JOURNAL OF APPLIED MATHEMATICS AND DECISION SCIENCES, 7(2), 61–63
Copyright© 2003, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Background

The Applied Statistics, Education and Research Consortium was established in 2001 as a consortium of the University of Wollongong, the University of Newcastle, and Queensland University of Technology. Its principal objective is the sharing ideas and resources in education and research. In line with the education focus, a series of workshops on statistical education was initiated. The concept is as follows.

- Each workshop aims to encourage active discussion about statistical education through the open sharing of current practice, thinking and resources.
- The target audience is practising educators in statistics, within the university environment, in the workplace, in schools and in the community.
- The format of each day-long program is as follows:
- Invited presentations of 40-60 minutes duration;
- Contributed "snapshots" of 5 minutes duration;
- Group activity of 1-2 hours duration.

The first education workshop took place in June 2001 in Newcastle, with the focus *Teaching Statistics in Business*. The presentations on this day included themes such as stimulating students in other disciplines to learn statistics; how students learn; teaching adult learners; active teaching ideas; reflective teaching; seeking what the customer wants; and business statistics course profiles.

The second workshop took place as a satellite workshop of the Statistics, Combinatorics and Related Areas Conference held in Wollongong in December 2001. The workshop focus was *Teaching to Diversity*. Statistical Education presentations with different foci were made at the conference. Some of these presentations appear in the proceedings of the conference, published at the end of 2002; see Gulati et al. [1]. The presentations at this satellite workshop included themes such as teaching in the workplace; teaching and learning theory in practice; web-based resources; teaching experiences in other countries; the experience of foreign students in Australian universities; and teaching by distance.

A third workshop was held as part of an Australian Mathematics Society Conference in Newcastle in September/October 2002 at the University of Newcastle. Speakers were drawn from a cross-section of academic departments and the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The emphasis at this

meeting was on *Change*: changes in statistics students and courses over the last fifty years, changes in teaching and learning as a result of computers and other resources, and a new framework for contextualizing statistical education research in light of these changes.

These workshops have been an outstanding success and have received funding from the Research Management Committee, University of Newcastle, sponsorship from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, and the support of the Statistics, Combinatorics and Related Areas Conference held in Wollongong in December 2001.

This Issue

The quality of some of the workshop presentations and contributed snapshots merit a wider audience. Presenters comprised a rich cross-section of international and local promoters of statistical education, from academics to practitioners, from published authors in education to those promoting new practice, from introspective to global focus.

These papers undoubtedly will appeal to a general statistical audience because the messages are important for all of us and, having been pitched to a general audience in the workshops, will be accessible to a wide range of readers. Their publication soon after the satellite workshop gives immediacy and relevance to the work.

The Papers

- Porter et al. provides a framework for improving statistical education by looking at curriculum development, pedagogical practices, reflective practice, learning frameworks and online learning support.
- Davies et al. describes a statistical education project with multimillion dollar funding, taking place in three different continents.
- Graham et al. describes electronic resources, in particular, one that was developed at Ohio State University.
- Business statistics courses will continue to be the bread and butter of our tertiary institutions for the foreseeable future. Johnson and John remind us that doing a quality job always was, and always will be essential, and show us what is current in doing that quality job.
- The theme of the MacGillivray contribution is similar, but here the focus is on Masters of Business Administration courses.

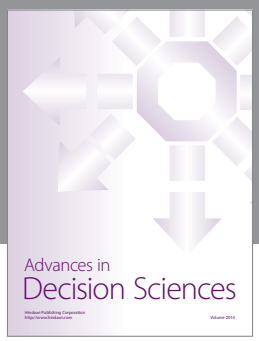
- Mortlock et al. reflects on the promotion of lifelong learning in statistics in the workplace.
- Nur and Mengersen investigate the special needs in regard to learning statistics of overseas students attending Australian universities.

