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**A Tribute to Bob deMas  
Recipient of the 2022 George Cobb  
Lifetime Achievement Award  
from the  
Statistics Education Community**





February 22, 2022

To the George Cobb Lifetime Achievement Award in Statistics Education Review Committee:

It is an honor and privilege to nominate our friend and colleague, Robert (Bob) Claude delMas, for the George Cobb Lifetime Achievement Award in Statistics Education. Bob has contributed to the field of statistics education for over 25 years. His work and service have impacted many people, from the numerous undergraduate and graduate students he teaches, to the educators who have benefitted from the tools and assessments he has developed and shared, to the researchers and advisees who have drawn and learned from his work and mentoring. It is no surprise that Bob has won prestigious teaching awards at the University of Minnesota, nor that he was recognized by the ASA when he was made a fellow in 2010.

**Overview of scholarly work.** Bob's unique background in cognitive psychology combined with his knowledge of statistics, and natural curiosity about student learning have led him to make profound contributions to undergraduate and graduate statistics education practice through high-quality and relevant research. Bob's research has influenced statistics educators and statistics education researchers, as well as many undergraduate and graduate students whose statistical reasoning and thinking have been developed by his research-based teaching methods. Google Scholar counts over 3000 citations of Bob's research! His work is characterized by the way he deeply examines difficult concepts related to how students think and learn about statistics. Two main areas of his research are (1) understanding and developing statistical reasoning, particularly through the use of simulation, and (2) assessment of statistical learning outcomes.

**Understanding and developing statistical reasoning.** Early in his career, Bob's interest in understanding students' reasoning about sampling distributions led him to develop *Sampling Sim*, an interactive program that used simulation to teach ideas underlying sampling distributions. Funded by an NSF project called *Teaching and Assessing Statistical Inference* (with Joan Garfield and Beth Chance), Bob studied how the *Sampling Sim* program could be used to develop students' statistical reasoning. This work, along with the development of subsequent tools to study students' thinking about variation and statistical inference, has provided insights into how to best structure learning activities and assess student understanding. Beth Chance writes about her experiences working with Bob on this project, saying, "It was so fun to... say 'wouldn't it be great if we had software that would do this for the students' and he would create it—across several different programming languages!" She adds, "He was always finding new ways to dig deeper into student understanding and to understand how students interacted with the tools and how to improve the tools based on that feedback. I learned so much from him and Joan about listening and watching students and really hearing/seeing their learning as it developed... Bob was never afraid to 'think outside the box,' challenging the status quo/tying in cognitive theory about how students learn, and the statistics education community is much the better for it!" Beth added that her experiences with Bob informed her work on the Rossman-Chance applet collection.

Bob's research in this area also informed the NSF-funded AIMS and CATALST curriculums. Activities from the AIMS project are still widely used (especially at community colleges), and the CATALST curriculum (a pioneering curriculum that uses simulation-based methods for statistical inference) has been adopted at several universities and high schools.

**Assessment in Statistics Education.** One of Bob's unique contributions has been his work related to assessment, including the multi-year NSF funded *Assessment Resource Tools for Improving Statistical Thinking* (ARTIST) project (with Joan Garfield). The project involved creating the CAOS test and the online ARTIST assessment database. The CAOS test has been given to more than 50,000 students and has been used by nearly 250 instructors (from 170

institutions) to help understand students' statistical reasoning. This assessment has also been of great benefit to statistics education researchers, many who have used CAOS in their own research. (It has been used in 60+ scholarly papers, nearly 30 theses, and cited in many more.) The other assessment resources found on the ARTIST website are also widely used (if word of mouth is to be believed; the usage is not tracked). In addition, the topic-area assessments have formed the building blocks for other research-based assessments. This work inspired an assessment conference (ARTIST conference, 2004) that led to the several collaborations and publications.

Bob has continued his work in developing and promoting "good" assessment throughout his career. He was a major contributor to both the STI and GOALS assessments, which were developed as part of the *Evaluation and Assessment of Teaching and Learning About Statistics* (e-ATLAS) project that built on and updated CAOS. More recently, as a co-PI on the *Levels of Conceptual Understanding in Statistics* (LOCUS) project, Bob worked with Tim Jaccobe to develop assessments of students' statistical understanding that measure development in topics identified and promoted in the Guidelines for Assessment and Instruction in Statistics Education (GAISE) Report.

**Mentoring.** In addition to his scholarly work, Bob has positively influenced the careers of many statistics educators and researchers. This is, perhaps, most evident in his role as a Ph.D. advisor for several statistics education students at the University of Minnesota, and in his role serving on committees for students at other institutions and in other countries. One of Bob's students, Ethan Brown, describes Bob as "a hidden champion on many research projects and for many emerging statistics education researchers." Another advisee, Jonathan Brown, comments, "His kindness, patience, and willingness to refine my ideas over countless meetings has been unmatched... I've treasured our time together in our meetings, both formal and informal: they have advanced the state of scholarship in statistics education and provided me with holistic support... Put simply, I leave every meeting with Bob with a fuller brain and a fuller heart."

