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Xiao-Li Meng
Whipple V.N. Jones Professor of Statistics

September 2, 2010

Professor Jeffrey S. Rosenthal
Department of Statistics
University of Toronto
100 St. George Street, Room 6018
Toronto, Ontario
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Dear Jeff:

It is with great pleasure that I write to invite you speak as the inaugural lecturer of the David K. Pickard Memorial Lecture on November 13, 2010, Saturday, to be held at Harvard University.

I quote the opening paragraphs of The David K. Pickard Memorial Endowment Fund document to describe the background and this lecture:

“The gifts of colleagues, students, and friends of David Pickard establish the David K. Pickard Memorial Endowment Fund. This fund celebrates the memory of David K. Pickard, who served as a junior faculty member in the Harvard Statistics Department from 1977 to 1985. Professor Pickard was known for his outstanding teaching, having won two major Harvard-wide teaching awards: the Phi Beta Kappa Prized in 1982 and the Levenson Prize in 1984. He also won the Hoopes Prize two years in a row for supervising and nominating a senior thesis. Professor Pickard had a strong influence on the Statistics PhD students at Harvard in that period. Sadly, Professor Pickard died of a brain tumor in August 1986 in Kingston Ontario, where he had moved after leaving Harvard.

Income from this fund shall support a biennial lecture by an outstanding university faculty member on a topic to do with teaching and pedagogy. It is the donors’ hope that this topic might be as broadly conceived as possible with an emphasis on identifying speakers whose focus is on making the study of statistics accessible and which either implicitly or explicitly deals with the art and science of teaching.”

Based on these criteria, the David Pickard Lecture Committee, for which I chair, enthusiastically and unanimously invites you, a passionate educator and spokesman of statistics and probability through your articles, books and presentations, especially to the general public, as the inaugural lecturer. We believe that your many outreach activities and pedagogical efforts would be particularly fitting to be presented at this inaugural event to commemorate David Pickard’s many similar endeavors and his contributions to our profession in general.

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We understand your many commitments, and therefore would be particularly grateful if you would find a way to fit this invitation into your schedule. (I am sorry for the restrictiveness of the date, for it was determined by many factors, including the availability of Packard's family members and of major donors.) The entire afternoon program is planned to be about 3 hours long, including opening remarks and award ceremony, your lecture and a lecture by the winner of the David Pickard Award (the same fund also provides awards to a junior faculty at Harvard as well as to several teaching fellows). It will be followed by a dinner party, where we also hope you would be willing to share with us your many talents as a musician and singer.

I also want to mention that whereas the Pickard fund is specified to cover speaker's travel and local expenses for delivering this lecture, should your wife be attending the event with you, please let me know so I can make a separate arrangement to have her expense covered as well.

If you have any question before deciding, please feel free to contact me via meng@stat.harvard.edu or 617-495-1603 any time. We all very much hope you will be able to accept this invitation.

With very best wishes,



Xiao-Li Meng
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of Statistics, and
Chair, Department of Statistics

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