

THE BIOSTAT NEWS

July 2006

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Volume 4, Issue 1

Greetings from the Chair

It is hard to believe that it is July already and time for another issue of *The Biostat News*. I'd like to begin by thanking our editor, Heonia Hillock for putting this issue together. I hope you will enjoy reading about things at Michigan and about faculty, staff, students and alumni associated with the Department. Many of you have asked to see reports on more of your fellow



alumni in the newsletter, and there are several alumni highlighted in this issue. If you would be willing to be part of the next Alumni Spotlight section, please let us know; we are happy to be informed of career changes, marriages, children, liaisons,

lottery wins and any other key events in your lives. Also, if you know of another alumna or alumnus whom you feel we should contact for a contribution, let us know and we will make an invitation. As always, we would welcome any suggestions you might have for developing further our alumni or other programs.

In only six short weeks, we will have the renewal of another academic year and will welcome 24 new residential students to the Department. Of these, eleven are entering the doctoral program and 13 are entering the MS or MPH programs. With these additions and our continuing residential and OJ/OC students, we are expecting a total enrollment of about 145 students this year. As noted elsewhere in this issue, we are also excited about welcoming five new faculty members to the Department.

I would also like to report on our efforts in fundraising, and especially in seeking support for our scholarship and student support programs. We are still early in the process of developing a strong scholarship

program, but our premier fund, the Richard G. Cornell Scholarship Fund now stands at about \$280,000 and has been growing at a steadily increasing rate. We are now able to fund a one term scholarship out of the proceeds and we hope to build the fund further. We have appreciated support from faculty, students, alumni and staff, and I hope that each reader will consider making an investment in Biostatistics at Michigan. There are regular fundraising drives that you will undoubtedly see in your mailbox. Or, you can make a contribution by going to <http://www.giving.umich.edu/where/units/publichealth.htm> and choosing the Biostatistics fund of your choice.

I took the position as Chair of Biostatistics in January, 2002. This is a terrific Department and it has been a pleasure working with many outstanding members of the faculty and staff. It has also been a great pleasure to get to know so many students and alumni. I followed Rod Little as Chair and inherited a Department whose members were working so very well together, that was making a real mark on the national and international scene, and that was on a steep trajectory. The Department has continued to grow in its research and teaching mission and continues to be a premier department in the world. Within the School of Public Health and the University, it is an outstanding contributor in terms of its research income, enrollment, teaching excellence, reputation and the strength of its students.

To give an idea of the growth of the Department, it is interesting to look back over the past five years. In that time, the Department will have made 15 new faculty appointments. With departures taken into

account, the number of faculty has increased by about nine. In the same period, our student enrollment has increased by 35% and all of our programs remain very healthy as we continue to attract outstanding students. In those five years, research activity has continued to grow at a rapid pace with many new linkages to other parts of the campus. As one measure, the Department's research funding has grown by about 60% to a current level of approximately ten million dollars in total extramural funding. All in all, it has been a great experience to be involved in the Department, and as Chair, I have enjoyed every minute. (Well, almost every minute.)

After some thought, however, I have decided that I would prefer to return to a role of teaching and research at the completion of my five year term in December. I had also served as Chair and as Dean at the University of Waterloo before coming to Michigan, and in sum, I will have spent 19 years in university administration, so it seems time for a change. As noted elsewhere in the newsletter, Rod Little will become Chair as of January 1, 2007. It is great to have such a distinguished predecessor and successor. Rod will again do a tremendous job for the Department, and I am looking forward to working with him.

So, all of that was a long about way to say that this is my last message to you as the Chair of the Department of Biostatistics. I have greatly appreciated the support of faculty, staff, students and alumni during this period and I look forward to continuing to work with all of you.

With best wishes,

Jack Kalbfleisch

Alumni Spotlight

We've started receiving more requests from alumni to be featured in our newsletter, but we still want to hear from more of you! Please contact our Student Administration office at 734-615-9812 or hillockh@umich.edu to share information about job changes, research projects, marriages, births, moves, awards, promotions, and whatever you want us to know.

