Report from the Chair

We are now well-settled in our new home, the nicely-renovated Kreeger Building, where we moved in the Spring of 2010. While a bit removed from the rest of campus, we have excellent facilities for faculty and graduate students, including a state-of-the-art computer lab, and space for adjunct faculty. Our Wednesday brown-bag seminar series continues to bring in excellent scholars from the Washington area and beyond. In the past two years, speakers have included – just to mention a few -- Sherman Robinson (IFPRI, formerly from Berkeley), Truman Bewley (Yale), Prakash Loungani (IMF), PhD alum Stephanie Seguino (Vermont), Chris Ruhm (Virginia), Gavin Wright (Stanford), Eric Verhoogen (Columbia), Peter Doeringer (Boston U.), Eric Renault (Brown), and Petra Todd (Penn).

Our graduate and undergraduate programs remain strong. At the undergraduate level (with Mary Hansen in charge) we now have about 200 majors, spread over several options. At the graduate level, Martha Starr has taken over as PhD program director, Kara Reynolds as director of our MA programs.

Our faculty continues to feature prominently in the editing of professional journals, with Bob Feinberg serving as a co-editor and Kara Reynolds as an associate editor of the Southern Economic Journal, Maria Floro and Caren Grown as associate editors of Feminist Economics, Amos Golan as an associate editor of Econometric Reviews and an editorial board member of Foundations and Trends in Econometrics, Tom Husted as an editorial board member of Public Choice, Mieke Meurs as an associate editor of Politics and Society, and Martha Starr as a co-editor of Review of Social Economics.

In department transitions, I have taken over as Chair for the current academic year, after four years of Robert Blecker’s excellent leadership, leading to a three-year term for Tom Husted (returning to us after a 9-year run as Associate Dean of CAS) who takes over next Fall – so, yes, I am a lame-duck. Mieke Meurs has replaced Tom, and is now the Associate Dean for Graduate Affairs in CAS. A fixture in the Department for many years, Sheila Budnyj retired last December, and Danielle Robinson has replaced her as an administrator mostly for graduate programs. In faculty transitions, we were saddened to learn of Prof. Michael Hazilla’s death in the fall of 2010. Ellen Meade left us in the fall of 2011 to return as a Fed senior policy adviser, while James Bono left effective this Fall to pursue research opportunities in California. Our new tenure-track hires in the past two years were Natalia Radchenko, a labor economist and microeconometrician, with interests in macroeconomics and growth, who joined us this Fall, having just completed his PhD at Brown.

In the Department office, Aisha Khan (formerly Malik, who both completed her MPA in SPA and got married in the past year) and Glen Arnold continue to keep the department running smoothly.

Best regards,
Bob Feinberg
Chair, Department of Economics
Research in the Economics Department

Info-Metrics Institute Programs
Since Fall of 2010, the Info-Metrics Institute (directed by Amos Golan) has organized several conferences at American University:

September 24 & 25, 2010
Info-Metrics: Theory and Applications in the Social Sciences

May 2, 2011
Info-Metrics across the Sciences

October 3, 2011
Philosophy of Information

November 12, 2011
Information Theory and Shrinkage Estimation

March 30 & 31, 2012
Information and Econometrics of Networks

The Institute has also offered several Info-Metrics Summer Tutorials over the past two years:

Summer 2011:
Info-Metrics: Theory and Practice
Amos Golan (American University)

Spatial Econometrics: Theory and Practice
Ingmar Prucha (University of Maryland)

Summer 2012:
Microeconometrics with focus on Panel Data and Discrete Choice: Theory and Practice
William Greene (New York University)

Data Mining and Information: Theory and Practice
Teddy Seidenfeld (Carnegie Mellon University)

A Special Two-Day Tutorial on Info-Metrics
Amos Golan (American University)

The Fall 2012 Info-Metrics Institute newsletter, to become available mid-October, will include all Institute related updates from the past academic year as well as information on upcoming Institute events. For further information and to view the Fall 2011 Info-Metrics Institute newsletter, please visit http://www.american.edu/info-metrics. Stay tuned!

