Dean Isaacson retires as Department Head

After eighteen years at a position he initially considered temporary, Dean Isaacson is stepping down as the head of the Department of Statistics and director of the Statistical Laboratory.

History
On July 1, 1984 Isaacson became the acting director and acting head. He was the fifth person since 1933 to assume the position of director of the Statistical Laboratory. He followed George W. Snedecor, Raymond J. Jessen, T. A. Bancroft and Herbert A. David. (The Department of Statistics was not formed until 1947 so Dr. Snedecor did not hold the position of head of the department.)

When H. A. David stepped down, the search was on. Dean agreed to take the position on a temporary basis while a search for a permanent Department Executive Officer (DEO) was conducted. He was to continue in the position of acting for up to two years while an external search was to be held for a permanent DEO.

On July 1, 1986, at the end of the two-year search for a new DEO, Dean became the permanent DEO. “The faculty had voted to look outside the department for a new chair,” Isaacson recalled. “But since there was no open faculty position in the department, we had to conduct an internal search.” After eighteen years, it looks like that decision was a good one.

Accomplishments
During the years of Isaacson’s tenure, many positive accomplishments have taken place in the department. The success and growth of the department’s Masters program through Distance Education is high on Isaacson’s list. He’s also proud of the quality of the faculty members hired and maintained on staff during his tenure. And most recently, the National Science Foundation VIGRE grant which promotes interdisciplinary activity between the Department of Statistics and many other departments on campus, impacts the lives of undergraduates, graduates, post docs and faculty members alike.
**ISAACSON’S FUTURE WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT**

Students, faculty and alum do not need to be worried; Dean is stepping down only from the departmental head position. He plans to continue being an active force within the department. Dean’s heart has always belonged to the students and teaching and he will continue teaching and advising. He hopes to continue staying in touch with the students who streamed through his office during his years as department head.

The faculty, staff and students have all appreciated Dean’s “open door” policy during his tenure as department head. The office may change, but it sounds like the door will remain open.

On May 1 a reception was held for Isaacson. The room was packed with friends, family, students and colleagues of the person who is believed to be currently the longest serving academic department chair on campus.

**A NEW DEPARTMENT HEAD IN THE FUTURE**

A search has been held for a new department head. Interviews have taken place with four candidates visiting campus for 2-day interviews. At press time a new department head had not been named. It is anticipated a new DEO will be named this summer.

### Other Departmental Highlights

#### NEW FACULTY

Three new faculty have joined the staff this year.

**Heike Hofmann**

Heike Hofmann, assistant professor, joined the Department in January. Hofmann received a degree in Mathematics and earned her doctorate in Natural Sciences in 2000. Both were gained from the University of Augsburg, Germany. Her areas of research include: data visualization, statistical computing, multivariate statistics, exploratory data analysis and interactive statistical graphics.

**Tapabrata Maiti**

Tapabrata (Taps) Maiti, assistant professor, was hired last January and works with the Survey Section. Taps earned his Ph.D. in 1996 from the Indian Statistical Institute, Calcutta, India. Most recently he has been an assistant professor at the Department of Mathematics and Statistics at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Maiti’s research interests include: sample survey, small area estimation, Bayes and empirical Bayes modeling, generalized linear models, longitudinal data analysis, Bayesian neural networks and MCMC methods.

**Kirk Wolter**

Kirk Wolter, professor, joined the faculty this spring. Wolter is a 1974 Ph.D. graduate of Iowa State in Statistics. Along with his teaching responsibilities, Wolter will be the director of the Interdisciplinary Research Institute for Survey Science (IRISS), a new center just approved by the Iowa Board of Regents. Through IRISS, Iowa State University is positioned to be a major player on the national and international stage in the collection, analyses and use of information for research and decision-making.
IRISS will bring together the statistical work of three pre-existing units: Institute for Social and Behavioral Research (ISBR), Research Institute for Studies in Education (RISE), and the Survey Section of the Statistical Laboratory. Through IRISS these units will collect and analyze data about people, households, businesses, the environment and other entities. It will conduct empirical research, methodological research, training, and state and federal program evaluation of interest to the general public and to Iowa State University. Work will be carried out largely through the design, execution, analysis, and delivery of large-scale sample surveys and observational studies. Faculty, staff and students affiliated with the institute will also analyze other databases either previously developed at Iowa State or developed elsewhere.

