

# Larry Hedges Awarded 2018 Yidan Prize for Education Research

Northwestern University professor Larry Hedges, a pre-eminent scholar and global heavyweight in education research, was awarded the 2018 Yidan Prize for Education Research, the world's largest prize in education research.

The prize, which comes with \$3.9 million in support, recognizes Hedges for his groundbreaking statistical methods for meta-analysis, which serve as a foundation for much of the rigorous, evidenced-based education policy across the globe.

Hedges is chair of the department of statistics at Northwestern and a professor of education and social policy, psychology, and medical social science. Among the most influential applied statisticians in the world, Hedges' work allows policymakers, educators, and the public to see the evidence for "what works" in the field of education and makes it possible to take a scientific approach to improving education for future generations.

As a first-generation college student, Hedges' accomplishments and contributions are particularly inspiring. "I was a kid from a poor family. We didn't know anybody who went to college," Hedges said. "The reason I am passionate about education is precisely that it was a life-changing thing for me in terms of mobility, and I would like everybody else to have that chance."

Hedges' father worked for minimum wage until he retired, and his mother was a dishwasher at the local college.

"As an 11-year-old boy wandering about the Fresno State College campus, where his mother worked as a dishwasher at the college's cafeteria, Larry literally saw an open door and stepped inside a chemistry lab," said Northwestern President Morton Schapiro, who nominated Hedges for the Yidan Prize. "He encountered a talkative graduate student testing food samples for pesticides and they had a conversation. For the first time, Larry could see the possibilities for a future unknown to his parents, neither of whom attended college."

Hedges would go on to earn a Regents Scholarship at the University of California, San Diego, where he studied mathematics and physics. He became deeply involved in peer tutoring and mentoring of minority students.

Hedges discovered his path and passion, making such an impact that the university invited him to continue his work after graduation. In the three years that followed, Hedges put together a summer bridge program for under-represented students and a mathematics clinic.

When Hedges entered graduate school in 1976, education research was in a state of disarray. While much research had been done, it lacked standards and rigor. He saw an opportunity to develop more rigorous methods for synthesizing research findings across studies through meta-analysis. This work would

occupy much of Hedges' early career and ultimately redefine the concept of evidence in education and psychology.

By 1980, when he left graduate school for his first academic job in the department of education at The University of Chicago, Hedges was traveling to apartheid South Africa, where he helped start supplementary academic preparation programs—illegal under South African law at the time—to help non-white students gain admission to white universities.

More recently, at Northwestern, Hedges turned his attention to the smallest scale of educational research studies, so called "single case" designs involving a single individual. Such studies are crucially important in areas such as the study of rare disabilities, where it is unrealistic to assemble a large sample.

"Larry's vision and commitment to education as a vehicle to promote opportunity have boosted the prospects for a generation of students, and his impact on the field of education research is absolutely immeasurable," Schapiro said. "In fact, his life's work is informed by his own experience of the power of education to change lives."

The Yidan Prize is named for its founder, Charles Chen Yidan, who established the prize in 2016 with a mission to make the world a better place through education.

"I congratulate the laureates and nominees alike for their outstanding contribution

and achievements,” Yidan said. “Education should be an area of interest that goes beyond race, religion, economic status, or country of origin. I hope every country and region can share the results of education research and development, facilitating more international cooperation in order to create a better world through education.”

Hedges shares the honor this year with professor Anant Agarwal, founder and CEO of edX, an online learning destination founded by Harvard and MIT that provides access to high-quality education at scale to learners around the world, regardless of geographic location, financial resources, prior academic qualifications, gender, or race. Agarwal is

the recipient of the Yidan Prize for Education Development.

This year’s laureates were selected from almost 1,000 nominees working in 92 countries by an independent committee over the course of a six-month selection process.

Hedges has authored or co-authored 10 books and numerous journal articles, including the seminal *Statistical Methods for Meta-Analysis* and *The Handbook of Research Synthesis and Meta-Analysis*.

He is an elected member of the National Academy of Education and a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, American Statistical Association, American Psychological Association, and American

Educational Research Association. He is also a member of the Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness, which established an annual endowed lecture in his honor. He gave the inaugural Hedges Lecture in 2016.

Hedges was nominated by President Barack Obama to the Board of Directors of the National Board for Education Sciences, confirmed by the US Senate in June 2012, and elected chair of the board in 2016.

He was elected “Statistician of the Year” by the Chicago Chapter of the American Statistical Association for 2013–14. In 2018, he became the third American to be elected an honorary member of the European Association of Methodology. ■

## Nominations Sought for Zelen Leadership Award

Nominations for the Marvin Zelen Leadership Award in Statistical Science are being accepted until November 30, 2018. The annual award honors Marvin Zelen’s long and distinguished career as a statistician and his major role in shaping the field of biostatistics.

The award recognizes an individual in government, industry, or academia, who by virtue of his/her outstanding leadership, has shaped the theory and practice of statistical science. While individual accomplishments are considered, the most distinguishing criterion is the

awardee’s contribution to the creation of an environment in which statistical science and its applications have flourished.

The award recipient will deliver a public lecture on statistical science at the Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health in May 2019 and will be presented with a citation and honorarium.

Nominations should include a letter describing the contributions of the candidate, specifically highlighting the criteria for the award, and a curriculum vita. Other supporting materials would be helpful to the committee.



Marvin Zelen

Please send nominations to Shaina Andelman at [sandelma@hsph.harvard.edu](mailto:sandelma@hsph.harvard.edu).

For details, visit the Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health website at <https://bit.ly/2lZwKfj>.