Bob's mentorship extends far beyond his doctoral students to his over 50 co-authors. From his active participation in the research process, to his constructive feedback during the editing process, Bob is mentoring those he works with, even when it may not seem explicit. For example, when co-authoring "Every Rose Has Its Thorn: Secondary Teachers' Reasoning about Statistical Modeling," a paper that appeared in *ZDM Mathematics Education*, Bob helped Nicola Justice and Mike Huberty, two novice statistics education researchers, learn how to respond to editor feedback—at times making changes while standing firm when suggestions were not appropriate. Matt Beckman, one of Bob's former PhD students and an emerging leader in statistics education at Penn State University, reflects on his experiences co-authoring with Bob, saying, "Bob has gently and skillfully brought me along from apprentice to colleague. I can only describe it as a deep-seated, honest humility that good ideas can come from anywhere—even when he's clearly the expert in the room. I think one of the reasons that Bob has been so productive is that he sees what needs to be done and just does it with excellence."

This lead-by-example style that Bob embodies is apparent in his outreach and service to the broader statistics education community. While collaborating with three doctoral students to give a CATALST workshop at USCOTS 2013, Bob not only helped the workshop attendees experience new technology and an innovative curriculum, but also helped his students learn how to organize and lead a workshop, and share ideas with the other statistics educators.

**Teacher Development.** Bob has also supported teacher preparation and teacher development in statistics education. As a co-PI on the *Statistics Teachers Educational Practice Survey* (STEPS) grant, he helped to develop a survey that could be used to learn about current practices of teachers teaching statistics at the undergraduate level. This survey set foundations for the more current *Statistics Teaching Inventory* (STI) survey instrument, which is still being used today to take the temperature of the undergraduate statistics teaching community on important issues and topics. He has also contributed to teacher development through numerous workshops, disseminating new research-based ideas and teaching techniques. At the high school level, Bob has

participated in research on how mathematics teachers understand statistical modeling, more recently even venturing into new areas of how teachers can learn modern data science topics such as classification trees.

Bob has also helped develop and teach several statistics education seminar courses designed to help grow and develop excellent statistics teaching. For example, he co-taught a course in which graduate students explored best practices for teaching statistics, including innovations in content, pedagogy, and technology. Students from across the University of Minnesota took this course (which was later offered in collaboration with Penn State University) and reported how it greatly improved their knowledge and ability to teach statistics well.

**International Leadership.** Bob served the statistics education community as associate editor of the *Journal of Statistics Education* for nearly ten years (2001-2010) and immediately after that as editor of the *Statistics Education Research Journal*, the premier research journal of our field, for four years. As editor, Bob played the role of mentor looking at the potential for scholars' work to contribute to the growing knowledge about teaching and learning statistics. He often provided detailed and valuable feedback to authors that not only helped them publish their work, but also raised standards of excellence and rigor in statistics education research. Even when rejecting papers, Bob went above and beyond, helping writers understand where the deficiencies were so they could improve and resubmit their manuscripts.

Bob has also helped grow the international community of scholars and educators, making connections with and mentoring statistics educators from other parts of the world. He was a founding member of the *International Forum on Statistical Reasoning Thinking and Literacy* (SRTL), which meets every two years to immerse in questions of statistics education research. On several occasions, Bob traveled to Japan to help nurture colleague Kazunori Yamaguchi's interest in statistics education. Kazunori states that Bob "continued to visit Japan and introduced us to the results of their projects and other activities... Bob's contribution to the reform of statistical education in Japan has been great." Bob also has mentored statistics educators from Costa Rica, hosting them in Minnesota and traveling there to encourage their work in statistics education.

In summary, Bob's research has been devoted to deep, authentic investigations that have brought new insights and opened up new lines of inquiry in statistics education. Bob has influenced how statistics is taught and assessed, and has paved the way for many other researchers to build on his work. And, similar to the award's namesake, George Cobb, Bob's mentoring and leadership have influenced these scholars just as much as his intellectual contributions. Even as he readies for retirement and the next chapter in his life, Bob continues to contribute his time and knowledge to mentoring early career scholars and promoting statistics education research.

Sincerely,



Nicola Justice, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor  
Mathematics Department  
Pacific Lutheran University



Andrew Zieffler, Ph.D.  
Senior Lecturer  
Educational Psychology  
University of Minnesota



Elizabeth Fry, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor  
Mathematics Department  
St. Catherine University

Bob,

I want to convey my gratitude to you. We have worked together for over 20 years, you hired me for my first real adult job in General College. That decision has made a world of difference for me and my family. I appreciate your kindness, thoughtfulness and support. Knowing you, working with you has made me a better person. I thank you for that.

