

Math and Stat Colloquium

Thursday, April 21

3:30pm LIB164

Refreshments will be served beforehand in the Lund Hall Foyer at 3pm

Speaker:

Natalie Blades

Assistant Professor

Brigham Young University

Department of Statistics



“Accounting for Student Demographics in the Interpretation of Student Evaluation Data”

Abstract: The 2006 report of the Commission on the Future of Higher Education identifies a lack of outcomes-based accountability by universities---a sector receiving 2.9% of GDP annually from federal and private funds (Miller and Oldham 2006). In response to this criticism, administrators are working to transpare measurement and documentation of learning outcomes and teaching effectiveness. Strategies for promoting this accountability include instructor self evaluation, observation by peers and administrators, teaching portfolios, and learning-outcome-based evaluations; one of the most common tools remains the student evaluation of teaching (SET), used by institutions for promotion and tenure decisions, by instructors for course improvement, and, increasingly, by students for course and instructor selection.

Criticized because they reflect instructor behavior unrelated to desired learning objectives, student evaluations are a cheap, convenient surrogate obtained from those who spend the greatest amount of time observing the instructor. This presentation presents a context within which student evaluations of teaching may be more meaningfully interpreted. I will describe the one-million records available for this analysis and demonstrate the effects of putative confounders of student ratings: gender, teaching area, course level, course size, college. An ordinal model is proposed for evaluating instructor effectiveness using SET responses and demographic information about the students in the course and guidelines are suggested for college-course-gender-etc.-adjusted SET interpretation.