



# SASA NEWS/SASV NUUS

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## SASA Flying high in 2015!



James Allison- SASA President 2015

**T**he first couple of months of 2015 have flown by and we are looking forward to a year filled with exciting SASA activities, opportunities and developments. I would like to start off by thanking the SASA2014 conference organisers at Rhodes University (especially Lizanne Raubenheimer and Sarah Radloff) for an excellent conference, which has sparked a tremendous amount of positive feedback. The SASA2015 conference will be co-hosted by the University of Pretoria and Stats SA. The local organising committee has decided on a new format for the conference, so we are all looking forward to the changes and additions that they will be introducing. We wish them all the best in this endeavour.

The first SASA EC meeting of the year has already taken place and we are planning a broad range of activities for the coming year. One

activity which deserves particular attention is a direct outcome of the 2014 SASA Education Workshop on "the online teaching of statistics". This workshop was a resounding success and led to the realisation that advances in technology could be fruitfully applied to the improvement of statistics education at grassroots level at South African universities. As a result, the Education Committee aims to form a team tasked with the development of a repository of e-learning materials for introductory statistics courses that could be used by universities around the country. I feel that this undertaking is a positive move which has the potential to add great value to the teaching of first year level statistics in South Africa. We will keep the members updated on the progress in this regard.

SASA has recently received R6 million from the NRF to help alleviate the crisis faced by academic statistics

***"The Education Committee aims to form a team tasked with the development of a repository of e-learning materials for introductory statistics courses that could be used by universities around the country".***

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in South Africa. This is a fantastic development in a process which was initiated two years ago. The organisation is deeply grateful to the NRF for recognizing the urgency of the situation and making these funds available. A number of calls for applications for funds have already been sent out, which included full- and part-time bursaries to Masters and Doctoral students, bursaries for staff development studies, bursaries for post-doctoral students, and funding for the appointment of specialists to co-supervise PhD students (the co-called "supervision knowledge share").

Another call will shortly be sent out for "mentorship programme" funding, which aims to support a statistics department by allowing for the appointment of mentors who can guide and develop the research profiles of young researchers working in these departments. I urge all statistics departments to make use of these funding opportunities. Furthermore, we plan to host a bursary holder's mentorship workshop. The goal of the workshop is to monitor and foster the investment in the students who have received bursaries from this NRF Statistics crisis fund. Details about this workshop will be

communicated to all stakeholders in due time. I would like to express my gratitude to the committee (in particular the chair, Paul Mostert) who have been working diligently to perform all the administration involved in the redistribution of these funds. Despite a severely limited time frame, they managed to do an excellent job!

I hope that 2015 is a good year for you and for SASA, and I look forward to seeing all of you in Pretoria for the SASA2015 conference at the end of the year!

James Allison

# SASA 2015 Conference

**28 November – 4 December 2015**

**Hosts: Department of Statistics with co-hosts StatsSA**

SASA's annual conference is hosted by a different institution each year. The Department of Statistics, University of Pretoria has volunteered to host in 2015 together with StatsSA who co-host every 4 years.

The conference will be from 28 November – 4 December 2015 on the University of Pretoria's Hatfield campus. The dates 28, 29 November and 3, 4 December are reserved for the workshops while the main conference sessions will be 30 November and 1, 2 December 2015, all full days. The opening of the conference will be on the Sunday evening with registration occurring on the Sunday afternoon already.

## **The local organising committee is as follows:**

Dr Inger Fabris-Rotelli (Chair)  
Prof Andriette Bekker  
Mr Johan Ferreira  
Mr Andre Swanepoel

## **Official Conference Secretariat:**

Mrs Sonette Olivier [sonette@savannaskills.co.za](mailto:sonette@savannaskills.co.za)  
Please do not hesitate to direct any questions if you have them.



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Dear SASA members

Welcome back to a new year!