Suzanne

Suzanne Loch



Bob,

Congratulations!! The award is well deserved. You have made our statistics courses a model for everyone to follow. Thank you so much for all you do for the students and for our department!!

Frances

Frances Lawrenz

Dear Bob,

You are MOST deserving of the USCOTS lifetime award. For so many years, I felt fortunate to be able to hang out with folks who worked closely with you and through them, I was able to learn from you. You were inspiring - your research, your work with assessment, your service especially as editor of SERJ, and what I grabbed onto most, the model you set with Joan Garfield for a graduate degree in statistics education at the University of Minnesota. Your dedication to that graduate degree was on full display with the deep gratitude shown by the many graduates of your program who nominated you for this award. I know you must feel a tremendous amount of pride as you observe their success as statistics educators. I treasure the opportunity I was given to work with you on the LOCUS assessment project. I knew you were amazing before this project but then I experienced it first hand. But what I will always hold close is when Dale and I visit the University of Minnesota and the evening we spent with you and Rose. Thank you Bob for your love of family, friends, and colleagues.

Chris Franklin  
Your southern GA buddy

Chris Franklin

Congratulations, Bob! You have been a thoughtful and valuable contributor at Stat Chats. Best wishes.

Julie Legler

Julie Legler

You have been the best of companions on many adventures: intellectual, social, in different parts of the world, traversing the data cycle, venturing wild conjectures, always bringing good humored insight and a generous spirit. Congratulations on your well-deserved award.

—Bill

Bill Finzer

Congratulations Bob! A well-deserved award for an amazing human, researcher, and mentor!!

Jen

Jen Noll

## Hooding Matt with Joan, 2015



Congratulations Bob!

This award is clearly so well-deserved. In addition to countless accomplishments (indeed, a lifetime of achievement), your ready smile and the occasional a sarcastic joke (often poking fun at yourself in classic Midwestern fashion!) always made the work more fun and kept things light-hearted. Of course, you've always been a terrific mentor to me and role model of high integrity, strong work-ethic, as well as a humble and open-minded collaborator and a patient & detailed editor. I feel so very grateful to both you and Joan as my PhD advisors and have relished the opportunity to continue collaborating with you after my graduation. You elevate and inspire those around you to do better work, be better colleagues, chase down every perspective, and flesh out all the ideas—even the “bad” ideas, just to see if anything's there. Thanks to your influence SERJ surged, CAOS brought order to stat ed assessment, and we all had more fun in closer community... enjoying a slice of your delicious flourless chocolate cake, if we're lucky! Congratulations again to my mentor, collaborator, and friend!

Sincerely, Matt

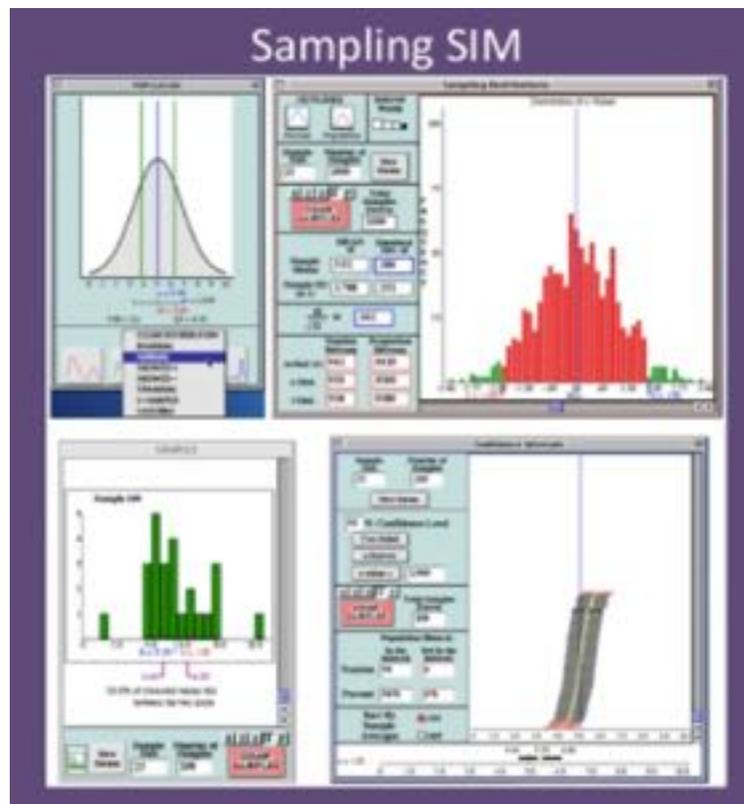
Matt Beckman

Dear Bob,

My master's capstone featured articles written by you and Joan (Garfield) on using simulation to develop conceptual understanding of sampling distributions. Encouraged by my master's advisor, I ended up taking a leave from teaching at Southwest High School (in Minneapolis) to enroll in the new Statistics Education doctoral track at the University of Minnesota. I have great memories of our little research group designing and teaching a course to use simulation techniques to teach inference, diving into existing research in the field, developing instruments to assess learning, and engaging in discussions in Auckland at the Statistical Literacy, Reasoning, and Thinking conference. Mostly, I am eternally grateful for your patience guiding me through the harrowing dissertation process.

