Significance Features Article by Cochran in October 2012 Issue

RUSTON, LA. – An article by Dr. James J. Cochran, Bank of Ruston Endowed Research Professor and Associate Professor of Quantitative Analysis at Louisiana Tech University, is featured in the October issue of the popular magazine Significance. In the article, “Frankenstein for President: Statistics and Operations Research come together to create the Optimal Candidate for the U.S. Presidency,” Professors Cochran and David J. Curry of the University of Cincinnati discuss their use of statistical estimation and mathematical programming to project the winners of Presidential elections, find the optimal positions for a candidate for the Presidency, assess the strengths and weaknesses of a candidate’s platform, and assess the viability of a third party candidate. The article is based on forthcoming research papers by Cochran, Curry, Rajesh Radhakrishnan, and Jon Pinnell entitled “Political Engineering: Optimizing a U.S. Presidential Candidate’s Platform” (to appear in Annals of Operations Research) and “Hierarchical Bayesian Prediction Methods in Election Politics: Introduction and Major Test” (to appear in Journal of Political Marketing).

About Cochran’s article, Significance Editor Julian Champkin said ‘The art of getting elected is getting more scientific. The fascinating thing about Professor Cochran’s work is that it can tell a political candidate exactly what positions on the key issues he should adopt to win most votes. It will be interesting to find out as the 2012 campaign progresses whether the candidates stick to their principles or adjust their platforms to gain votes and get elected.’

Significance, which is published six times annually by the Royal Statistical Society and the American Statistical Association, aims to communicate and demonstrate in an entertaining, thought-provoking and non-technical way the practical use of statistics in all walks of life and to show informatively and authoritatively how statistics benefit society. Articles are largely non-technical and hence accessible and appealing to the general public. The October 2012 issue also includes articles on contrasting styles of classic movie directors such as Hitchcock and Cecil B. DeMille, on whether Prozac is safe for young people, and on whether violence in the home increases when big sporting matches are being broadcast.

Cochran, who received his Ph.D. in statistics from the University of Cincinnati in 1997 and joined the Louisiana Tech College of Business faculty in 2000, is considered a leading authority in the areas of sample based and Bayesian optimization, statistical methods, computational statistics, statistical learning, and mathematics education.

For more information, please contact Debbie Van De Velde in Louisiana Tech’s College of Business at 318-257-3741 or debrav@latech.edu.