Publications

Sara Finney (Senior Assessment Specialist and Professor of Graduate Psychology) and her two first-year MA advisees, Catie Mathers and Aaron Myers published an article on the psychometric properties of the examinee motivation scale across test instructions conditions. More specifically, research investigating methods to influence examinee motivation during low-stakes assessment of student learning outcomes has involved manipulating test session instructions. The impact of instructions is often evaluated using a popular self-report measure of test-taking motivation developed at JMU (i.e. SOS). However, the impact of these manipulations on the psychometric properties of the test-taking motivation measure has yet to be investigated, resulting in questions regarding the comparability of motivation scores across instruction conditions and the scoring of the measure. To address these questions, the factor structure and reliability of test-taking motivation scores were examined across instruction conditions during a low-stakes assessment session designed to address higher education accountability mandates. Incoming first-year college students were randomly assigned to one of three instruction conditions where personal consequences associated with the test results were incrementally increased. Confirmatory factor analyses indicated a two-factor structure of test-taking motivation was supported across conditions. Moreover, reliability of motivation scores was adequate even in the condition with the greatest personal consequence, which was reassuring given low reliability has been found in high-stakes contexts. Thus, the findings support the use of this self-report measure for the valuable research that informs motivation instruction interventions for low-stakes testing initiatives common in higher education assessment.

See the last page of this report for citation information regarding the publication.

2016 APT Rater Training & Ratings

A group of GA consultants from the PASS office here in CARS, along with CARS Staff, and faculty from around JMU participated in the APT rater training workshop and APT rating process July 18th through the 25th. Each academic program submitting a report was rated, using the APT rubric, for quality indicators. An extensive quality control process is currently underway, with feedback to the academic programs to be sent out on October 1st. A great big thanks to all of the faculty who participated in this year’s ratings; and congratulations to Allison Ames (faculty supervisor of the PASS office) and her group of graduate students for their excellent guidance.
• Jeanne Horst (Associate Assessment Specialist & Associate Prof. of Grad Psyc.) and PhD student Heather Harris were invited to serve and accepted positions on the editorial board for Practical Assessment, Research, & Evaluation. The journal can be found at the following link: http://www.pareonline.net

• The PASS office in CARS is welcoming a new crew of graduate assistants for the 2016-17 academic year. First, we want to thank previous PASS consultants (Scott Strickman, Nick Curtis, and outgoing PASS leader, Courtney Sanders) for their excellent service. Thank you! The new PASS consultants are Liz Pyburn and Tom Waterbury, along with Nick Curtis, who has moved into the PASS leadership role.

• CARS faculty and staff held a two-day retreat at the conference center at Horizons of Valley Pike on August 18th & 19th. The group enjoyed the time out of the office to focus on goal-setting and planning for the upcoming academic year. The goals and initiatives from last year’s retreat were revisited, and the group celebrated the accomplishments on those fronts, as well as all of the other hard work that contributed to the success of the 2015-16 year. Dr. Linda Halpern was able to join us for some of the morning on Thursday to discuss engagement, and hear about the strides CARS has made in regards to national visibility (one of our main initiatives from the previous year. Additionally, PhD students Nick Curtis and Scott Strickman joined for part of the meeting to highlight the student contributions to CARS initiatives. This is the first year graduate students have been invited to participate and their input was highly valued.

• On August 16th through the 18th, doctoral student Liz Pyburn and Jeanne Horst led a statistics refresher “boot camp”. The workshop was attended by 33 students, some of whom were incoming CARS graduate assistants. The boot camp was a great success, thanks to Jeanne & Liz for their hard work!
Rising 3rd year doctoral students pose for a “Last first-day of school” picture on August 29th, as they begin their final year in the Assessment & Measurement PhD program. This group will be finishing up their final classes, along with proposing and defending dissertations this year and those smiles on their faces tell us that they can see the light at the end of the academic tunnel!

Pictured from left to right: Jessica Jacovidis, Scott Strickman, Courtney Sanders, Kelly Foelber, and Kristen Smith.