Wolter was Senior Vice President, Statistics and Methodology, at the National Opinion Research Center in Chicago before arriving at Iowa State University.

**STERN LEAVING FOR UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA-IRVINE**

Hal Stern, professor, has announced that he will be leaving to accept a position as chair of the brand new Department of Statistics at the University of California, Irvine. Stern admits it was a difficult decision. “I’ve been treated well by Dean Isaacson, the faculty, staff, students and the university administration. My departure is primarily because Ames, though a pleasant and easy place to live, does not seem like the best place for my family at this time,” Stern wrote to the department staff on March 20.

Stern has been with ISU’s Department of Statistics since 1994. At this time, there is no definite date for Stern’s departure. We wish Hal the best.

**DISTANCE EDUCATION GRADUATES TWO MORE**

Gary M. Jeppson just finished his Master’s program through the Department of Statistic's Distance Education Program. Jeppson is a Product Analyst Specialist with 3M in Salt Lake City, Utah. In addition to this degree program, Jeppson has a B.S. from the University of Utah in Chemistry and a M.S. in Medical Biophysics.

Jeppson was one of the first 3M distance education students. He began his quest for the Master’s degree in August 1998 and graduated Spring 2002.

One more of our General Motors students received a masters degree this spring. In 1995 Vinod Kumar started taking classes towards our Master's Program; shortly after that he officially enrolled in the program. In addition to this degree, Kumar has a B.Tech from the Indian Institute of Technology in 1986; M.S. in Mechanical Engineering (Heat Transfer) from Notre Dame University in 1988; and a M.S. in Applied Physics from Princeton University.

Kumar is currently a Senior Project Engineer for GM at their Global Alternative Propulsion Center at the R&D Facility for Fuel Cells in Rochester, New York.
Frederick Lorenz, Statistics and Sociology, was awarded the title of University Professor. Lorenz has an international reputation in rural health research and in the application and development of statistical methodology in behavioral research. The National Institute of Mental Health included his study of the emotional recovery of women after divorce in its congressional report on significant advances in social and behavioral research. The national press has cited his studies of the recovery of families after losing their farms. At Iowa State, Lorenz was instrumental in creating the Institute for Social and Behavioral Research. Giving generously of his time as mentor and role model, Lorenz has served as major professor or on program of study committees for numerous graduate students.

Yuhong Yang, associate professor, was awarded the Liberal Arts and Sciences award for Early Excellence in Research/Artistic Creativity. Yang has produced groundbreaking work in the statistical theory of nonparametric function estimation. His primary contributions are to strategies for model development and to estimation in the presence of long-range dependence. Yang has begun to work with collaborators to develop applications of his basic research in such diverse areas of meteorology, agronomy and automated machine learning. As a recipient of the prestigious National Science Foundation CAREER award, Yang has been identified as one of a few extremely promising young scholars who are likely to “become academic leaders of the 21st Century.”

Bill Duckworth, assistant professor, Amy Foelich, assistant professor, and Bob Stephenson, university professor, won a Miller Faculty Fellowship which will provide funding for their proposal “Engaging Students in Statistical Discovery” beginning July 1, 2002.
Steve Vardeman, professor, received a 2001 Regents Faculty Excellence Award. In order to be nominated for this award, the faculty member must be a tenured faculty member who has given significant service to Iowa State University and/or the State of Iowa. The faculty person must have shown distinction in at least two of the following areas: teaching, research/creative activity, extension/professional practice, or service. In addition, more than 50% of each nominee's responsibilities must be faculty, not administrative, duties.

