



2015 Tarnai Award Winner - Nathan Palmer of the Social and Economic Sciences Research Center (SESRC), Washington State University

Nathan Palmer from Washington State University Social and Economic Sciences Research Center (SESRC) has been awarded the 2015 John Tarnai Memorial Scholarship by the Association of Academic Survey Research Organizations (AASRO). The award provides a scholarship in memory of John Tarnai, former AASRO president, and recognizes an outstanding but relatively new Survey Center employee with great promise for pursuing a long-term career in survey research. The scholarship defrays the cost of attending the annual meetings of the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR), the umbrella professional organization for academic, government, private sector and non-profit survey researchers.

In nominating Nathan for the scholarship, Dr. Rose Krebill-Prather, Assistant Director of SESRC, wrote: "Nathan has a strong commitment to further learning more about survey methods and producing quality survey data. Toward that end, Nathan plans to eventually pursue a graduate education to obtain a Ph.D. in Sociology."

When Nathan first came to SESRC in 2012 having just completed a Master's degree in statistics, he was put to work as a telephone interviewer rather than as the data analyst he had trained to be. He enthusiastically embraced the new work, and was soon promoted into data collection supervisor and then data manager positions. Nathan quickly learned SESRC's CATI and web programming software, combining his technical skills, newly acquired familiarity with front-line interviewing, and a careful eye for detail to maintain data quality and operational efficiency on complex and multi-mode projects. Dr. Krebill-Prather notes that, "consistently, Nathan is mindful of the specifications for each survey project and raises good questions about procedures and makes suggestions that promote and preserve data quality."

Nathan demonstrates a keen interest in methodological rigor and research, showing a particular affinity for questions of visual design issues, time of day/day of week variation in response, and the effect of different survey modes on data outcomes. According to Dr. Krebill-Prather, "Nathan has indicated he would like to be more involved with survey research methods so that we are better able to get the results the client is truly after, which is not necessarily the answer the client might expect, but the results that are accurate and precise."

The AASRO Awards Committee was especially impressed with the speed at which Nathan immersed himself in the survey project work and the energy with which he has pursued additional survey research methods training since being hired by the SESRC. He not only regularly attends monthly AAPOR webinars, but took on responsibility for scheduling these events for the entire SESRC staff. In winter 2014, Nathan co-authored a poster presentation highlighting non-response bias issues brought to the fore by a SESRC business survey. In Spring 2015, Nathan was the first SESRC staff member to



inquire about and enroll in a graduate-level survey methods course to be offered by luminary survey methodologist Don Dillman.