

Development In Business Simulation & Experiential Exercises, Volume 18, 1991

“A CRITICAL REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT OF ABSEL’S AWARD-WINNING PROCEDURES AND PROTOCOLS”

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ABSTRACT

This paper is the third in a three part series of self-examination reports on ABSEL. The principal purpose of this paper is to report on the procedures and protocols ABSEL has used to designate award-winning papers. The paper also considers the procedures used by other academic organizations and compares these to ABSEL’s. Further, the paper compares the award-winning papers of ABSEL to both ABSEL papers in general and to articles in SIMULATION & GAMES. The paper contains information on the progress of papers after having won an ABSEL award. The paper also reports on the career impact of the award for the award-winning authors. Finally, the paper offers some suggestions for ABSEL in regard to the procedures for designating award-winning papers.

INTRODUCTION

This paper is the third in a three part series of self-assessment and introspective articles on ABSEL. The first article was a review of the ABSEL Proceedings for the years 1976 to 1984 in terms of degree of rigor of research designs and the degree to which they address various educational objectives (Butler, Markulis, & Strang, 1985). The second article addressed issues of authorship, in ABSEL Proceedings over a 15 year period, including trends in author turnover, multiple authorship, institutional representation, etc., (Markulis, Ricci, Strang, 1989). This article focuses on the award-winning papers, and the process and protocols used by ABSEL to determine award-winners.

Most academic organizations provide national or regional forums through which scholars can present and critique the latest research and theory- building in the field. Many of these same organizations also go through a process of selecting the ‘best’ papers or presentations made at these forums. In some fields, competition for the ‘best’ paper or presentation is quite keen, as the award is viewed by the indigenous scholars to be a considerable plaudit. In some instances, financial incentives are attached to these awards. It would seem, then, that most academic organizations are proud to publicly recognize their ‘best.’ In view of this, one might reasonably argue that an academic organization is, ipso facto, distinguishable by what it considers to be its best work. With this in mind, it is our intention to perform a review of what ABSEL considers its ‘best.’

This paper will cover the following:

- (1) A profile of authors of award-winning papers. Included in the author profile are comments by award winning authors on the career impact of having received an award, (Appendix 1 contains a complete list of the award-winning papers, authors and/or co-authors, award title and year of award.)
- (2) A profile of award-winning papers,
- (3) A comparison of ABSEL’s award-winning papers to other ABSEL papers using the dual criteria of educational objectives and rigor of research,
- (4) A review of the procedures ABSEL has used to determine and designate award-winning papers since 1978, (the first year ABSEL began giving out awards),
- (5) A review of procedures and protocols used for designating award-winning papers from several management, as well as non-management organizations.

METHODOLOGY

During the years 1978 to 1990, 26 papers were designated as award winners. Many of these papers were co-authored, leading to a total of 46 award- winning authors (in this paper, “award-winning author” will refer to all authors of papers with one author, as well as to those with multiple authors). A short questionnaire soliciting information on their papers was sent to each award-winning author.

Former ABSEL Program Chairpersons for the period 1978 to 1990 were identified and a letter was sent to them indicating our interest in obtaining information on the procedures and protocols used to determine award-winning papers. The letter presented several questions concerning the procedures that had been used to determine award winners and indicated that one of the authors would be contacting them in a couple of weeks to obtain this information through a telephone interview.

Finally, a short questionnaire was sent to the chairpersons of several academic management and non-management conferences. This questionnaire requested information about the procedures and protocols used in determining award-winning papers in their organizations.

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RESULTS

Twenty-one questionnaires were received from ABSEL's award-winning authors for a response rate of 46%.

Table 1 presents the author profile, which includes information about the author's degree, teaching area(s) and number of years associated with ABSEL.

<u>Table 1.</u> <u>Author Profile</u>	
<u>Area of Doctorate</u>	<u>Number</u>
Economics	2
Management	7
Marketing	3
Org. Behavior	5
Miscellaneous Total	21
<u>Major Teaching Areas</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Business Policy	5
Economics	1
Information Sys.	1
Management Sc.	3
Marketing	4
Org. Behavior	9
Personnel	5
Psychology	1
Small Business	2
Statistics	1
<u>Total Number of Years</u> <u>Associated with</u> <u>ABSEL</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
1 to 3	5
4 to 6	4
7 to 9	1
10 to 12	5
13 or more	4
<u>Total</u>	19*

There were two non-responses.