**Promotions**

Philip Dixon was promoted to professor. His areas of expertise include: design of experiments or observational studies; choice of statistical methods; statistical computing; interpretation of output from statistical computing packages.

Dixon has a broad background in statistical methods and a specific expertise in: analyses to demonstrate equivalence; ecological statistics; analysis of species composition data; population size estimation; analysis of spatial patterns; environmental statistics; analysis of censored data, especially below-detection limit values; analysis of environmental trends; computer-intensive analysis; bootstrapping; randomization tests.

Dan Nettleton was promoted to associate professor. Dan Nettleton’s current research activities include the development of statistical methods for identifying quantitative trait loci (genomic regions that control quantitative traits in plants and animals).

Nettleton is also working with several plant and animal scientists at ISU on the analysis of gene expression data from microarray experiments. The goal of this work is to identify which of thousands of genes change expression in response to one or more treatments. Such projects help researchers understand what genes play a role in important biological processes.

Mike Daniels was promoted to associate professor. His areas of interest in research include Bayesian statistics, biostatistics, hierarchical modelling, and estimation of covariance matrices. In his work he also applies statistics to problems in medicine, biology, and the environment. Recently Daniels announced his plans to go to the University of Florida.
SERVICE PROJECTS
Every year, the STAT-ers recycle approximately 5,000 pop cans and now bottles as a significant fund-raising endeavor. This year we investigated a way to expand our recycling to provide a greater service to the community. We collected about two pounds of pop tabs from pop cans to give to the Ronald McDonald House for them to cash in.

We also participated in two great, traditional Stat-er service projects: the Fall Food Drive to help fill up the food pantries in Ames and the Finish Line. For the Finish Line, we ran 186 laps and raised about $300 for Cancer Research.

A MESSAGE FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT
BY JASON SINNWELL
It's just minutes after the last STAT-ers seminar of the year, and now I have the task of giving my take on the year from the Vice President's perspective. As far as my duties go, I must say I was very pleased with the willingness of professors to stand in front of our department's finest and share their knowledge. In the cases of Dr. Stephen Vardeman and Dr. H. A. David, their idea was to inform students of what they felt was important for “Gentle Graduate Students” of our department to know. Both professors were most precise and accurate in their estimate. Our other format of seminars come from Dr. Richard Evans of Vet Med and Dr. Karin Dorman. Both shared a research problem in the hope of inspiring a statistics student to work on the project with them.

The business being said, and since this is the most attention I could expect to get from a bunch of busy statisticians, please allow me to reflect beyond my standard duties of VP. Each day, late night, or a wee hour of the morning, as I tip my hat to the great George W. for whom our department is named and whose picture is in the lobby, I have to take a very deep breath once I step out that front door. It's not because I want to inhale the leftover fumes from that last cigarette butt in the entrance ashtray; it's because when you're in this department, there is so much going on and stepping outside is a change of pace.

Yes, we have extra excitement because we're interviewing full professors and DEO candidates, but it's more than that. People are scrambling to finish the latest Koehler assignment, finding Kathy Shelley to fix all their computer problems, or sneaking candy from the front office. You must admit this is a exciting place, and all of it will be inherited by a new DEO. We have the man in the corner office, Dr. Isaacson, to thank for the hard work he's done in the last eighteen years. The success of the STAT-ers organization is largely due to the support we've received from Dean. So thank you, Dean and thanks to all the STAT-ers for another eventful year.

TOP 15 IOWA STAT-ER HAPPENINGS IN 2001-2002
(IN NO PARTICULAR ORDER):
15. Funds were obtained for student’s traveling to statistical conferences
14. Phone cards made available to students for job interviews
13. Lunch gatherings at various Campustown eateries
12. Honoring “STAT-er Teacher of the Year”, Dr. Hal Stern
11. The “Thanks goodness it’s the end of the year BBQ”
10. IM sports ranging from broomball to volleyball
9. The tasty International Dinner
8. Once again freezing at the Spring Breakfast
7. Participating in a mean game of volleyball at the Fall picnic
6. Job Seminars from prominent companies (Wells Fargo, Klemm Assoc., Pharma Co.)
5. Informative seminars from ISU faculty (Vardeman, Dorman, Evans, H.A. David)
4. Running in the The Relay for Life
3. The ever popular FACs (billiards night, game night, jam-session, etc.)
2. The infamous STAT-er Halloween Party (including a few party crashers)
1. The talent show demonstrating that we do have talent beyond statistics

