SNRS Spring 2018 Survey – Results

Take-home message #1: **Students are craving more statistics.**
Statistics were by far seen as the most potentially useful activity we asked about. While that is extremely important to identify, it is also a bit tricky to tackle since we use so many different types of statistics across SNRS. However, in addition to the quantitative and statistical courses already in place, we can work to offer more opportunities. As a first step toward this, Jason Harmon is organizing a semi-formal survey of statistical methods that will start this semester.

Take-home message #2: **We are a diverse group with diverse needs.**
After accounting for statistics, there was a tremendous amount of diversity in the types of activities and the structure of activities students would find helpful. While an interesting challenge, it means that there are also many opportunities (even if no one thing is going to be great for everyone). To help start tackling this diversity of potential activities right away, we can take advantage of the next take-home.

Take-home message #3: **Some students are willing to help lead.**
Some students expressed an interest in helping lead specific activities or helping organize things more broadly and generally. SNRS wants to support leadership activities while helping develop more opportunities for all SNRS graduate students. We will start by having interested people get together and go from there.

SNRS Graduate Student Activities Survey
May 2018 – Results

SNRS Graduate students were emailed a survey on qualtrics on May 8th to gauge their initial interest in activties we could put together for graduate students (closed 5/18/18). Questions focused on potential topics, format of activities, and open-ended self-identification of the types of activities students would want to participate in or help lead.

Who responded

Using the best list we had at the time, 50 students were invited to participate and 27 responded. For this survey, MNRM students were not included because we did not have an up to date list (a problem we have now fixed so they can be included going forward).

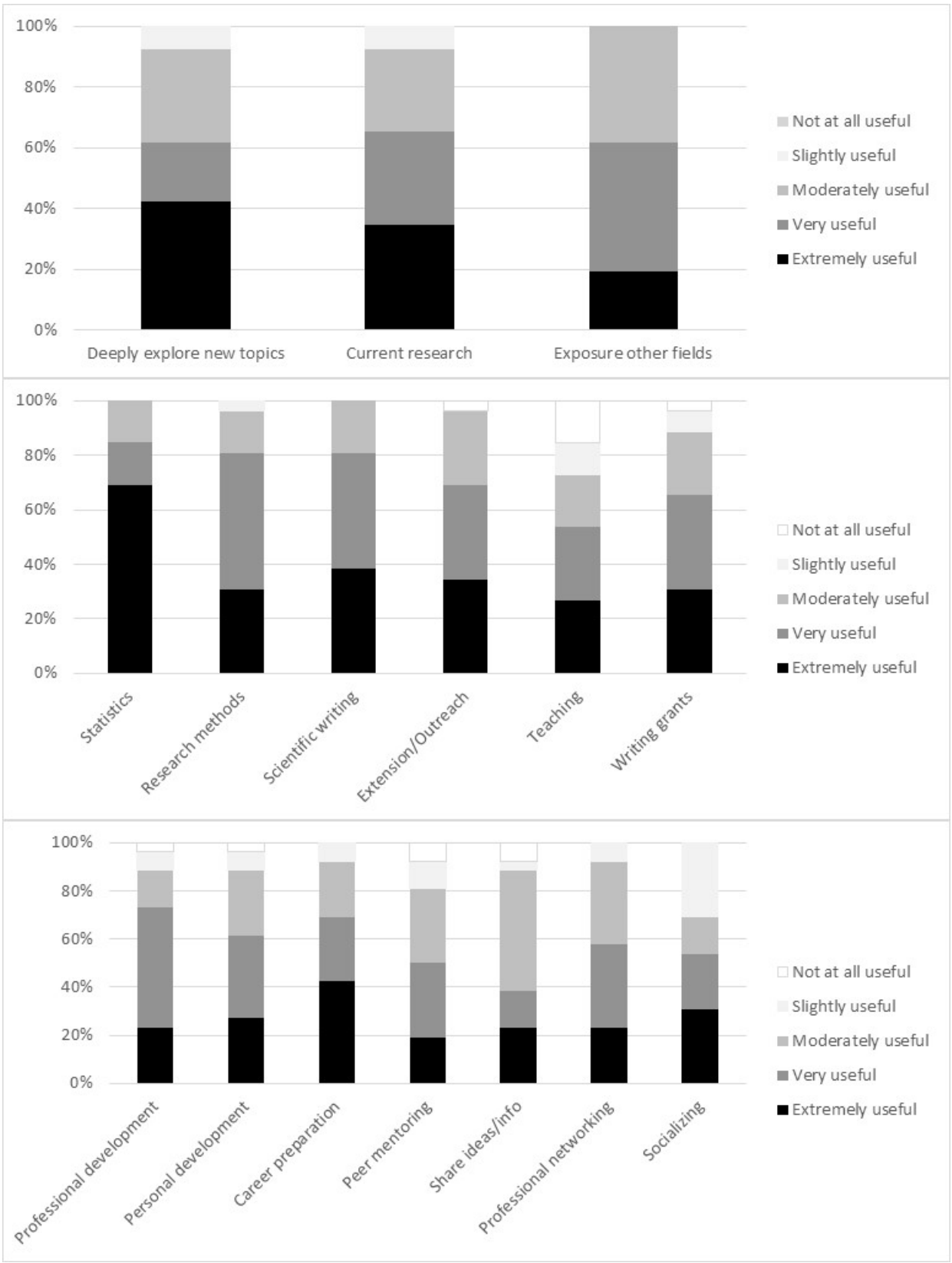
Here is a break-down of who was invited and who responded:

Category	**Invited**	**Responses**
MS	70%	59.3%
PHD	30%	40.7%
ENT	18%	18.5%
NRM	18%	14.8%
RNG	32%	37.0%
SOIL	32%	29.6%
Active student	74%	70.4%
Recently defended	26%	29.6%

Summary of responses: Overall we had a fairly decent number of responses, especially for being at the end of the semester. Almost all students who started the survey finished it. PhD students were a little more likely to fill out the survey than MS students, but otherwise there was fairly even representation by main groups.

Types of Activities

Students were asked how useful they felt different types of activities would be. The types were presented in a rough grouping to try to help promote thinking and comparison of types of activities. The results below are presented by grouping that was given the students. For each type of activity there is the distribution of responses (proportion of respondents who gave a given answer; answers on likert scale from extremely useful to not at all useful; the darker the bar the more useful the student thought the activity might be).


100%
80%
60%
40%
20%
0%
Deeply explore new topics
Current research
Exposure other fields
Not at all useful
Slightly useful
Moderately useful
Very useful
Extremely useful
Statistics
Research methods
Scientific writing
Extension/Outreach
Teaching
Writing grants
Professional development
Personal development
Career preparation
Peer mentoring
Share ideas/info
Professional networking
Socializing

Types of Activity – Results #1: Statistics

Statistics/analysis activities were far and away the activity seen as the most useful. Almost 2/3 of respondents said that some sort of statistics activity would be extremely useful. Interestingly, PhD students were even more heavily biased in their response; 100% of PhD students said a statistics activity would be extremely useful.