As can be seen, all 21 respondents had advanced degrees. Of these, 16 were PhD's, 3 were DBAs and 2 had EdDs. The field of Organizational Behavior was the most represented in the teaching areas (n = 9), which may seem surprising in that the development of computerized simulations is generally considered to be more of an area for Decision Sciences or Economics. The last data in Table I show the relationship between the number of years affiliated with ABSEL and winning an ABSEL award.

Table 2 reports data regarding the subsequent history of ABSEL award-winning papers.

<u>Table 2.</u> <u>Paper Profile</u>	
<u>Resulted in</u> <u>Further Work?</u>	<u>Resulted in</u> <u>Publication?</u>
Yes 18	Yes 16
No 3	No 4
	In Progress 1 *
<u>Where Published?</u>	
Simulation and Games	6
ABSEL	4
Academy of Management Journal	2
Other journals	11

Eighteen respondents indicated that further work was done with the paper with 16 of these stating that a publication resulted.

Table 3 provides the authors' views on the career impact of the ABSEL award.

<u>Table 3.</u> <u>Career Impact</u>	
<u>Impact on Career</u>	<u>Number of respondents</u>
None	12
Slight	3
Moderate	2
Significant	2
Very Significant	2
<u>Selected Comments:</u>	
-- "Personal satisfaction"	
-- "Incentive to do further work"	
-- "Impact fleeting"	
-- "Dean unfamiliar with ABSEL"	
-- "Added to confidence"	
-- "Helped get promotion to Associate Professor"	

Table 3 provides the authors' views on the career impact of the ABSEL award. As Table 3 notes, although most respondents felt that the award ipso facto had little career impact, many of them felt they gained considerable personal satisfaction from having received the award.

In an attempt to evaluate the several key characteristics of award winning papers, a comparison was made between the ABSEL award winning papers, articles appearing in SIMULATIONS & CANES (1974-84), and all ABSEL papers (1974-1984). The comparison used the evaluation criteria of research design and educational taxonomy employed by Butler, Markulis and Strang (SIMULATION & GAMES, Vol. 19, No. 1, Mar. 1988, pp. 3-26). Table 4 provides this information.

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Table 4.
Research Design Characteristics
of Articles

	S & G 197 4-84	ABSEL 197 4-84	AWARD WINNERS 197 8-90
	(%)	(%)	(%)
C	4.1	12.5	0.0
R	0.0	0.0	0.0
T	1.8	1.1	29.2
O	47.6	40.8	0.0
P	19.4	35.6	37.5
C-R	0.6	0.0	0.0
C-T	12.4	3.1	29.2
R-T	0.0	0.0	0.0
C-R-T	14.1	2.6	4.2
	100.0 (n=170)	100.0 (n=458)	100.0 (n=26)

Note: C (Control) = studies with at least one control group; R (Random) = studies with randomization; T (Treatment) = studies in which treatments were varied; O (Other) = articles that do not pertain to research; P (Prescriptive) = articles promoting or describing simulation gaming or experiential exercises with reference to any research methodology.

Articles Categorized According to
Learning Outcomes

	S & G 1974-84	ABSEL 1974-84	AWARD WINNERS 1978-90
	(%)	(%)	(%)
A	12.9	9.4	33.3
C	13.5	21.0	8.3
P	0.0	0.0	0.0
A-C	21.8	24.7	37.5
O	51.8	45.0	20.8
	100.0 (n=170)	100.0 (n=458)	100.0 (n=26)

Note: A = studies that address learning in the Affective Domain; C = studies that address learning in the Cognitive Domain; P = studies that address learning in the Psychomotor Domain; A-C = studies that address learning in both the Affective and Cognitive Domains; O = studies that do not address learning per se.

While it should be noted that the time spans for the review are not exactly the same, certain patterns did arise. It is not surprising that ABSEL's award winning papers seem to be more diligent with respect to research criteria and ~n addressing educational objectives than either ABSEL or *Simulation & Games* papers. These observations are borne out by the elevated percentage of articles using "treatments" and the larger percentage of articles with explicit educational objectives revealed in Table 4.

Another interesting facet of award winners is the selection and designation processes. Eight former Program Chairs were contacted for information regarding the process and protocols used by ABSEL to select award winning papers. It

should be noted that the authors were not interested in obtaining information about the so-called 'politics' of the process, but rather, what the process was, and how the number of awards to be given was determined.

The survey of program chairs indicated that a variety of procedures have been used to select award winners. Program chairs indicated that at this time there are no formal written procedures. Therefore, most chairpersons have considerable discretion in determining both the number of awards as well as the selection process.