Cheers to your receiving the *George Cobb Lifetime Achievement Award* (raising a single malt); so well deserved!

Warmly,  
Sharon



**d**elMas – anagram of “Medals” for how you’ve led:  
**E**ditor of the top journal in stat ed,

**L**OCUS and other funded schemes,  
**M**ajor player on Minnesota’s team,

**A**SA Stat Ed section chair,  
**S**tatistics educator extraordinaire!

It’s been a meaningful pleasure working with you  
over the years on the CAUSE RAB, with SERJ  
(as an author, then as your Assistant Editor), etc.  
Congratulations and thanks for all you’ve done for the field,

*Larry*

# Statistical Thinking



A Simulation Approach  
to Modeling Uncertainty

Catalysts for Change

Bob,

You are very deserving of this award! Your work throughout your career has been instrumental to so many in creating statistics education research as a discipline in its own right! Though your impact is far and wide through your scholarship, your personal interactions with so many of us are what have truly inspired several generations of innovation and research in statistics education! Working with you in the CAUSE research advisory board and on several efforts on graduate education and research guidelines through ASA were some of the most influential experiences in shaping my own career and how to build a statistics education focus in our PhD program at NC State. Your genuine spirit and warm smile are always a delight to everyone who interacts with you. Though I don't have any photos (that I can find), I have vivid memories of so many times spent engaged in wonderful conversations, both personal and professional! Congratulations on this lifetime achievement award. You are one of the giants for our field, and you have lifted us all up through your vision and innovations!

Many Smiles  
Hollylynnne

Hollylynnne Lee

CAUSE research group at USCOTS 2011



Bob,

I am so happy for you! Congratulations on this great honor! I praise God for your life and for your achievements!

You have positively impacted so many people. I am yet to meet a student who did not enjoy your EPSY classes, or a statistics education researcher who was not influenced by your research. Your impact on assessment of student learning and the carefully development of quality assessments will continue to impact scholars and inspire quality research.

In my life you were/are a professor, research adviser, assessment expert, and a kind and loving friend. You are also one of the few examples of faculty that have a good life balance. Whether you are singing on a choir, kicking butt on karate, on having fun with family, you always lead by example in showing what the life of a professional should look like. And the amazing part is that you still answer emails so fast! It does not matter how long we don't talk to each other. You always reply to my questions, concerns, and anxieties so fast, with kind and encouraging words, and with valuable input and reflection. Knowing you and working with you has been a privilege.

Your great work goes beyond the classroom, into statistics education research, and into the world.

Thank you for all you did and all you do!

Many hugs,  
Anelise



Dear Bob,

Congratulations on this well-deserved honor! I remember how excited I was, more than a decade ago, when I was accepted to the UMN Statistics Education PhD program, and I found out that my advisor would be THE Bob delMas who had authored many of the articles I'd read. :) Your work has had such a profound impact on the statistics education community worldwide, and I am lucky to have learned so much from you. I want to thank you for always being there to support me through my career journey, first as a graduate student and then through multiple job changes. I wish you a happy and restful retirement, and hope I continue to see you at our local stat ed socials.

All the best,  
Liz

Liz Brondos Fry



The International Collaboration for Research on

STATISTICAL REASONING, THINKING AND LITERACY



SRTL

Dear Award Panel,

We are pleased to support the nomination of Robert delMas for a George Cobb Lifetime Achievement Award. We have known Bob for 25 years as an international leader, mentor and significant innovator in statistics education research.

Bob is a founding member of the International Collaborative for Research in Statistical Reasoning, Thinking and Literacy (SRTL), which began in 1999. SRTL is an academic community of leading and emerging researchers and educators in statistics education, focused on bringing about change in the field by focusing on the development of students' statistical reasoning at all levels. Bob is one of the most consistent contributors and leaders of this community from its inception. In particular, Bob's deep knowledge of learning theories have resulted in contributions to innovative curriculum, assessment and technologies that have had a significant impact on statistics education at the college level. For example, he was a key member of the team who developed the university CATALST curriculum, which embedded frontier knowledge of statistical modelling, informal statistical inference, and simulations and randomization-based instructional methods. This curriculum has been adopted at multiple universities across the US. It is one of the first of its kind to use students' contextual and personal understanding as a foundation from which to build more formal statistical understanding. Although these ideals have been raised by the field, few have been so successful in translating these ideals into practice.

