Prof. Sherman, 9/27/2010

I just wanted to drop you a line and thank you for making an impact in my education that let me stand out in a recent internship. Your STAT305 was reverberating in my head as I designed, authored, and presented a test proposal during an internship with the Air Force Research Laboratory, Directed Energy Directorate, Laser Effects Research Branch (AFRL/RDLE) in Albuquerque, NM. The test proposal was ACCEPTED and I was extended an offer to return, which I did this last summer. I then had the satisfaction of advising a new intern working on that continuing project in addition to taking on a new project with more advanced modeling.

The statistics from your STAT305 class played a critical role in qualifying and validating my characterization study. I was not significantly confident going through 305 but I have become increasingly grateful for the foundation laid. I think the situation is similar to the of learning most other math-centered knowledge; it does not really sink in until you get to the next level or find an meaningful application (addition seems more relevant and manageable once you start learning multiplication; multiplication-->integration; etc.).

Applying statistics within an uncertainty analysis really helped set me apart in the internship to support defining various instrumentation requirements in order to achieve the desired results reliability. I would suggest introducing a demanded application for statistics into 305 such as performing uncertainty analysis on measurements taken with a modern apparatus.  A great guy I met from Boeing seems to have partially made his career out of this stuff and it seems vitally important with the trend of basing more decisions on complex metrics and measurements [and/or advertising such metrics to induce persuasion].

Thanks again,
Joe Vircks

FYI: I tied initially invoking the term "random variable" but it was continually received by audiences as synonymous with "noise". I did however write it into the test documentation along with a definition and clarification.