Summer Internships

Doctoral students Courtney Sanders, Kelly Foelber, and Heather Harris spent part of their summer working off site at different internships in the fields of assessment, measurement, and psychometrics. Courtney spent her summer in Atlanta, GA at SACS-COC where she worked in the Office of Research and Training. Kelly temporarily relocated to Philadelphia where she held an 8-week internship with the National Board of Medical Examiners. Heather spent her summer in the D.C./Maryland area while she interned at the American Registry of Diagnostic Medical Sonography, and the Alliance for Physician Certification & Advancement. All three students returned to CARS in August and are excited to apply their experiences to their ongoing PhD work. A special CARS Talk will be held on September 30th to give these students an opportunity to share their experiences, discuss what courses and activities they felt helped prepare them for these internships, and lessons and skills learned on-site throughout their internships. Please join us if you are interested, all are welcome!
Fall Assessment Day turned 30 this year! About 4,600 incoming freshmen were invited to Fall Assessment Day, on August 26, 2016, which took place in the newly renovated ISAT/EnGeo buildings as well as the Assessment & Testing Center. With the help of almost 60 proctors, we were able to administer twenty-four different assessments to assess a variety of skills, including critical thinking, ethical reasoning, information literacy, quantitative/scientific reasoning, oral communication, and writing skills. A recently developed partnership with Educational Testing Service (ETS) also allowed us to administer one of their quality online assessments – the ETS HEIghten Critical Thinking Assessment, to about 60 students. Because the administration went fairly smoothly, we will administer other ETS measures assessing Civic Competency & Engagement (and perhaps Intercultural Competency & Diversity) in the future. In our ongoing attempt to find data collection methods that are more environmentally friendly and less costly, we piloted the use of student’s smartphones for data collection with about 60 students this year. Because this pilot was also fairly successful, we will expand this practice in future years.

We could not do this all without the help of some very important people....

The Proctors

And the Assessment Day Team

From left to right: Chi Au (GA), Derek Sauder (GA –Lead), Paula Love (Administrative Support), Dena Pastor (Faculty Lead), and Kristen Campbell (GA)
International Meeting of the Psychometric Society – Asheville, N.C.

A large group of CARS faculty and graduate students traveled to Asheville, N.C. in July to attend, and present at the annual meeting of the Psychometric Society. Faculty members Sara Finney, Allison Ames, Debbi Bandalos, and Jeanne Horst along with graduate students Catie Mathers, Aaron Myers, Jessica Jacovdis, Liz Pyburn, and Madison Holzman all participated in the IMPS conference that was held from July 12th through the 15th.

Catie, Aaron, and Sara presented on the test-taking motivation research mentioned on the first page of this report and in the publications section. While Allison and Jessica presented a poster titled “Hyperpriors for IRT Models”. Madison & Jeanne presented findings from Madison’s first-year project with the Madison Research Essentials Skills Test (MREST) items. The project specifically addressed the concerns Cluster One has about the differences in test performance across international and domestic US students on the MREST. Her findings support the use of the test across the two student groups.

Jessica was the winner of a travel award from the International Meeting of the Psychometric Society (IMPS) that is typically given to graduate students wishing to present their work at the conference. Applications were judged by the quality of the methodological innovation or creative application of statistical analysis to an issue in psychometrics. As a result of receiving the award, Jessica had her registration fees waived, and received additional funds to support her overall travel to the conference. Congratulations to Jessica on this award and opportunity!
During the months of July & August, Orientation was “all-hands-on-deck” as students arrived for First-Year Springboard. All incoming first-year students attended orientation programming designed to provide them with the tools they need to be successful at JMU. As part of Orientation’s efforts to provide the best preparation and experience possible for incoming students, all students who participate are required to attend an assessment session. The assessments included items measuring students’ understanding of the programming content as well as student satisfaction and perceived sense of cohesion to JMU. Each day of First-Year Springboard, anywhere between 300-400 students came to the Assessment & Testing Center to complete these assessments. Orientation GA Shane Kerr, along with Steve Dutton and a group of Orientation Peer Advisors (OPAs) were heavily involved in administration of the assessments.

The 2015-16 CARS’ Assessment Day/Data Management Team (Derek Sauder, Kelly Foelber, Jessica Jacovidis, and Dena Pastor) published a short article on the use of technology to ensure data accuracy and efficiency in the collection of data in higher education assessment for Intersection, the newsletter of the Association for the Assessment of Learning in Higher Education (AALHE). The newsletter can be found here: http://www.aalhe.org/wp-content/uploads/AALHE-Intersection-Summer-2016.pdf
Presentations


Publications