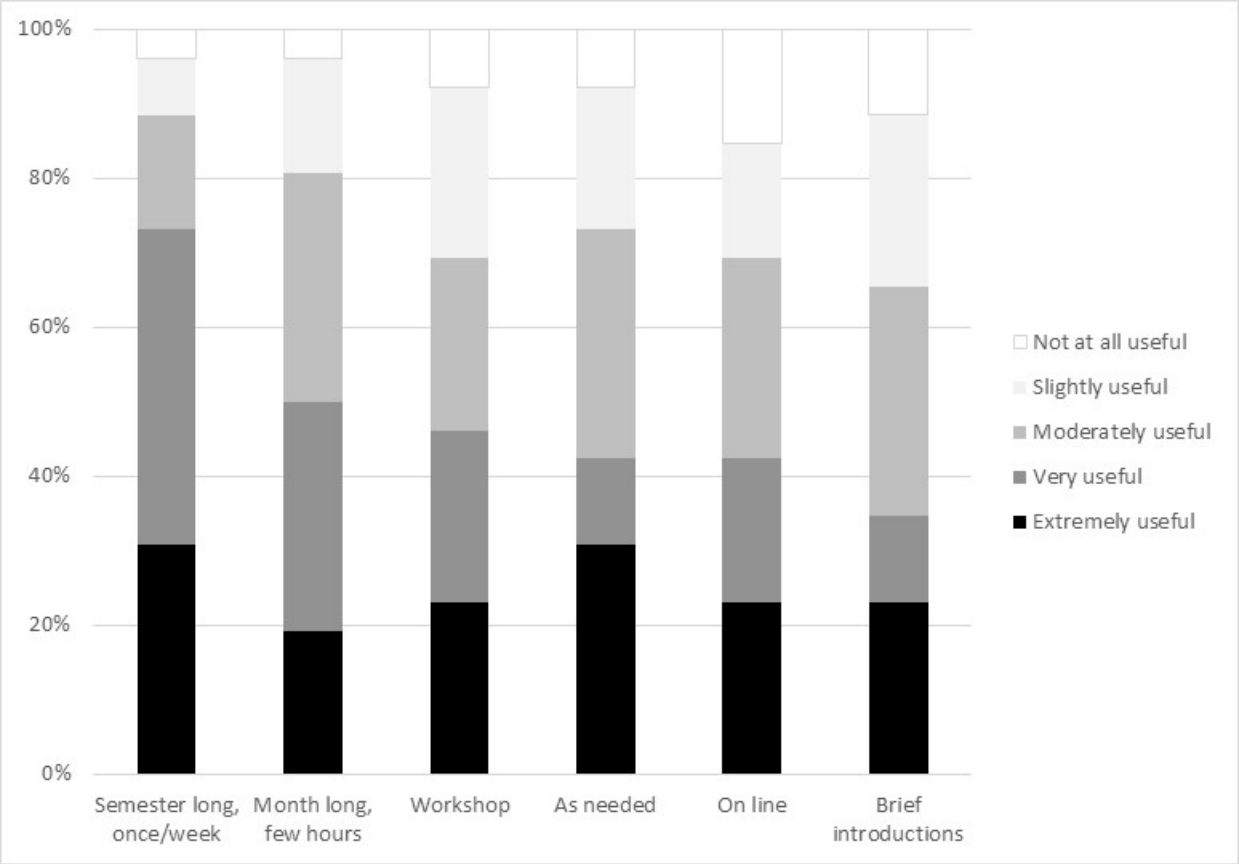
Next steps: Given its perceived importance to students, I think we should move forward with potential opportunities for statistics related activities. I think there are a couple of different types of opportunity to consider, with the overwhelming difficulty that there it is going to be very difficult to offer any kind of in depth course that is helpful across all of SNRS. Regardless, I think there are things we can do to help.

Types of Activity – Results #2: Lots of potentially useful activities

To me, another of the most striking results of this survey is the vast variety of potential activities that people might find useful. While that is somewhat challenging in that it doesn't necessarily point us to specific targets (outside of statistics), it does mean that there may be some level of interest for a variety of different types of activities. That means that there is a potential opportunity for students or faculty who are particularly interested in a given topic to develop an activity in that area and find others who would want to spend time on it as well.

This idea is furthered by the answers to the open-ended questions (not shown), which demonstrate a diversity of different types of activities students might be interested in attending or participating in. It is likely worth considering how to promote the discussion of different ideas. This could potentially be done by different people volunteering to lead (or recruit help) various activities and/or it might be helpful to consider a regular graduate student time where students decide on different topics and invite people to lead discussions while perhaps also socializing, etc.

Format of activities
Students were also asked about the potential usefulness of different formats. Answers are displayed as above.



Format of Activities – Results: Lots of variation
Students were asked about a variety of different formats for activities and which ones they would find useful. While there was a slight preference for activities that were like a typical seminar (once per week for the entire semester), it is important to point out that there was tremendous variation in answers. Every format type had 5-8 people who identified it as "extremely useful" and 1-4 people identify that format type as "not at all useful". Moreover, looking at individual responses shows little correlation among answers. Different students found each of those activities particularly useful or not useful. This is again a challenge for organization as it means not everything is going to work as well for everyone. It will be important to consider how to best use multiple formats to help different students get the most out of different activities.