Although the actual procedures that have been employed have varied over time, chairs did consistently report the use of multiple reviews at different levels. A commonly used procedure was one in which papers were ranked by reviewers on a 10-point scale. If the paper scored high on this scale it was passed on to a second tier of reviewers. In some cases, these reviewers were past ABSEL presidents. The chairs reported variability in how this second review was conducted. It is not clear if the second tier of the review process was always conducted as a blind review. In the last couple of years, the review form has asked reviewers if the paper under evaluation should be considered for a possible award.

Most chairs stated that they placed heavy emphasis on precedents. Interestingly, in spite of these assertions there appears to be a great deal of variation in the number of awards as well as the categories of award winners. One piece of information we were unable to obtain was the chairperson's sense of how many 'potential' award-winning papers there were in a given year.

To gain a sense of the relationship between ABSEL and other academic groups, a small sample of chairpersons of management and non-management academic conferences was contacted. Information was obtained from these chairpersons about the procedures and protocols used by their organizations to select award-winning papers. This was not meant to be an exhaustive survey, but was simply intended to shed some light as to what other organizations are doing in this regard. Interestingly enough, some organizations such as the American Psychological Association and Eastern Psychological Association do not give awards for papers at their conferences, while other organizations such as the Southwestern Political Science Association have special committees to determine best paper awards and also provide awards for undergraduate papers. In some cases, financial rewards were given for outstanding papers.

All 11 organizations that responded to our request for information indicated that they used a standard process to determine award-winning papers. Eight of these said that the program chair had little discretion in determining the award winning process, while 3 did not respond to this question. Most organizations that responded to our query indicated that they use the initial blind review form to identify potential award winning papers. From that point, the 'typical' procedure is to use a special committee of reviewers, who then rank order the top papers in order to arrive at the award winning paper or papers. In all cases, the process consisted of a blind review.

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Our conclusions will be short as we feel that most of the readers will want to draw their own conclusions--and perhaps offer recommendations-- from the data presented.

Our main thrust has been to report on the procedures and protocols ABSEL uses in determining award-winning papers. As noted, ABSEL has used a variety of procedures in the past, although these procedures have become more standardized in the past few years. We would recommend that ABSEL develop a set of standard procedures for determining award-winning papers, put them in writing and publish them in the ABSEL may also want to consider the possibility of offering various rewards to the authors of award- winning papers.

Self-examination and critical self-assessment are important demeanor for any credible academic organization. Reviewing the quality of research and contributions to theory, tracing the organization's membership, and assessing the protocols used by the organization to designate its 'best' represent just few of the kinds of self assessments that organizations should periodically undertake. This paper--like the two previous ones--represents, we believe, part of an invaluable and necessary self-examination process.

REFERENCES

All ABSEL Award-winning papers (see Appendix 1).

Butler, R. J., Peter Markulis and D. R. Strang, "Learning Theory and Research Design: How Has ABSEL Fared?" ABSEL PROCEEDINGS, 1985, pp. 86-90.

Butler, R. J., Peter Markulis and D. R. Strang, "Where Are We: An Analysis of the Methods & Focus of the Research on Simulation Gaming" SIMULATION & GAMES, Vol. 19, #1, (March 1988), pp. 3-26.

Markulis, P. M., Phillip Ricci and Daniel R Strang, "A Review of Salient Trends in Proceeding's Characteristics: A Fifteen Year Profile of ABSEL," ABSEL PROCEEDINGS, 1989, pp. 200-203.

APPENDIX 1

AWARD-WINNING PAPERS AND AUTHORS

YEAR: 1990
AWARD: Best Computer Simulation Research
TITLE: Demand Equations, Which Include Product Attributes
AUTHOR: Richard D. Teach
UNIV: Georgia Institute of Technology

YEAR: 1990
AWARD: Most Innovative
TITLE: Executive Evaluation of Student Learning in the Looking Glass
AUTHOR: Diana Page & Ralph M. Roberts
UNIV: University of West Florida

YEAR: 1989
AWARD: Most Innovative
TITLE: A Simulating Simulation in International Business Negotiations With a Japanese Company
AUTHOR: Barry S. Axe
UNIV: Temple University

YEAR: 1989
AWARD: Best Research
TITLE: A Study of the Relationship Between Student Final Exam Performance and Simulation Game Participation
AUTHOR: T. Richard Whiteley & Anthony J. Faria
UNIV: University of Windsor

YEAR: 1988
AWARD: Best Paper - Experiential Learning
TITLE: Experimental Analyses of Magnitude and Source of Students' Inequitable Classroom Perceptions in Three Reward Conditions
AUTHOR: John D. Overby & Kay A. Durden
UNIV: The University of Tennessee at Martin