• After graduating with an MS in Biostatistics from the U-M in 1997, **Jaywant Mandrekar** obtained his PhD in Biostatistics



from the Ohio State University in 2002. Since then, he joined the Division of Biostatistics at the Mayo Clinic, Rochester, MN. Jay is the lead statistician for the Departments of

Radiology, Neurology, Infectious Diseases and Clinical Microbiology at the Mayo Clinic. He is involved in multiple clinical trials, population studies and NIH grants in these areas. He has also been active in organizing sessions and presenting his research at the statistical conferences each year. His wife, Sumithra, is also a PhD statistician and works at the Mayo Clinic.

• **Paul Chan** has started his first year of cardiology fellowship since finishing OJ/OC in 2005 and is continuing to do research projects as they pertain to cost-effectiveness analyses, prediction models for sudden cardiac death, and assessment of statin benefit in high-risk patients. He has had nine items accepted for publication since starting OJ/OC, recently won first place in the Young Investigator Award competition at the Annual American College of Cardiology conference (March, '06 in Atlanta), and had one of his publications awarded the Parmley Prize from the Journal of the American College of Cardiology, which is awarded to the two best manuscripts each year by a junior faculty or fellow.

• **Courtney Thornburg** graduated from our OJ/OC MS program in 2005. She is an Assistant Professor of Pediatrics in the Division of Hematology/Oncology at Duke University Medical Center. She is part of the Duke Hemostasis and Thrombosis Center

which is one of the eight pilot thrombophilia program sites funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and participates in the NHLBI sponsored Transfusion Medicine and Clinical Trials Research Network. She continues to develop her own research interest in pediatric hemostasis and thrombosis. She is expecting her second child in August.



• **Beth Hauser** is currently an Associate Research Professor in the Center for Human Genetics at Duke University School of Medicine. She has been there since 1998, when she graduated with her PhD from UM. Following in Mike Boehnke's footsteps, she is attempting to combine statistical methods development for human disease gene mapping with applications to genetic studies of cardiovascular disease. She feels it is a very exciting time to be doing genetics research. She spends her time away from work with her husband, Mike, and children, Theo and Anna. She also discovered a fondness for singing at Mike Boehnke's FUSION research meetings so she joined the Women's Voices Chorus in Chapel Hill.

• **Menggang Yu** graduated with his PhD from our Department in 2003 and is currently an Assistant Professor at the Department of Medicine/Biostatistics of Indiana University School of Medicine. He is the leading statistician for Hoosier Oncology Group for which he supervises/advises statistics up to 20 protocols annually. His current research concentrates on alternative methods to Cox regression in Survival analysis, clinical trials, and causal inference.

• **Joel Greenhouse** (PhD, 1983; MPH, 1977) is Professor of Statistics at Carnegie Mellon University, and Adjunct Professor of Psychiatry and Epidemiology at the University of Pittsburgh. He is an editor of the journal *Statistics in Medicine* and the past editor of the *Institute of Mathematical Statistics' Lecture Notes and Monograph Series*. His research interests, inspired in part by Dr. Cornell, include the use of Bayesian methods in practice, especially for the analysis of clinical trials data and for meta-analysis. Joel is married to Pam, a hospital administrator. They have

two children Rebecca and Zachary.

• **Dr. Linda Brubaker** put her OJ/OC skills (2003-2005) to immediate use to advancing the state of the science for women's pelvic floor disorders. During her OJ/OC coursework, Dr. Brubaker was leading a large surgical trial in cooperation with the Pelvic Floor Disorders Network (NICHD) Data Coordinating Center at University of Michigan (Morton Brown, PhD, P.I.). The results of this trial were just published as the lead article in the April 13 *New England Journal of Medicine*. In addition to her recent funding renewal as PI for the Pelvic Floor Disorders Network, she is a P.I. for the Urinary Incontinence Treatment Network (NIDDK). In addition to her clinical duties, Dr. Brubaker was selected as the first Assistant Dean for Clinical and Translational Research at the Stritch School of Medicine, Loyola University, Chicago. A wonderful unanticipated effect of the OJ/OC program occurred during the four hours Dr. Brubaker spent driving back and forth to Ann Arbor. She developed a novel research education program to better train residents about clinical research. The CREST (Clinical Research Education Study Teams) program was recently implemented at Loyola.