Another key contribution that Bob has made to the international community is in his mentorship and enculturation of young researchers into the field. He is well-known for his kind, caring guidance and willingness to support the development of young scholars and the community. His work is often "behind the scenes", where he is a prolific reviewer, co-author, and consistent member and leader of community activities and initiatives. For example, Bob was one of the section leaders of the recent *International Handbook of Research in Statistics Education* (Springer, 2018) and has served in multiple editorial roles in statistics education, including lead editor of the *Statistics Education Research Journal* (2009-2014). In these roles, he took great care to both lead and mentor other researchers and educators, including those from developing countries, to grow a young and diverse group of emerging scholars.

All in all, Bob has a long history of significant and comprehensive contributions to statistics education. His work is far-reaching in many dimensions of the field. He is indeed an obvious candidate for this award.

Sincerely,



Dani Ben-Zvi & Katie Makar  
Co-Chairs

***The International Collaboration for Research in Statistical Reasoning, Thinking and Literacy***

With Dani at ICOTS-10 in Kyoto



USCOTS 2013



March 3, 2021

To: George Cobb Lifetime Achievement Award in Statistics Education Review Committee

Re: **Bob delMas - nomination**

Dear colleagues:

It is my pleasure to write this letter of support in nominating Bob for the George Cobb Award. I have known Bob in various professional capacities for over 20 years, ever since we spent a week together in 1999 at the first forum of SRTL in Israel. Afterwards, I have followed up his work and read many of his publications, had various chats at conferences, worked with him during a 2-week stay at the U of Minnesota in 2008, etc.

During these years, I witnessed Bob's many contributions to statistics education in the USA and abroad, including to research-based knowledge focused on understanding and teaching core constructs in statistics, educating many grad students, promoting the ARTIST assessment collection, and serving in professional roles to ASA and at conferences. (And not to forget what a masterful teacher and presenter he is - I sat on several of his classes and talks). Very few in the statistics education community have had such an enduring presence.

Let me focus on Bob's contribution to statistics education worldwide, in his service to IASE, the Int'l Association for Statistical Education. In 2010-2013, after gaining much experience as JSE's Associate Editor, Bob volunteered for four long years as Editor of the Statistics Education Research Journal (SERJ), IASE's flagship peer-reviewed publication. (He started this role soon after I finished my 4-year stint as SERJ editor in 2008). At first, Bob consulted me on several occasions regarding both conceptual and technical matters, as he shaped his editorial strategy, but soon took off and I just watched in great satisfaction how he navigated SERJ to new heights. This was during a time SERJ had to cope with a steady increase in submissions, and Bob aspired to nurture young international researchers, while keeping and increasing the quality of published research.

For the reasons described above, I warmly recommend that Bob delMas is awarded the prestigious George Cobb Lifetime Achievement Award in Statistics Education.

Yours sincerely,

Prof. (Retired) Iddo Gal  
Past-President, International Association for Statistical Education, IASE  
Personal webpage: <http://lecturers.haifa.ac.il/en/hw/igal>



Dear Bob,

Congratulations to your lifetime achievement award. Well deserved! I am appreciating your work in statistics education very much for many years and look back and forward to inspiring talks with you at professional meetings.

All the best from Paderborn University, Germany,

Rolf

Rolf Biehler

Dear Bob,

My heartfelt congratulations on your award! I have such good memories of the conferences that we both attended, starting in 2001, SRTL-2 in Australia. You and your colleagues also organized a memorable conference in Minnesota. If I remember well, George Cobb then joined us. I am also grateful for the editorial and review work you did to make statistics education a serious discipline of its own.

THANKS!  
Arthur

Arthur Bakker

STRL-11



STRL-9

Kia ora Bob,

Congrats on the Lifetime Achievement Award in Statistics Education.

I have fond memories of working with you at SRTL conferences, and this photo from SRTL-8 reminds me of how you care for and grow our community of statistics educators.

I also remember a long time ago you visiting with Ian and I at our place when you were in New Zealand. I hope that we have opportunities to meet up again in the future, be it in NZ or elsewhere in the world.

Ngā mihi nui

Pip 🍌

Pip Arnold

CONGRATULATIONS Bob and thanks for everything you have done to improve statistics education. I wasn't able to dig up any old pictures, but I'll always remember you standing at your computer (before that was a thing) and tinkering on software to help students visualize and interact with statistics concepts. I'll also always be thankful for your tangents and your humor. It was such a pleasure working with you and Joan all those years ago. Your impact on the community, whether ARTIST or CATALST or SERJ or ICOTS or JSE or CAUSE (to name a few) is long standing, as is your impact on me personally! Thank you for your support and inspiration. May the best of the past be the worst of the future.

