



A Student-Run Consulting Program Providing Community Service

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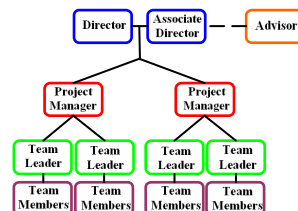
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Introduction

Statistics in the Community (STATCOM) is a volunteer community service organization directed and staffed by graduate students in Purdue University's Department of Statistics. It offers professional consulting services to governmental and non-profit groups in the local community free of charge.

STATCOM was founded in the 2001-2002 academic year by graduate student Nels Grevstad, and has since helped many local organizations. Through its service efforts, STATCOM seeks to enhance the relationship between Purdue University, the Department of Statistics, and the surrounding community.

Organizational Structure



All service is voluntary, secondary to coursework in priority, and typically limited to 1-2 hours per week in one of the following capacities:

- **Director and Associate Director** (2-semester terms)
 - Students who oversee the operations of the service
 - Assign new clients to teams of consultants and serve as contacts for clients
 - Seek out new clients and advertise services
- **Advisor**
 - Faculty or staff member who provides support and guidance
 - Ensures continuity and facilitates community connections
- **Project Managers** (1-semester terms)
 - Students who monitor activities of multiple teams
- **Team Leaders** (1-project terms)
 - Students who ensure progress for specific projects
 - Responsible for maintaining records of progress and preparing report for client
- **Team Members** (1-project terms)
 - Students (usually 3-6 in number) who work with their team leader to serve a specific client

Suggested First Clients

- Schools
- Local government offices
- Libraries

Basic Strategy for Finding Clients

- Approach several local organizations
- Make professional presentation of possible services, including examples of past projects (with appropriate permission)
- Ask past or current clients for names of potential clients
- Follow-up later with clients who do not express an immediate need and with past clients
- Take advantage of media exposure to advertise for additional clients
- List organization with local volunteer groups

Working with Clients

Teams provide professional and confidential consulting on a wide variety of statistical issues and give the client a polished final presentation and written report.

Sample Clients (names used with permission)

- **Lafayette School Corporation**
 - A statistical analysis of state funding data for school corporations in Indiana during the 2000-2001 school year was performed for this client.
 - The goal was to examine the relationship between education and experience of teachers and certain types of funding to school corporations, and in the process to gain an understanding of Indiana's current funding distribution formulas.
 - The results of this project were presented to the state legislature and used to revise the funding distribution formulas.



STATCOM consultant Nels Grevstad meeting with Lafayette School Corporation Superintendent Ed Eiler



A team of STATCOM consultants working on a project using a laptop provided by Purdue University's Office of Engagement.

• West Lafayette Public Library

- STATCOM consultants worked with library representatives to develop and define a specific project goal.
- Given data corresponding to a particular observational unit (book, magazine, CD, DVD, video), the client wanted a formula that would indicate the popularity of that unit.
- STATCOM developed a model for the number of times a book is checked out, with book category, price, and age as significant explanatory variables.

• The Sagamore Parkway Task Force

- STATCOM designed surveys to assess the opinions of local residents and business owners on issues relating to Sagamore Parkway West, a stretch of US Highway 52 that runs through the City of West Lafayette, Indiana.
- The surveys addressed the use of public space, traffic and pedestrian issues, retail interests, development, and funding for improvements along the Parkway.
- STATCOM also analyzed the results of the surveys and provided detailed reports to the Task Force, gave presentations, and discussed the process and results at public meetings.
- The results were used by the Task Force to formulate their recommendations to the West Lafayette Mayor.
- The local media reported on this project several times, and this considerable publicity led to additional projects with other clients.

Benefits of a volunteer consulting service

• Benefits to the department

- Increases interaction between the department and the local community.
- Raises awareness of the department in the university and the community.
- Gives department/staff the opportunity to ensure that local initiatives are carried out in a statistically sound manner.
- Provides opportunities for faculty to mentor students.

• Benefits to the university

- Allows the university to demonstrate how its curriculum and programs can improve the quality of life in the surrounding area.
- Improves community relations.

• Benefits to the students

- Apply/adapt material learned in class to real data.
- Learn proper client/consultant etiquette.
- Learn how to work effectively as a team.
- Become experienced with the writing, presenting, and record-keeping that is done in industry.
- Develop leadership and administrative skills.
- Become proficient in statistical software.

• Benefits to the community

- Helps local organizations operate more efficiently by applying statistical methods to their operating procedures.
- Enables non-profit groups to improve their operations while conserving their financial resources.

Starting a Community Service Organization at Your University

For more information on starting a community service organization at your university, contact STATCOM at statcom@stat.purdue.edu. STATCOM can provide you with a copy of our Procedures Handbook, our STATCOM brochure, sample reports, and other documentation. More information can also be found on the Internet at <http://www.stat.purdue.edu/statcom>.

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