YEAR: 1988
AWARD: Best Paper - Simulation
TITLE: Strategy Design, Process and Implementation in a Stable/Complex Environment: An Exploratory Study
AUTHOR: Jerry Gosenpud & Joseph Wolfe
UNIV: University of Wisconsin-Whitewater
University of Tulsa

YEAR: 1987
AWARD: Best Research - Simulation
TITLE: Decision Styles and Student Simulation Performance: A Replication
AUTHOR: Robert W. Hornaday & Kent E. Curran
UNIV: The University of North Carolina at Charlotte

YEAR: 1987
AWARD: Most Innovative
TITLE: The Use of Expert Systems to Develop Strategic Scenarios: An Experiment Using a Simulated Market Environment
AUTHOR: Andrew Varanelli, Marion Sackson, Denis Cronin, & Carol Lazaro Dulberg
UNIV: Pace University

YEAR: 1986
AWARD: Best Paper
TITLE: The Assessment Center as a Teaching/Learning Device
AUTHOR: R. Bruce McAfee & Alex Hawryluk
UNIV: Old Dominion University

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YEAR: 1985
AWARD: Best Research
TITLE: Predicting Performance Over the Course of the Simulation
AUTHOR: Jerry Gosenpud, Charles Milton, & Arthur Larson
UNIV: University of Wisconsin-Whitewater

YEAR: 1985
AWARD: Most Creative
TITLE: Developing the Competencies of "Resistance to Stress" and "Accurate Self-Assessment"
AUTHOR: Donald S. Kline
UNIV: Bloomsburg University

YEAR: 1984
AWARD: Best Research
TITLE: A Path Analytic Study of the Effects of Alternative Pedagogies
AUTHOR: Alvin C. Burns & Dan L. Sherrell
UNIV: Louisiana State University

YEAR: 1983
AWARD: Outstanding Research
TITLE: Simulating Market and Firm Level Demand -A Robust Demand System
AUTHOR: Steven C. Gold & Thomas F. Pray
UNIV: Rochester Institute of Technology

YEAR: 1983
AWARD: Outstanding Paper
TITLE: Role-Playing Based on Video-Tape Scenarios: An Application of Modelling to Building Supervisory Skills
AUTHOR: James C. Faltot & John R. Ogilvie
UNIV: University of Delaware

YEAR: 1982
AWARD: Best Experiential
TITLE: The Value of Conjoint Analysis in Enhancing Experiential Learning
AUTHOR: Leonard Greenhalgh & Scott A. Neslin
UNIV: Amos Tuck School, Dartmouth

YEAR: 1982
AWARD: Best Research
TITLE: The Effects of Different Team Sizes Business Game Performance
AUTHOR: Joseph Wolfe & Thomas I. Chacko
UNIV: University of Tulsa
 Iowa State University

YEAR: 1981
AWARD: Best Simulation Research
TITLE: Providing a Real World View of the Personnel Function: A Simulation
AUTHOR: George E. Stevens & Eileen K. Burton
UNIV: Arizona State University

YEAR: 1981
AWARD: Innovative Experiential
TITLE: Finding an Effective Means of Teaching Managerial Behavioral Skills: Two Different Experiential Teaching Methods Compared
AUTHOR: Daryl G. Mitton & Betty Lilligren-Mitton
UNIV: San Diego State University

YEAR: 1981
AWARD: Best Experiential Research
TITLE: Problems in Evaluation of Experiential Learning in Management Education
AUTHOR: Lane Kelley & Jeffrey Easton
UNIV: University of Hawaii
 University of Lancaster

YEAR: 1981
AWARD: Innovative Simulation
TITLE: Teaching Performance Appraisal Skills: An Experiential Approach
AUTHOR: Eileen K. Burton
UNIV: Arizona State University

YEAR: 1980
AWARD: Best Research
TITLE: Associations Between Individual Cognitive Processing Variables and Business Game Performance and Play
AUTHOR: Joseph A. Wolfe
UNIV: University of Tulsa

YEAR: 1979
AWARD: Best Experimental
TITLE: Personality Development and Conflict Dynamics: An Experimental Design to Study the Effects of Teaching Methodologies on Conflict Resolution
AUTHOR: Tom Basuray, Jerry J. Gosenpud, & Steven A. Scherling
UNIV: University of North Dakota

YEAR: 1978
AWARD: Most Innovative
TITLE: Emergent Simulation in Administration Courses
AUTHOR: Claude t. Wynn, George E. Crawford
UNIV: Weber State University