



Greetings!

As a policy research firm, Optimal Solutions Group, LLC (Optimal) has proactively taken steps within its existing projects to support the government's need to do more with less by investing upfront in design and technology and integrating these investments into data collection, analysis, reporting, and dissemination. Imagine these research activities almost being done concurrently and customized as the environment changes. This approach reduces the time spent waiting for research results on old questions. More funds can be directed into doing what is needed.

Rigor that is built on quality, subject matter expertise, and international gold standard methods will never be irrelevant and will always remain critical parts of research. As policy experts, we have to embrace the change and prepare for it, rather than it happening to us.

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

Spotlight

Business Intelligence Improves Maryland's Fatherhood Initiatives

To make data actionable for program and policy administrators, Optimal is developing real-time performance dashboards for the [Winning Fathers Demonstration Project](#) (WFDP), administered by the Maryland Department of Human Resources (MD-DHR). The dashboard's interactive performance reports and data visualizations illustrate programmatic outcomes (i.e., healthy marriage indicators, employment) and management reports (e.g., enrollment trends). Johnny Rice, II, director of the Office of Grants Management, MD-DHR, said: "The development of the dashboards empowers our team by providing an additional

[Optimal's New Website](#)

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tool that will lead to better decision making. More importantly, the dashboard affords management the opportunity to better assess overall progress made towards our targeted goals and objectives."

For more information, [click here](#).

Optimal Launches New, Interactive Corporate Website

Optimal recently launched its new [corporate website](#). Optimal aims to provide a richer user-friendly experience, within a dynamic and interactive environment, where visitors can learn more about innovative research, methods, and policies. The new website utilizes Web 2.0 features, such as Twitter, Facebook, and RSS feeds. Shortly, users will also be able to attend in Optimal workshops via live webcasts.

[Roundtable Focuses on Low-Skilled Workers, Promising Careers, and Green Jobs](#)

Hosting local government, education, and business leaders, Optimal recently organized a roundtable discussion on employment options for low-skilled workers in Baltimore. Led by moderators Dr. Toks Fashola, Luis Pinet, and Tracye Turner, the group covered a wide range of topics, including job training and educational infrastructure, barriers to entry-level positions facing low-skilled workers, recommendations for recruitment, and methods by which these workers can find employment in growing industries, e.g. green industries.

For more information, see the Workforce & Economic Development Policy Roundtable's [Facebook page](#) or visit Optimal's [website](#).

[Statistical Power Analysis Paper Published](#)

In conjunction with co-authors Drs. Larry Hedges and Christopher Rhoads of Northwestern University, and the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) at the U.S.

Questions or Comments?

Contact us for more information:

301-306-1170 or

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Department of Education, Optimal assisted in developing a technical paper for the National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER) entitled "Statistical Power Analysis in Education Research." The paper informs education researchers and practitioners about the complexities of calculating power when using two of the most rigorous research designs in education.

[Click here](#) to view the report.

Optimal News



[Dr. Nancy Miller Discusses a Study on Long-Term Care for Seniors](#)

[Dr. Nancy Miller](#), Associate Professor at the Department of Public Policy at the University of

Maryland - Baltimore County (UMBC), presented findings from a recent study on home- and community-based care services (HCBS) as part of Optimal's Brown Bag Series. Dr. Miller discussed the correlation of HCBS with rebalancing long-term care systems in the U.S. economy.

If you'd like to learn more about the study's findings, [click here](#). To view upcoming Brown Bag Series presentations, [click here](#).

(Pictured above): Dr. Nancy Miller discusses the study's findings about long-term care for seniors.

[Dr. Turner Delivers Keynote Address at UMD Economic Commencement](#)

Optimal President and Chief Executive Officer Dr. Mark Turner delivered the keynote address at the University of Maryland's Spring, 2010 Department of Economics Commencement ceremony. Dr. Turner challenged students at his alma mater to work



across disciplines to succeed in an ever-changing and increasingly interconnected world: "You will need the critical analytical skills groomed here at Maryland but also a sense of curiosity, passion, and urgency to realize your goals and in helping to improve our world."

Dr. Turner and his wife, Tracye, also established an [endowed scholarship](#) to support undergraduate economics students at the University of Maryland demonstrating exceptional service and leadership capabilities. Recipients will be selected based on their leadership and commitment to a better society through improving minority communities.

(Pictured above): Dr. Turner speaks to the University of Maryland's Economics degree recipients.

[Walton Presents on ELL Student Performance at AERA](#)

At the 2010 American Education Research Association's (AERA's) Annual Meeting in Denver, Colorado, Optimal Research Associate Ebony Walton presented her work correlating the use of language at home with duration of residency in the United States. Ms. Walton's research also relates English Language Learner (ELL) status to performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) mathematics, reading, and science. Ms. Walton's paper, titled "Looking to the Past to Help the Future: Using Retired NAEP Variables to Improve ELL Identification," was part of the four-paper symposium, "Understanding the Dynamics of the ELL Student Population and their Academic Achievement Using NAEP Data."

To learn more about other presentations at the 2010 AERA conference, [click here](#).

[Dr. Pender Published in Education Policy Analysis Archives Journal](#)

Research Associate Matea Pender, Ph.D. (Optimal), (with Dave E. Marcotte (UMBC), Mariano R. Sto. Domingo (UMBC), and Kenneth I. Maton (UMBC)) was recently published in the *Education Policy Analysis Archives Journal*, Vol. 18. The paper, "The STEM Pipeline: The Role of Summer Research Experience in Minority Students'

Graduate Aspirations," examines the role of practical research experience during the summer for talented minority undergraduates in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. Dr. Pender's research has proven vital as racial and ethnic diversity in the university setting broadens.



"Why Be an Economist?" Day 2010

Optimal hosted its fourth annual National Science Foundation-funded aspiring economist

event. Several key staff members presented to the students, highlighting the work an economist might undertake within Optimal's four research centers: health, education, workforce development, and housing. The presentations explored the question, "Why Be an Economist?" in an age when economics is becoming an ever more multidisciplinary field.

(Pictured above): Economic students with Dr. Mark Turner, Tracye Turner, and presenters Lindsey Cramer, Dr. Luis Pinet, and Dr. Matea Pender.

Optimal to Co-Sponsor, Participate in University of Maryland Health IT Workshop

Optimal will be a co-sponsor and active participant in the First Annual Workshop on Health IT and Economics, hosted by the Robert H. Smith School of Business Center for Health Information and Decision Systems at the University of Maryland. The conference will be held October 8 through 9, 2010, at the Washington Marriott Wardman Park Hotel in Washington, DC. Optimal staff will serve on the workshop's policy and practice panels and provide perspective on the economics of health technologies in practice and policy implications. Staff will also demonstrate how a combination of public health policy and IT projects will increase quality while saving time and reducing costs.

For more information, please visit the Workshop on Health IT and Economics 2010 website:
www.rhsmith.umd.edu/chids/white/.

Green Matters

Home Energy Audits - Legislated?

According to the [Wall Street Journal](#), the city of Austin, Texas is joining others such as Berkeley and San Francisco in requiring home energy audits. This is emblematic of the growing trend across the country of creating new policies to ensure buildings are more energy efficient. Existing tools on the market help identify potential cost efficiency, savings, and rebates. [Treehugger.com](#) also highlights the tools offered, including the Google Powermeter, Microsoft Hohm, Apogee, and [EnergySavvy](#), which are used to help homeowners conduct energy audits.