This issue contains the president's column and an NRF newsletter. An article about Nico Laubscher, a well-known statistician, is also included. This is followed by Education News, the Multivariate Data Analysis Group (MDAG) and the seminars at Stellenbosch University.

The first announcement of the 2015 SASA conference to be held at the University of Pretoria is in this issue. Take note of the dates.

**We welcome all new members.**

Hope you have a successful 2015!

Mardi

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The Newsletter is an informal collection of news items and short articles of interest.

The Newsletter will appear in March, June, September and December.

**Submission deadlines:**

Issue	Deadline Date
March	1 February
June	1 May
September	1 August
December	1 November

The views expressed in this Newsletter are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the policies of the SA Statistical Association or the editor of the Newsletter.

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# SASA-NRF CRISIS IN ACADEMIC STATISTICS FUNDING

The focus of the awards is on **excellence** in all categories identified by the SASA committee, and all research should be in Statistics or Mathematical Statistics majors. This will be done taking cognizance of the collaborative efforts between SASA, the Centre of Excellence in Mathematical and Statistical Sciences and other initiatives aimed at promoting and supporting the development of statistics as a field and related human capacity.

Since this grant from the NRF is to foster and develop human capacity in academia, the student and supervisor need to know that to commence his/her studies in Mathematical Statistics/ Applied Statistics that SASA expects the following:

The Mathematical Statistics option involves research on theoretically identified aspects with applied demonstrations and examples of the concepts. The applied option involves research into theoretical aspects identified through specific application needs and requirements. The applied option doesn't allow only for standard application of known statistical techniques on data sets. The applied statistics option involves more application based research with some theoretical work, that is, new statistical techniques for a specific application.

A scientific panel, consisting of established researchers in Statistics, has evaluated all applications received. We are pleased to announce the first cohort of awards in the following categories.

## Post-doctoral fellowships:

- Dr T Sandrock, (PhD from Stellenbosch University)
- Dr DA Burger, (PhD from Free State University)

## PhD bursary awards:

- Mr S Janse van Rensburg (Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University)

- Ms C van Zyl (North West University)
- Mr F Kamper (University of Stellenbosch)
- Ms SA Pitts (University of KwaZulu-Natal)
- Ms DJ Roberts (University of KwaZulu-Natal)
- Mr JT Ferreira (Pretoria University)
- Ms A Smit (Pretoria University)

## Masters bursary awards:

- Mr S Pazi (Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University)
- Mr M Mafu (Rhodes University)
- Mr JA Combrink (University of Cape Town)
- Ms G Dlamini (University of Cape Town)
- Mr TJ Wolff-Piggott (University of Cape Town)
- Mr G Maribe (University of the Free State)
- Ms B Naidoo (University of KwaZulu-Natal)
- Mr JJ Hendriks (University of Pretoria)
- Mr PA Mijburgh (University of Pretoria)
- Mr KH Lau (University of Pretoria)
- Mr S Buitendag (University of Stellenbosch)
- Ms MJ de Villiers (University of Stellenbosch)
- Ms CL Orsmond (University of Stellenbosch)

In the knowledge category, the award went to Prof Simos Meintanis is assisting with the PhD at North West University: Prof James Allison and student: Ms M Cockeran

The second call went out recently. These awards will be announced soon to the applicant and the results and further initiatives will be published in the June newsletter. We, as the Statistics community of South Africa, would like to thank the NRF, specifically Dr Andrew Kanike, for all the efforts and time making these awards possible. We want to congratulate all the successful candidates with these awards and are looking forward to their successful career in Statistics.

Remember to visit the SASA website for Announcements, Latest News, Vacancies, Local and International Conference calls, Links to international Journals, Contact details of Committees etc.

<http://www.sastat.org.za/>



# Education Committee 2015

The committee, chaired by Prof. Delia North (UKZN), convened for their annual meeting on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> January. The 2015 education committee and their respective portfolios are shown in the table below.