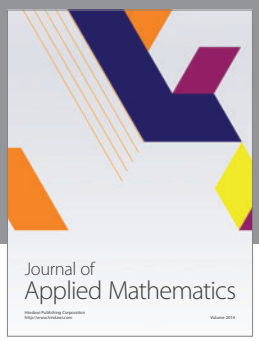
A New Niche

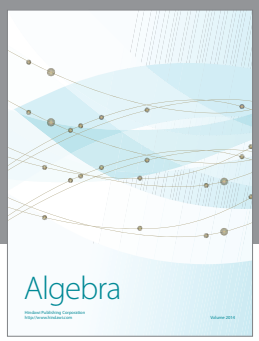
The Journal of Applied Mathematics and Decision Sciences recognizes that statistical education is a vibrant and important area of interest to its readership, and that researchers have limited opportunity to publish their findings. To that end we have asked Dr Anne Porter, a contributor in this special issue, to be an Associate Editor of the journal with a particular focus on statistical education. We welcome future contributions in this area and look forward to regularly publishing significant findings.

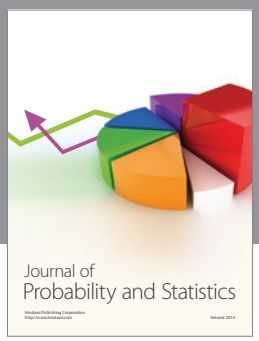
References

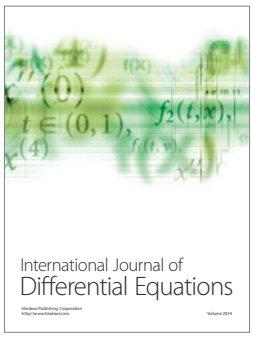
1. GULATI, C.M., LIN, X-Y, RAYNER, J.C.W. and MISHRA, S.N. (Eds.) *Advances in Statistics, Combinatorics and Related Areas, Selected Papers from SCRA2001-FIM VIII, Proceedings of the Wollongong Conference, University of Wollongong, Australia 19 - 21 December 2001.* World Scientific Press, 369 pages, 2002.

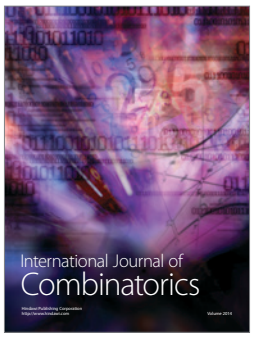


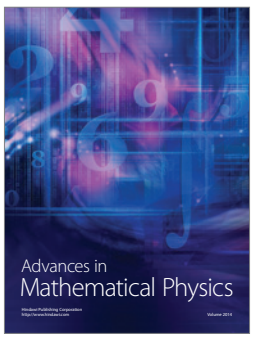


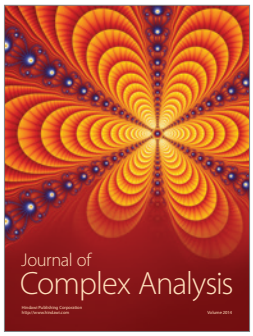


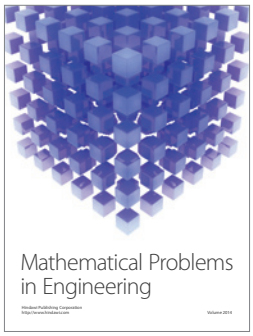


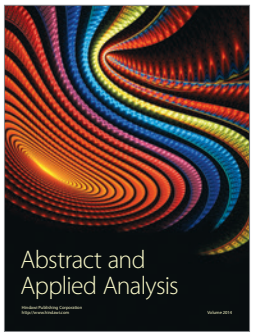


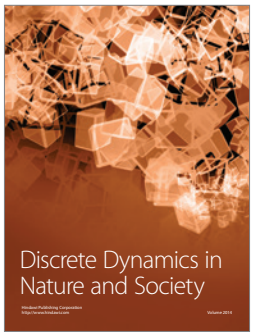


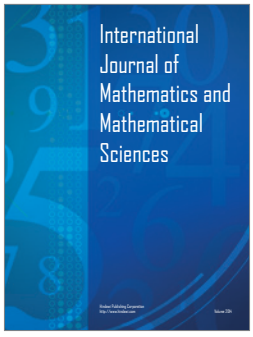


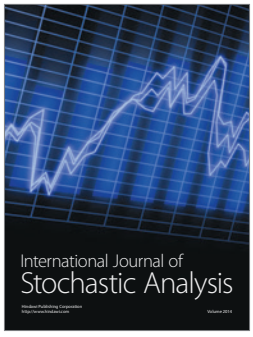












Hindawi
Submit your manuscripts at
http://www.hindawi.com