• After completing her PhD from University of Michigan in 1981, **Dianne Finkelstein** took her first job at Rutgers University Statistics Department. In 1982, she moved to the Biostatistics Department at Harvard. Working at first in cancer and then AIDS research, she found the medical collaborations to be the most satisfying. Thus, in 1986, she took a position in the newly formed Biostatistics Center at the Massachusetts General Hospital. In 2004, Dianne was promoted to Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School (with a joint appointment as Professor in the Biostatistics.) Her daughter Laura is now attending the Master of Fine Arts program at Boston University as a painter. Her 32 year old son Danny completed a PhD at Brandeis University in 2005, and he and his wife Heather are expecting their first child this summer.



Five New Faculty Join Biostatistics

We were very successful last year in recruiting new faculty and we are welcoming five new faculty to the Department.

• **Sinae Kim** received her Ph.D. from Texas A&M University this year and will be



joining the Department as an Assistant Professor this Fall. While at Texas A & M, she was a member of Bioinformatics research group: Bayesian methods for Genomics. Her research focuses on the theory and practice of Bayesian variable selection & clustering method for genomic and proteomic data.

• **Bhramar Mukherjee** is also joining us as an Assistant Professor. She is a 2001 graduate of Purdue University and held a position as Assistant Professor of Statistics at the University of Florida for the past four years. Bhramar's interests include Bayesian methods and the analysis of epidemiological studies.



• **Alexander Tsodikov** is also joining the Department as Professor. Alex's interests include topics in bioinformatics as well as statistical methods in cancer research, survival analysis and cure models, and he comes to us from the University of California, Davis, where he has recently been promoted to Professor. Alex received his Ph.D. in Applied Mathematics in 1991 from St.



Petersburg State Technical University, Russia. He has had previous appointments at the University of Utah, the University of Liepzig and the Curie Institute in Paris.

• **Brisa Sanchez** is joining as Research Assistant Professor of Biostatistics. Brisa received her Ph.D. in Biostatistics in 2006 from Harvard University and has worked in problems in environmental and social epidemiology and has been investigating the

use of structural equation models. She will continue work in this area through links with researchers in the Department of Environmental Health Sciences.



• **Wen Ye** will also be joining as Research Assistant Professor. Wen is finishing her Ph.D. in Biostatistics here at Michigan and she is working in the joint modeling of



longitudinal and survival data. She has also worked on clinical trials as a GSRA. Wen's main responsibilities will be in projects related to the Biometrics Outcomes Research Core (BORC) and the Biostatistics Collaborative and Methodological Research Core (BCMRC) as well as in methodological research. With five new faculty, this is indeed a very exciting time and we all look forward to their arrivals.

Honors & Awards

We have the great pleasure of announcing several faculty promotions and honors.

• **Tim Johnson** has been promoted to Research Associate Professor. This is a very apt recognition of Tim's excellent contributions to statistical theory, particularly in Bayesian analysis, and his outstanding work as a collaborator on many projects at UM and elsewhere.



• **Jeremy Taylor** has been appointed as the Pharmacia and Upjohn Foundation Research Professorship of Biostatistics. This is research chair is funded in part by a 1996 endowment to Biostatistics. This is a very well deserved appointment and recognition of Jeremy's ongoing leadership in Biostatistics as well as his work as Associate Director of the Comprehensive Cancer Center.



• **Goncalo Abecasis** has been honored with the prestigious Pew Fellowship awarded by the PEW Scholars Program in the Biomedical Sciences. This program in the Biomedical Sciences is designed to support young investigators of outstanding promise in the basic and clinical sciences relevant to the advancement of human health. One nomination is invited from the presidents of each of a limited number of institutions selected on the basis of the scope of their work in biomedical research.



• **Doug Schaubel** is the 2005 recipient of the James E. Grizzle Distinguished Alumni Award from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill where he earned his PhD in 2002. Doug was presented with this award at the Bios Alumni Day held on Monday, April 3, 2006 in Chapel Hill. Congratulations to all of our outstanding faculty for their great achievements.



Jobs

We are again searching for excellent faculty and staff to join the Department. Detailed descriptions of open positions as well as application procedures can be found on the Department's website. Openings at the University as a whole can also be found on the new Career Portal <http://www.umich.edu/~jobs/>. The new website went live on May 22 and you can now apply online for positions across the U. If you are aware of any positions open in the Biostatistics field, we encourage you to pass them along to the Department via email at hillockh@umich.edu. We routinely pass along this information to our alumni list and the SPH Career Services office.

