



Newsletter

Spring 2007

OPEN Participation Year Round

By Chari Smith, OPEN Newsletter Editor

OPEN is always exploring ways to best serve the evaluation community. This year, the Program Committee will present a series of skills based trainings. This series will be offered instead of the annual OPEN conference. "We have decided not to offer an annual conference this year in order to give the committee an opportunity to do some major strategic planning," says Tanya Ostrogorsky, OPEN President-elect and Program Committee member. "We look forward to 2008 when we will be prepared to offer an awesome annual conference that will meet the needs of the vast majority of program evaluators across the state, and we invite anyone interested in helping plan events for the future to join us in the adventure."

The trainings will cover a range of topics to meet the needs of evaluators with various interests. This spring, the first training will focus on cost benefit approaches in social research. "This will be an exciting training for participants really interested in understanding how costs and benefits fit within the context of evaluation," says Pamela Clark, OPEN President.

In the summer, the second training will focus on defining evidence based practices in Oregon. For example, the Oregon Department of Human Services, Addictions and Mental Health Division, defines Evidence Based Practices (EBP) as "a practice that has been shown to produce results in several settings (replication) and can be exported (manuals, etc.)." Evidence based practice impacts multiple agencies such as the Oregon Youth Authority, Oregon Commission on Children & Families, Oregon Department of Corrections, the Oregon Criminal Justice Commission, and various tribal organizations. Training participants will gain a greater understanding of EBP and how it impacts evaluation as a whole.

The third training will be offered in the fall and focus on SPSS. This statistical analysis software has become one of the most valued tools for evaluators. The new version, SPSS 15, was recently released. As stated on their Web site, "SPSS for Windows provides you with a broad range of capabilities for the entire analytical process." Evaluators have different levels of experience with and usage of SPSS from simply running frequencies to in-depth regression analysis. Therefore, OPEN intends to include multi-level information for a wide range of users from the beginner to seasoned expert.

If you are interested in helping with planning any of the trainings or next year's conference, please contact Tanya Ostrogorsky at ostrogor@ohsu.edu.

Want to know more about OPEN members?
Coming soon: a new Web site feature - member profiles!
First up: An interview with new Metro Auditor Suzanne Flynn.

OPEN Focus on Student Members

Hi everyone, Gina Magharious here! I'm your 2007 Student Representative to the OPEN Council, and am also serving as this year's Member Services Committee Chair. Filling both these roles gives me a great vantage point for focusing on student members of OPEN. As I worked with the Council on planning for the upcoming year, I thought it was important to find out more about how OPEN can be of benefit to—and increase the involvement of—students who have an interest in evaluation as a possible career.

So, in January we developed an electronic survey and emailed it to all 43 OPEN student members. The survey asked 7 questions about students' specific needs, interests in, and expectations of OPEN as a professional organization. I am pleased to report that 20 students responded to the survey, giving us a 46.5% response rate. Here are highlights of what they said:

- Student respondents said they **joined** OPEN primarily **for two reasons**: networking and education.
- Although email announcements and workshops/presentations were each identified by about 25% of respondents as being the **most useful services** offered by OPEN, nearly one-third also said they were unsure what the most useful benefits of OPEN are!
- One-quarter of students would like to see OPEN **offer more** frequent education/training sessions (e.g., statistics, theory and design, career preparation, cultural competency, and evaluation in specific disciplines, among others), and offer "one-on-one" mentoring opportunities with veteran evaluators.
- 90% of respondents would be **interested in participating** in an OPEN student subgroup, and two-thirds said they might be willing to help lead such an effort. 95% would be interested in volunteering to help on OPEN committees and provide support for OPEN activities.

I really appreciate all students who responded. We will definitely consider students' feedback as we develop programs and activities throughout the year, and will incorporate as many of these valuable student suggestions as possible. In fact, several efforts are underway to address student needs. Practicing evaluators met recently with Portland State University graduate students to discuss career paths and expectations at a lunchtime brown bag session. We are also exploring the possibility of holding a similar session at another campus in Oregon and an Internship Fair in Portland by the end of the spring term. Stay tuned for details.

Don't hesitate to contact me at gina@pdx.edu if you have any questions or ideas about how OPEN can best support student (as well as regular) members!

--Gina

President's Message

Dear colleagues and friends,

Spring 2007 is filled with exciting events and great opportunities for networking and social outreach for OPEN members. Thanks to the great work of our two committees (Program Committee and Member Services Committee), OPEN is offering the following events this spring, and more are in the planning stages:

--Portland-based government research analysts meeting. Portland is home to many research analysts employed by various governmental agencies. A no-host brown bag lunch will enable them to meet each other and learn more about research being conducted by their colleagues. The brown bag session will be held on Thursday, April 12th from 12:00 PM to 1:00 PM at Cube Space (622 SE Grand Street, Portland, 503-206-3500).

--Public health research analysts meeting. In May, OPEN and the Epidemiology/Biostatistics Section of the Oregon Public Health Association will cosponsor a no-host brown bag lunch for public health research analysts and evaluators that will enable them to meet each other and learn more about research being conducted by their colleagues. This brown bag session will be held on Thursday, May 10th from 12:00 PM to 1:00 PM at Cube Space (see location details above).

--SAS special features training. Immediately following the Public Health Research Analysts brown bag, Renu Gehring, a Managing Partner at Ace-Cube, LLP, will present a training session on special features in the use of SAS statistical database and analysis software. The training will focus on SAS loops, functions and macro processing with examples from hospital discharge data. Ms. Gehring is a SAS Certified Professional with over 12 years of programming experience. More information available soon!

Registration is required for all three events, so watch your email inbox or the OPEN Web site for details. If you have an idea for a brown bag session (and would like to volunteer to facilitate it!) or have suggestions for other program topics or events, please let us know. I look forward to seeing you at one or all of these upcoming OPEN activities.

--Pamela Clark, 2007 OPEN President, clark_pamela@yahoo.com.