Thanks,

Beth

Beth Chance

Dear Bob,

I'm so excited to hear that you've been named the winner of the George Cobb CAUSE Lifetime Achievement Award. This is fabulous news and well-deserved. Throughout your career you have tirelessly and effectively worked to improve statistics education and to ensure that statistics education research is on a sound scientific footing. This has included your exceptional work as a mentor, your dedicated editorial efforts as a reviewer and editor (Statistics Education Research Journal, 2009-2014), chair of the ASA Committee on Statistics in Two Year Colleges, and past chair of the ASA Section on Statistics Education (now Section on Statistics and Data Science Education)

Along with others in the community, I have directly benefited from the outcomes and deliverables of your many funded grants and related projects. Your work on the LOCUS project has improved the assessment of high school statistics courses through the development of a large set of validated items. Your work on the eATLAS project led to the development and dissemination of the Statistics Teaching Inventory (STI) is an instrument designed to assess the instructional practices and beliefs of instructors of introductory statistics courses. Your leadership with the CATALST project helped to promulgate an innovative introductory curriculum and to develop a cohort of faculty able to teach it. The STEPS and AIMS projects contributed substantially to understanding instructor characteristics and approaches to adapt materials, respectively.

One project, however, stands out in terms of impact that continues to resonate broadly in the community: your efforts as co-PI (with Joan and Beth) on the Web-based ARTIST (Assessment Research Tools for Improving Statistical Thinking, <https://apps3.cehd.umn.edu/artist>) project. These validated instruments and assessments were developed and made accessible through the above website, including the Comprehensive Assessment of Statistics [CAOS] pre-test, post-test, and eleven topic assessments (e.g., Bivariate comparisons and study design). These items were particularly valuable as they provided many examples of problems that focused on statistical thinking more than statistical computation. More than 15 years after the grant ended, these online assessments continue to be used by the community (myself included, as recently as January, 2021) as a way to provide low-stakes assessments and practice on conceptual understanding for our students.

Your work on these projects has been leveraged by dozens of workshops, presentations, and papers that he has presented or written, have had a broad impact on the teaching and learning of college-level statistics. I can't imagine a more worthy recipient! We are thankful and hugely appreciative.

Warmly,

Dr. Nicholas Horton

Dear Bob,

Congratulations on the George Cobb Lifetime Achievement Award, this comes as no surprise since you are a great teacher, researcher and a mentor in the field of statistics education. Thank you so much for teaching, guiding and just being super helpful when I was in the stat education program. It would not have been the same without you. Every time I have Ice-cream I'm reminded of you and the story you shared with the 8261 class about your everyday ice-cream consumption, what a great story to get us interested in statistics and variability. Enjoy your award, you surely deserve it.

Your friend from the north

Auja

Aubjörg Björnsdóttir



Bob,

When we solicited letters to support your nomination for the George Cobb Lifetime Achievement Award in Statistics Education, the enthusiasm from the statistics education community was so heart-warming as they rallied around celebrating your research, your service, and your kindness. What a joy it was reading about your work and being the recipient of all the emails in support of your nomination. It was difficult to write a nomination letter that captured all that you've given. One thing that really stuck out was the way that you've not only been an ace researcher and leader, but also that you've gone above and beyond sharing your talents, care, and joy (including, but not limited to, salsa dancing and harmonica!). I think you've been a leader not only in statistics education "stuff" but also in authentic life-sharing that helps build true, authentic community.

You have been such a blessing in my life. It seems you show up at all the right times with words of encouragement, acts of service, or direction. Some examples include: when I was nervous moving to Minnesota for graduate school and you helped me learn where I could find gluten free food in Minneapolis; when you encouraged me in the UMN Recreation Center Lobby regarding setbacks on my dissertation; when you've come through with great insights on our collaborative papers on the CIS research; when you seemed undeterred when our decision tree research was initially rejected—helping me to learn to not take negative reviews as a final declaration of failure; at USCOTS when I was running late but you prepared a gluten-free plate for me (and I was SO hungry!); at ICOTS when you encouraged me to submit my work instead of worrying about whether it was good enough; when we had our first baby and you and Rose brought us dinner and lent us your amazing rocking chair and rocked Gordon to sleep when we were so sleep deprived we didn't know up from down. It is not surprising how at any mention of your name Michael immediately says, "I love that guy." The sentiment is true for all of us.

Congratulations, my dear teacher, mentor, friend, encourager. You are a very worthy recipient of this prestigious award. As you step into retirement and your next phase of life, I wish you the deepest joy and blessings!!!

Nicola



**Holding Gordon**



**With Nicola and Catherine**

Thank you, Bob, for all you have done for the statistics education community, and especially for my statistics education journey. Your insights, your ability to ask the hard questions, and especially your tangents have impacted the way I teach and do small-r(eseach). You were my first connection to the field at USCOTS in 2009 (remember our 3-mile speed walk?), and I remember thinking, this is where I belong due your charismatic, warm, open nature.