Staff Award

Amanda Ring was awarded the 2006 Excellence in Staff Service Award. This annual award is made to staff members that excel in their job within the School of Public Health. Amanda has been working in student services in Biostatistics for the past four years. She supports not only residential students but also coordinates the Department's successful On Job/On Campus (OJOC) program in Clinical



Research Design and Statistical Analysis (CRDSA). Many of the more recent alumni will undoubtedly remember Amanda and her very helpful approach. We congratulate Amanda

on her outstanding contributions to the Department and it is with regret that we have to say farewell to her as she leaves us as her family moves to Ohio. We wish Amanda luck in her future endeavors and thank her for her years of service to the Department.

Rod Little to become Chair

As noted, Rod Little will be take over the position as chair of the Department effective January 1, 2007 when Jack Kalbfleisch will complete his term. The department has been well-served by Jack's leadership, and his successes built upon those achieved during Rod's previous term as chair. The department's extraordinarily high quality leadership for many years now has undoubtedly contributed significantly to the excellence for which the department is known throughout the country. Many thanks to Jack for his many years of terrific service, and Rod for his willingness to serve again.



Graduation 2006

Graduation season is always an exciting one in Ann Arbor and this year was no exception.

Every year, the School of Public Health organizes the Graduating Student Gift Campaign. The campaign gives graduates the opportunity to give back to SPH before moving on with their careers. This year's theme, *It's Your Choice, Make It!*, encouraged students to decide what to support at U-M SPH. Graduates could make donations to various department specific and/or school-wide funds. The Class of 2006 more than tripled last year's participation rate with 86% of the graduates contributing gifts or pledges. All of the donations were matched by an anonymous alumni donor. Our Department had the largest jump in participation under the leadership of student champion Laura Roede and with the assistance of Jack Kalbfleisch, chair, and Amanda Ring, student administrative coordinator.

Convocation took place on April 28, 2006 at the Michigan Theater and was an exciting event for the Department. Twenty-one of our residential students graduated with their Master's degrees and of those, four will continue on to our doctoral program. Several doctoral students also participated in the ceremony to commemorate their years of hard work.

Biostatistics Class of 2006

MS Graduates
 Elizabeth Campagna
 Galen Cook-Wiens
 Jenny Fahrenheitz
 Yang Feng
 William Frame
 Wenjuan Gu
 Ying Guo
 Xiaobi Huang
 Jiyoung Lee
 Oliver Lee
 Shih-Yuan Lee
 Aaron Lobbestael
 Angie Qin
 Henry Robertson
 Laura Roede
 Yuan Tian
 Zhiyi Tian
 Lindsay Waite
 Wei Xie
 Xiaotong Zhang
 Wenjun Zhou

Doctoral Graduates
 Wei Chen
 Matthew Schipper
 Andrew Skol
 Wen Ye
 Yining Ye
 Zhangsheng Yu



Upcoming Events

• The U-M Biostatistics and Statistics Departments will be holding a joint **alumni reception** again at the **Joint Statistical Meetings**. The reception will be held on Tuesday, August 8, 5:30-7:30pm at the Grand Hyatt Seattle in the Princessa II Ballroom. All U-M Biostatistics and Statistics Department alumni, faculty, students, family and friends are welcome to attend. You may find more information regarding the event on our website.



• This year's **Annual Fall Picnic** will be held on Sunday, September 10, 11:00am-3:00pm at Burns Park in Ann Arbor. This is a potluck event with the Department providing hamburgers, veggie burgers, hotdogs, and beverages. All Biostatistics students, faculty, alumni, staff, family, and friends are invited to attend.

• The 2006 **SPH Prospective Student Information Day** will be held on Saturday, October 14 in SPH II. This event is intended to advertise the School and the various Departments by offering prospective students the opportunity to hear from and interact with faculty, staff, students and alumni. If you know of anybody who is interested in pursuing a degree in Biostatistics please let them know of the event or have them contact the Department at 734-615-9812 or hillockh@umich.edu. Also, if any alumni would be willing to give a 5-10 minute presentation on what they're doing with their degree, please let us know! Additional information regarding this event can be found online at http://www.sph.umich.edu/students/information_day.html.

University of Michigan
 School of Public Health
 Department of Biostatistics
 1420 Washington Heights, M4224
 Ann Arbor, 48109-2029

Phone: 734-615-9812
 Fax: 734-763-2215