

ELWERT PRESENTED INAUGURAL CAUSALITY IN STATISTICS EDUCATION AWARD

*Award Established by Judea Pearl to Promote Teaching of
Basic Causal Inference in Introductory Statistics Courses*

MONTRÉAL, QUÉBEC, CANADA, August 5, 2013—**Felix Elwert**, the Vilas Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, is the first honoree of the American Statistical Association’s (ASA) new Causality in Statistics Education Award.

The award is presented to an individual or team that does the most to enhance the teaching and learning of causal inference in statistics. It was established by Judea Pearl to highlight the growing importance of introducing core elements of causal inference into undergraduate and lower-division graduate classes in statistics. Pearl—who is a longtime ASA member, recipient of the 2012 Turing Award and professor of computer science and statistics at the University of California, Los Angeles—donated \$15,000 from his Turing Award prize to fund this new ASA award this year, next year and in 2015.

The award of \$5,000 and a plaque was presented to Elwert last night during a special awards ceremony at the 2013 Joint Statistical Meetings (JSM 2013) in Montréal, Québec, Canada.

“It is my hope that the ASA Causality in Statistics Education Award will stimulate the generation of effective course material that will convince every statistics instructor that causation is easy and he or she, too, can teach it for fun and profit,” said Pearl in explaining his motivations for establishing the new award. “The fun comes from showing students how simple mathematical tools can answer questions that Pearson-Fisher-Neyman could not begin to address and the profit comes from the fact that most customers of statistics ask causal, not associational, questions.”

Elwert was honored for an innovative two-day course he developed on causal inference with directed acyclic graphs. The course is offered to graduate-level students and applied quantitative researchers in the nonexperimental social and biomedical sciences. It covers a review of counterfactual causal concepts; principles of directed acyclic graphs; nonparametric identification by conditioning; conceptual differences between confounding, over-control and selection bias; and examples and exercises.

Slides for the main sections of Elwert's short course spanning approximately eight lecture hours and accompanying publications are available at www.ssc.wisc.edu/~felwert/causality.

Honorable mentions were presented to **Tyler VanderWeele** of the Harvard School of Public Health for his class notes on methods for mediation and interaction and **Richard Schienes** and **Steven Klepper** of Carnegie Mellon University for their course, titled “Empirical Research Methods for the Social Sciences.”

The ASA Causality in Statistics Education Award received a prominent endorsement in early July, when Microsoft Research announced a gift of \$5,000 to support this new award.

“We enthusiastically support ASA’s Causality in Statistics Education Award. We’re excited about advances in causal inference and believe that future waves of innovation will be catalyzed by providing effective education about principles and applications of causal reasoning,” said Eric Horvitz, distinguished scientist and managing co-director of Microsoft Research.

About JSM

JSM, held annually since 1974, is conducted jointly by the **American Statistical Association (ASA)**, **Statistical Society of Canada (SSC)**, **International Biometric Society (ENAR and WNAR)**, **Institute of Mathematical Statistics (IMS)**, **International Chinese Statistical Association**, **Korean International Statistical Society**, **International Society for Bayesian Analysis**, and **International Indian Statistical Association**. JSM activities include oral presentations, panel sessions, poster presentations, continuing-education courses, an exhibit hall (with state-of-the-art statistical products and opportunities), a career placement service, society and section business meetings, committee meetings, social activities and networking opportunities. JSM 2014 will be held in Boston, where the ASA was founded in 1839.

About the American Statistical Association

The American Statistical Association is the world’s largest community of statisticians and the second-oldest continuously operating professional society in the United States. Its members serve in industry, government and academia in more than 90 countries, advancing research and promoting sound statistical practice to inform public policy and improve human welfare. For additional information about the American Statistical Association, please visit the ASA website at www.amstat.org.

###

For more information:

Jeffrey A. Myers

Office: (703) 684-1221, Ext. 1865; Mobile: (540) 623-7777

Email: Jeffrey@amstat.org