Laura Le

Congrats on this big achievement and best of luck in your retirement!

Laura

Dad,

I am so proud of you for the amazing career you've had and the people whose lives you have touched. When I was in grad school I valued our talks about teaching so much, and the most important thing I learned from you was to always have compassion and respect for your students, to put yourself in their shoes, give them the benefit of the doubt, and set them up for success. You have helped me and so many people become better teachers. Congratulations!

Elise delMas

Elise



Congratulations Bob!

I am so happy that you are being recognized with this special award, named for our dear friend George Cobb. It has been a joy to work with you and share a warm friendship over these many years.

From our first meetings with Chick Ahlgren to talk about sampling distributions, to hiring you as a research assistant, to welcoming you as a colleague in Educational Psychology, to working together in our graduate program, you have been a wonderful collaborator.

We have traveled the world together, giving talks, sharing our research, and working on grant projects. We have dreamed up new curriculum, tried out new software tools, brainstormed assessments, and conducted research interviews and case studies. We have ridden elephants in Thailand, floated in the Dead Sea, and been caught in an earthquake together, to name a few memorable experiences we have shared. You have helped me through difficult times, and always had an open door for me to come sit and chat.

Thank you for all these great memories. Enjoy this award and your forthcoming retirement!

With love, Joan



Congratulations to my long-time (but not old) friend and colleague! Such a well-deserved award, recognizing the influence you've had on the field and on many scholars who will continue your work. It's been an honor being part of the old-timers group with you at SRTL. Many hugs and gluten-free treats,

Andee

Andee Rubin

Dear Bob,

Congratulations on receiving the George Cobb Lifetime Achievement Award. How wonderful to be recognized for a "lifetime" of contributions to the field. I hope, however, that receiving this recognition doesn't lead you to hang up your spurs as I expect you still have at least another half-life of ideas to contribute.

Cliff

Cliff Konold

Congratulations on this wonderful and well-deserved honor. It has been such a pleasure and a privilege to work with you over the years. From our first collaboration on the ARTIST project, you changed the way I thought about assessment. Working with you on the CATALYST project was another way your work influenced how I thought about teaching. I never dreamed that project would create such a vibrant course. I still wish I had had the opportunity to teach it as I think the students gain such wonderful insight to statistical concepts from that truly collaborate endeavor we engaged in to create it. I am so excited to see you recognized in this extraordinary way!

-John

John Holcomb



Bob,

Congratulations on this well-deserved award! Your research and passion for statistics education has inspired me and so many others to enter this field. Thank you for the humor, heart, and endless stream of ideas that you bring to every room you enter. It has been a pleasure learning the ropes from an advisor as experienced, thoughtful, and supportive as you.

Chelsey

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Congratulations Bob on being awarded the well-deserved George Cobb Lifetime Achievement Award in Statistics Education. I first met you virtually, when I was an inexperienced statistics instructor seeking evidence-based answers for how to teach statistics. What I encountered was a lot of papers by "Bob delMas", "Joan Garfield", and "Andy Zieffler". When I visited Minneapolis for the first time, it wasn't really as a prospective student, it was to seek advice from an expert statistics educator. However, after our first meeting I knew I wanted to be able to work with you as your student. Your personal magnetism drew me in, as it has many others no doubt.

You are a patient, kind, and encouraging mentor and advisor. I look back at some of my notes from our meetings in my first year and think with hindsight, "How did Bob figure out what I was asking about? I can't even figure it out!" You always know what to say to keep my interest piqued, and know the right thing for me to do as the next step of my development. You always remember to have fun and aren't afraid of being wrong or questioning what we think we know, maxims that I hope I continue to live by throughout my life.

I can't help thinking about the scores of students who've had the fortune of sitting in your classroom, and the few of us who are blessed to call you our advisor. Thank you for dedicating a lifetime to supporting all of us, helping us become better statisticians and better statistics education professionals. Congratulations Bob.

- V.N. Vimal Rao

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V.N. Vimal Rao



Bob,

You are much more than a colleague. You are a dear friend that has been there through many years and countless conversations. I am honored to have you as a colleague and friend and am so happy you are being recognized for all your great work. Your contributions to the field of statistics education have made such an impact on so many students, faculty, scholars and will continue to impact the field long beyond your retirement. Thank you for being the person, scholar, teacher, colleague, and mentor you are. I am forever grateful our paths crossed on a serendipitous shuttle ride in Slovenia. With great thanks, admiration and appreciation,

Tim

Tim Jacobbe



Dear Bob,

Congratulations on receiving this extraordinarily-well-deserved award! When thinking back on our longtime friendship and collegueship I find that my memories are of drinking, music, and dancing. Fortunately for all concerned, I was not doing the dancing, but I did join in on the whiskey and the music. I fondly recall many excellent scotches around the world, including one not-so-good irish whiskey in Copenhagen and several very excellent glasses of scotch at a bargain price in Two Harbors, Minnesota. And I recall music nights at SRTL, including at least one accompanied by your wonderful guitar. Naturally, I also think of your scholarship: the papers you wrote that I and so many others often cite; (for me, the papers addressing misconceptions are particularly useful when arguing with mathematicians who think statistics is "easy"); the wonderful mentoring you've provided for your graduate students and young faculty who are now active members of our community; and the warmth and insight you bring to our discussions at these many happy conferences and colloquia. Our statistics education community has been very lucky to have you in it!

