



To meet the current economy's challenge of providing more services with fewer resources, Optimal has sharpened its focus on real-time analysis and business intelligence. Optimal has redoubled its commitment to using innovative approaches for public policy research through using real-time grant monitoring, knowledge management, and business intelligence tools - all of which provide cost and time savings, and increased effectiveness to its clients.

Optimal's history reflects a commitment to providing more effective ways for its clients to achieve their goals. Currently, Optimal is partnering with experts on the cutting edge of social network analysis, software design, and survey research in the areas of education, health, workforce development, and housing.

In this edition of the newsletter, you will read how Optimal is meeting the needs of clients through innovation and developing partnerships with researchers and experts. As a small business, we look forward to taking today's challenges and turning them into opportunities.

Mark D. Turner, Ph.D., President and CEO
Tracye Turner, Executive Vice President and COO

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Questions or Comments?

Contact us for more information:

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Spotlight



UMD Vice President Welcomes Optimal to M Square Research Park

During Optimal's annual kickoff meeting in January, Associate Vice President of

Research and Economic Development, Brian Darmody spoke about the interdisciplinary and research focus of the organizations represented at [M Square Research Park](#). Mr. Darmody noted that M Square is the home of the world's largest group of earth scientists in the world and mentioned UMD's other state-of-the-art research in cyber security, linguistics, food safety, and energy

independence. He explained that M Square is the first public-private research park in these multi-disciplinary fields, and that Optimal's new corporate headquarters provides access to UMD's research support and faculty expertise. Optimal embraces the collaborative possibilities and being one of the first firms in this cooperative endeavor.

(Pictured above): Optimal staff with Brian Darmody during his remarks.

Real-Time Data: New Healthy Marriages Implementations

As a subcontractor to MDRC, Optimal has provided technical expertise in real-time data collection and analysis on the [Supporting Healthy Marriage](#) evaluation. This project innovates by implementing a Web-based management information system (MIS) for marriage program administrators, providing them the ability to better monitor and manage participant outcomes. The project allows researchers to validate data and evaluate performance at the program and participant levels. Optimal customized the MIS system, Efforts-to-Outcomes, to enable the program sites throughout the country to effectively manage their healthy marriage programs within the confines of a randomized field trial.

Optimal trained program administrators to run real-time reports to track referral sources recruitment attendance and monitor progress in building healthy marriages at the participant and site level.

Employment Options for Low-Skilled Workers in Baltimore

Baltimore's diminishing workforce, specifically in the manufacturing industry, is a telling cross-section of the economic instability plaguing many Americans. Optimal's staff worked on a manuscript titled "[Employment Options for Low-Skilled Workers in Baltimore: Workforce Training Issues and Challenges](#)" to identify viable long-term employment alternatives for low-skilled workers. The manuscript describes several occupations that offer growth opportunities for low-skilled workers in the region and points to the growing green job market as a potential source of employment. Currently, the

manuscript is under review by *Economic Development Quarterly*. This work was funded by the [Ford Foundation](#).

Optimal News

Van Der Horst Receives Award

Benjamin van der Horst, a research analyst, recently won the Reed Fink Award in Southern History from Georgia State University. He earned this award for his master's thesis, [Unscrambling the Eggs: Eastern Airlines, Delta Airlines, and the Deregulated Era](#). It examines Eastern Airlines and Delta Airlines during the first era (1978-1991) of airline deregulation and how the decisions each made during this period led to Eastern's demise and Delta's success. His thesis blends economics and history to present a narrative of the airline industry before and after deregulation. Mr. van der Horst presented his thesis at Georgia State University before faculty members and students.



Optimal Team Trot for Hunger

In line with our philosophy, Optimal's employees have a shared commitment to giving back to our community. In this spirit, Optimal supported local efforts to feed the homeless through volunteering and providing food for [So Others Might Eat](#). Optimal staff volunteered on weekends to make and deliver 280 sandwiches to poverty-stricken residents of Washington, D.C. during the Thanksgiving holiday. Additionally, Optimal sponsored a team to run in the 8th Annual Trot for Hunger.

Optimal continues its commitment to providing financial support to numerous charities including the American Red Cross, United Service Organizations (USO), Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), Doctors Without Borders, local secondary and postsecondary schools, and other critical support organizations.

(Pictured left to right): Robert Beach, Katie Manthe, Kianna Banks, Danielle Ward, and Brandon Newbury

New Staff Announcements

Optimal has hired new research and administrative staff, including:

Robert Beach, Human Resources Director
[Lane Koenig, Ph.D.](#), Senior Research Associate
Kim Murray, Management Coordinator
Michael Peck, Information Technology Director
[Luis Pinet, M.S.](#), Research Analyst
[Ruth Sherman, M.B.A.](#), Senior Research Associate
Gordon Smith, Chief Financial Officer

The new research hires bring expertise in some of the areas of Medicare fraud, waste and abuse, emergency health, software development, and Medicare Part D.

Education Streamlined Acquisition Tool (ED-SAT) Awarded

Optimal has been selected by the U.S. Department of Education as a contractor for the Streamlined Acquisition Tool Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contract.

[More](#) about Optimal's ED-SAT award.

Green Matters

How Much Solar Energy is In Your Backyard

Have you ever wondered how much solar energy you can produce at your home or business? The National Renewable Energy Laboratory has an online tool called [In My Backyard](#)(IMBY) that will help you estimate how much electricity you can produce with solar or wind energy equipment. With the help of Google Maps, enter the address and select solar or wind renewable power. IMBY will then estimate how much renewable energy you could expect to generate. If solar power is chosen, it will even provide the specifications for the solar power unit you may need. Learn more about this tool at [IMBY](#) and make your Green impact.

The building housing Optimal's new headquarters at M Square Research Park is in the process of receiving a silver LEED certification. A LEED certification demonstrates that a structure meets the highest green building and performance measures.