Delia North	Chairperson, Education workshops, Outreach to schools, AMESA
Hannah Kroon	Student projects - Honours, Marketing (Posters)
Warren Brettenny	Second Year Bursaries/Scholarship Competition, SASA Newsletter
Tim Dunne	Paper Competition for Young Statisticians
Lizelle Fletcher	SASA website (planning), Third Year Bursary/Scholarship Competition
Fransonet Reyneke	Secretary, Postgraduate Paper Competition
Yoko Chhana	SASA website (co-ordination & planning), MOUs, liaison between SASA Educ committee and Stats SA/SAS/Eskom/etc.
Ivona Contardo-Berning	Lead the Online teaching of Introductory Statistics course
Karl Huang	Assistance with Honours Student projects

## The Education Committee is proud to announce 2<sup>nd</sup> year SASA Scholarship and Bursary recipients.

This year the scholarship, and bursary, was awarded to the applicant who performed outstandingly well in their first and second year of study. The recipient of this award for 2015 was Miss Michelle Alexander from the University of Pretoria. The Education Committee wishes her everything of the best for the future.

Two further bursary awards were also made to deserving students. Congratulations to Mr Oratilwe Mokoena from the University of Limpopo and Mr Thokozani Mchunu from the University of KwaZulu-Natal who received these awards.

## Third Year Competition sponsored by SAS, ICCSSA and SASA



Emma Plumstead (middle) winner of the Third Year Scholarship sponsored by SAS, receives her award from HOD Gary Sharp (left) with senior lecturer Johan Hugo (right).

The competition for both the scholarship and the bursaries was tough but the Education committee identified the three most worthy recipients: Ms Emma Plumstead of NMMU won the scholarship (sponsored by SAS) with exceptional third year results while Ms Shannon Sass (NMMU) and Mr Sabelo Mokoena (UKZN) received the bursaries (sponsored by ICCSSA and SASA respectively).

Congratulations to the winners, the SASA Education committee wishes you all the best for the year of study ahead. In addition, the SASA Education Committee would like to express their sincere gratitude to SAS and ICCSSA for their generous contributions to the awards.

# 2015 SASA Post Graduate Paper Competition, sponsored by Stats SA

It is with great excitement that the SASA Education Committee hereby announces the 2015 SASA Postgraduate Paper Competition! This competition is open to all students enrolled for Masters or PhD's in Statistics at South African tertiary institutions. Both full and part-time students are eligible.

Stats SA will be funding the competition as part of their drive to provide financial assistance to deserving students who show promise and diligence in their statistical work. A person entering the Postgraduate Paper Competition may submit their paper to a journal but **only after the competition i.e. only papers that have not previously been submitted to a journal may be entered in the competition.**

Three prizes will be awarded, subject to the adjudicators' discretion. Two of the prizes may be from any statistical sub-discipline and one prize will be reserved for Official

Statistics, on special request from the sponsors. The first author of the best three papers, as decided by the judges, will be sponsored to present his/her paper at the 2015 SASA Conference at the University of Pretoria. Sponsorship will include travel (within SA), accommodation and conference fees. In addition, the overall winner will receive R14 000, the runner-up will receive R10 000 and the third prize will be R7 750.

The SASA Education Committee will handle the adjudication process. The judges' decision will be final and there will be no correspondence regarding the decision.



## SEMINAR PROGRAM: FIRST SEMESTER 2015

### Stellenbosch University

#### Department of Statistics and Actuarial Science

6 February	<b>Warren Brown</b> (School of Business and Finance, UWC) <i>Investment portfolio transition management: The smoke and mirrors to profits</i>
20 February	<b>Jan Beirlant</b> (Department of Mathematics and LStat, KULeuven, Belgium) <i>Extreme value statistics for truncated Pareto-type distributions</i>
6 March	<b>JD van Heerden</b> (Department of Statistics and Actuarial science, SU) <i>The effect of adding a liquidity-related risk factor to the Fama and French four-factor model: The case for South Africa</i>
20 March	<b>Johan de Kock</b> (Libfin, Liberty Life, Claremont) <i>Liquidity models for funds</i>
24 April	<b>Stephen Burgess</b> (Department of Statistics and Actuarial science, SU) <i>Lapse experience in the life insurance industry</i>
15 May	<b>Nelmarie Louw</b> (Department of Statistics and Actuarial science, SU) <i>Dimension reduction in Multi-label problems where there are more variables than data cases</i>

Lectures start at 13:00 and are held in room 1015 of the Ou Fasiliteisbestuur gebou, Hammanshand street, Stellenbosch.