Stat-er’s website: http://www.stat.iastate.edu/grad/staters/staters.html
Ann Russey Cannon (Ph.D. ’94) and her husband welcomed Christopher Jacob on January 8, 2002. He weighed in at 6 pounds 11 ounces. Christopher was also welcomed by 4 1/2 year old brother James. Ann is an associate professor and Chair of the Department of Mathematics for Cornell College.

Roger S. McCullough (Ph.D.’61) sends his greetings to former colleagues and staff. McCullough retired in 1997. Before that he worked as a statistical consultant in Montreal for 4 years and Ottawa, mainly for Health Canada, for 27 years. During that time he also worked for two years in both Australia and Bangladesh. From 1986-89, he attended the University of Ottawa to gain a Master's degree in Health Administration. More recently he's taken degree programs in Gerontology and Dementia Studies and does volunteer work in a Day-Away program for people with dementia, as well as some ongoing consulting in Health Information.

Roger and his wife travel extensively with visits to over 80 countries. Good to hear from you, Roger--after 40 years!!

Michael Milligan (B.S.’68) will be retiring this summer. Milligan has worked for 30 years for Procter and Gamble and is currently a Principal Statistician for P&G in Cincinnati, OH.

Kirk Wolter (Ph.D. ‘74) has joined the Survey Section staff here at the Department of Statistics, Iowa State University. See article on page 2.

Donna Ruhl Brogan (Ph.D. ‘67) received an Iowa State University Alumni Association Distinguished Achievement Citation. This citation recognizes ISU alumni who are nationally and/or internationally recognized for pre-eminent contributions to agriculture, arts, education, industry, professions, public service, social welfare, science or other endeavors and is the highest honor given to alumni by ISU through the ISU Alumni Association. Brogan is on the Department of Biostatistics faculty at Emory University.

Alumni Deaths

We are saddened to inform you that S. Mahmoud Seyedsadr (M.S. ‘80) died of a heart attack on March 11, 2002. He had been working for Amgen in Thousand Oaks, California at the time of his death.

Justus Seeley (Ph.D. ‘69) died February 23, 2002 of a massive heart attack. At the time he was attending a high school basketball game that his daughter, Heather, was coaching. Seeley spent his career at Oregon State University.

An official ISU Department of Statistics Reception will not be held at the New York 2002 JSM Meeting. We hope you find time to hunt out other ISU alumni even though there is no formal reception.

Look for the reception to resume in San Francisco August 3-7, 2003.

DEPARTMENT OF STATISTICS WEBSITE HAS NEW URL

The website for the Department of Statistics has a new address. Please change your bookmarks and visit us at:

http://www.stat.iastate.edu/
Beginning with this issue of the Stat Newsletter, the Department of Statistics has changed its method of creating mailing lists. The list is now managed by a departmental database instead of maintained by the University's ADP department. This new database, designed by one of our graduate students, will give the department much more flexibility. Not only will this database maintain mailing addresses, in the future it will also give us opportunities to search for alumni by graduation year, major professor, and even by current employer or city.

As we transitioned from the University's mailing system to our own, we've had a little difficulty with names; the university stored your complete name and title in one field; we chose to store it in last name, first name and title fields for the ease of sorting. The mailing label on this document should list your name in one of two manners:

Title; First name; Last name (ex: Dr. Dean Isaacson)  
First name; Last name; Job title (ex: Beth Weiser, Information Specialist)

If in the transition we've turned your name around, we apologize. Please let us know so we can correct it. You may write, call or e-mail me with corrections or updates. Thank you.

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