a joint project with CAUSE and provides easy access to statistics education resources with both organizations. Browse and/or contribute learning materials (and more) at http://statistics.merlot.org/.

The 8th MERLOT annual conference on *Emerging Technologies for Online Learning* will take place April 22-24, 2015 in Dallas, TX. For more details, check the conference website, http://olc.onlinelearningconsortium.org/conference/2015/et4online/welcome.

The Journal of Online Learning and Teaching (JOLT)

Two recent articles from the Journal of Online Learning and Teaching (JOLT) may be of general interest to statistics educators. From Volume 10, Number 3, "Impact of Instructor Intervention on the Quality and Frequency of Student Discussion Posts in a Blended Classroom," by Cheryl A. Murphy and Russell A. Fortner, (http://jolt.merlot.org/vol10no3/Murphy_0914.pdf) describes a quasi-experimental study in a large instructional technology course. Students in both the "treatment" sections and "control" sections were assigned three online discussion topics. In the treatment sections, structured instructor postings were included during the discussion period, while in the control sections, students were left on their own after the initial instructions. The paper provides interesting insight for instructors of blended or online courses as well as an interesting study design that could be discussed in a statistics or research methods class.

For instructors involved in universal design for course materials, the position paper, "Color and Contrast in E-Learning Design: A Review of the Literature and Recommendations for Instructional Designers and Web Developers," by Rick T. Richardson, Tara L. Drexler, and Donna M. Delparte (http://jolt.merlot.org/vol10no4/Richardson_1214.pdf) may be of interest. The paper discusses the choice of color in webpages and e-learning tools and provides some resources for checking the accessibility of websites, particularly for people with visual impairments. By simply selecting different colors for the graphics and presentations we create, we can make our online resources useful to a wider range of students.