Enquires: Danie Uys, Telephone: 021 808 3879 , Fax: 021 808 3830, e-mail: dwu@sun.ac.za

## Tribute to Nico F. Laubscher

**N**ico Francois Laubscher was born in Paarl, 1934. His childhood was spent on a farm near the small town of Tadcaster at Vaalhartz in the Northern Cape, where he matriculated in 1951 at the Vaalhartz High School. Between 1952 and 1960 he studied at Potchefstroom University, completing BSc (Applied Mathematics), BSc (Hons) (Mathematics), MSc (Mathematics) and in 1960 DSc (Mathematical Statistics). His supervisors were HS Steyn and JM de Wet. His dissertation was titled "On transformations for the stabilization of variance and the normalization of distribution functions".

In 1957 he joined the CSIR as a Researcher in the Mathematics Division of the National Physical Research Laboratory. In 1961 when the National Research Institute for Mathematical Sciences was founded, Nico became the Head of the Statistics Division. He managed to build a very strong Division. In the academic year 1959-60 he visited the Department of Mathematics, Cornell University, Ithaca, USA. In 1974 he was Visiting Professor at Stanford University and in 1983 Visiting Professor at ETH in Zürich, Switzerland.

In 1976 Nico joined the University of Port Elizabeth as Professor of Statistics, and in 1987-1989 he served in the same capacity at the University of Stellenbosch. In 1990 he went into private practice and became Company Statistician, SANS Fibres in 1990-1996. Since 1997 to the present he is a Private Consultant in his own company, InduStat Pro. He provides training and specialised consultation in, among others, Design of experiments (DOE) and the analysis of data obtained through DOE, Statistical process control and Data mining.

Nico is a Founder Member of the SA Mathematics Association, Fellow and Past President (1973) of SASA.

He was Assistant-Editor of SASJ, 1971-1974 and Editor, SASJ, 1975-77. He was Member of the Editorial Council, Communications in Statistics, 1972-1994. He was an active contributor to the South African Statistics Dictionary.



**Nico Laubscher**

Nico published articles in *Biometrika*, *Annals of Mathematical Statistics*, *Technometrics*, *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, *The American Statistician*, *Trabajos de Estadística* and the *South African Statistical Journal* and also application articles in various journals such as the *SA Medical Journal*. He published on a wide variety of topics, such as the non-central t- and F-distributions, stabilizing variances of various distributions and non-parametric statistics. Linear models and ANOVA were of special importance in his work at the CSIR.

Nico and his wife Maud live in Stellenbosch. They have three children and six grandchildren. He is a keen golfer. His greatest pleasure is to visit Kruger National Park twice a year and, occasionally the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, Ndumo and Mkuzi parks in Northern KwaZulu-Natal. He is a keen nature photographer. Among his many interests is succulent plants. He was Editor of *Aloe*, the journal of the Succulent Society of South Africa in 1973-1975.

Compiled by Francois E. Steffens.

## Multivariate Data Analysis Group (MDAG) report

The Multivariate Data Analysis Group (MDAG), a special interest subgroup of SASA, has applied for affiliation with the International Federation of Classification Societies (IFCS). The application was presented at the IFCS executive committee meeting

on 3 December 2014. In accordance with the IFCS constitution an electronic voting will take place and feedback of the MDAG application is expected within three months.

<http://www.sastat.org.za/sites/default/files/files/MDAG%20constitution%20final%20201411.pdf>





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