– Rob



SRTL 2013 Farewell

Dear Bob,

CONGRATULATIONS!!! I remember our first conversation back in spring 2013, before I had applied to the Statistics Education program. After just a few moments of chatting with you, I knew I had found my place. On December 30<sup>th</sup>, 2013, I received my acceptance letter, and I was simply delighted to see you listed as my advisor – fittingly enough, December 30<sup>th</sup> is my birthday. (I know we share birthday months!)

I'm proud of our work! Thank you for shepherding me into the qualitative work on statistical thinking. It was a joy to discover those student problem-solving cycles. Later on, when we dove into the psychology student data, I had much fun digging into the data complexities and modeling strategies with you. Those were wonderful research moments that we shared. Similarly, I will never forget the feeling of camaraderie you established in our statistics education research seminars, with all of us students. While I'm not sure if we ever landed on consensus definitions for any concept, I certainly learned how to better explore subjective ideas with a curious, open mind.

I owe a tremendous amount of my growth and career to you. Thank you for patiently guiding me through my literature review and dissertation. You supported me firmly, through the countless drafts, rewrites, and often swirly process of developing my thesis materials. Your effort and time invested in feedback, down to the final draft of the dissertation, was invaluable. I am forever grateful. I would not be where I am today without you!

You always took care of the small things as an advisor. I recall numerous days when you checked in on me and made sure I was doing OK, amid whirlwind semesters. Those brief moments and gestures mattered. (You even offered to take me kayaking, when I had to miss our stat ed kayaking day!) Bob, you made such a difference in my life and the lives of others within the statistics education community and beyond.

I am so happy for you and this well-deserved achievement.

With endless gratitude,  
Jonathan. (Jonathan Brown)



Bob,

Your generous support, thoughtful mentorship, endearing "dad jokes", and overwhelming decency have deeply touched my life. When I first got excited about your research, I had no idea that such a gentle, kind, and hardworking person was behind this body of work. I'll never forget you excitedly responding to an email from me on Thanksgiving with a custom interactive data visualisation; hosting my parents at your house for my Masters graduation; being a witness at my civil wedding and showing up again at my larger one; or those long hours at your dining room table brainstorming and hashing out dissertation research ideas together. I've been inspired as much by your humanity, your love for your family and students, as by your brilliant contributions to statistics education -- often behind the scenes as a bedrock and invaluable guide and collaborator. You deserve huge appreciation for what you've given to us, every bit as much as the many people you've loyally supported personally and professionally throughout your life and career.

Ethan

Ethan Brown

2003 CAUSE meeting



2004 CAUSE meeting





Bob

Congratulations on receiving the Cobb Lifetime Achievement Award!

The stat ed community thanks you for all of your contributions to statistics education and statistics education research, which have helped to move the field forward in meaningful ways and to the benefit of our students.

I think of you often and hope that our paths continue to cross in the future. I look forward to our next visit!

Roxy



Hi Bob,

Roxy Peck once pointed out how just a few decades ago teaching statistics often involved an instructor “facing the board with their back to the bored”. Your many contributions to statistics education have helped to turn that around. You have pioneered the sharing of resources through the web, shown how to develop proper activities and to assess their value, shown how to think about the process of learning, provided terrific and caring mentoring to a new generation of statistics educators, and given your time in service to the statistics education community.

With apologies to Roxy, the cartoon above is meant to applaud how your work has helped to eliminate the bored while outside of work you helped to eliminate the board!

Dennis





**The George Cobb Lifetime Achievement Award in Statistics Education** is presented by CAUSE at the U.S. Conference On Teaching Statistics (USCOTS or eCOTS) to an individual who, over an extended period of time, has made lasting contributions with broad impact to the field of statistics education.

The award committee is made up of the Director of CAUSE, the Chair of the CAUSE Board of Directors, the eCOTS Program Chair and selected past winners. The 2022 committee (Dennis Pearl, Allan Rossman, Megan Mocko, Danny Kaplan, Chris Franklin, Mike Shaughnessy, and Ann Watkins) presented the award to Bob delMas on Thursday May 26th, 2022 at a virtual ceremony.

Book design by Barbara Cohen & Dennis Pearl