Selected Recent Faculty Publications:

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Selected Recent Faculty Publications  
continued from page 2


We want to hear from you!  
Send your latest news to econ@american.edu to be included in the next newsletter.

AY 2010-2011 and 2011-2012  
PhD Recipients

Juan Barrios  
*Participation in and behavioral strategies on nonprofit organizations the importance of institutions* (Advisor, Mieke Meurs)

Wissam Harake  
*Studies on monetary policy and the exchange rate* (Advisor, Ellen Meade)

Francois Kabore  
*Patent valuation, international intellectual property rights and innovation* (Advisor, Walter Park)

Yun Kim  
*Macroeconomic implications of household debt* (Advisor, Robert Blecker)

Renata Kochut  
*Patterns of foreign direct investment. An investigation of FDI in Poland* (Advisor, Robert Feinberg)

Hitomi Komatsu  
*An economic analysis of fertility in Japan: Will the husband’s time spent in housework and childcare increase birth probabilities?*  
(Advisor, Maria Floro)

Michael Martell  
*Disclosure of sexual orientation and the process of discrimination*  
(Advisor, Mary Hansen)

Nandaka Molagoda  
*Quality of life, firm formation and internal migration: A case study of Poland’s Powiats* (Advisor, Mieke Meurs)

Vy Nguyen  
*Three essays on financial market development* (Advisor, Maria Floro)

Ashley Provencher  
*Considerations of efficiency in policy evaluation: An application to child welfare policy* (Advisor, Mary Hansen)

Maria Rafaj  
*The capability approach to understanding student outcomes: Expanding the concept of human capital* (Advisor, Mary Hansen)

Adam Ratner  
*Four essays on the influence of school ecologies on educational production* (Advisor, Robert Lerman)

Julie Routzahn  
*Gender differences in attitudes towards credit, terms of trade, and the household balance sheet* (Advisor, Mary Hansen)

Sibel Selcuk  
*Exploring educational attainment and returns to education in select transition economies* (Advisor, Mieke Meurs)

Daouda Sembene  
*Institutions and poverty* (Advisor, Mieke Meurs)

Brandon Tracy  
*Exploiting a negative supply shock to understand better macroeconomic adjustments in the Brazilian economy* (Advisor, Larry Sawers)
Robert Blecker gave lectures on open economy macro theory at doctoral-level “summer schools” in Berlin, Germany, and Santiago, Chile, in August 2011. He also spoke at the annual Jornadas Monetarias conference at the Central Bank of Argentina in Buenos Aires in September 2010. His research on global trade imbalances, U.S.-Mexican trade, and post-Keynesian macro models for open economies is coming out in edited volumes with Cambridge University Press and other academic publishers. After finishing four years as department chair (2008-2012), he will be spending the next two years co-chairing AU’s Middle States Accreditation Steering Committee in addition to resuming his teaching of international economics and macroeconomics.

Ivy Broder presented a paper at the American Economic Association’s National Conference on Teaching Economics this past summer, “Incorporating Economics into Study Abroad: An On-Line Format”. The presentation described the unique course that she created in which AU students who are studying around the world, conduct research on the economy of “their” country and share that work with their classmates, developing a strong on-line community.

Bob Feinberg continues to serve as a co-editor of the Southern Economic Journal. He was invited to present a paper on US state-level antitrust enforcement at a June 2012 UK conference sponsored by the Competition Policy Centre of the University of East Anglia. He is in the process of editing a special issue of the Review of Industrial Organization on Antidumping Policy and Industrial Organization.

Maria Floro has served for the past several years as Vice-President of the International Association for Feminist Economics. She gave a talk on “Gender and Work in South Africa: What Can Time Use Data Reveal?” at the 2011 International Association for Time Use Research Conference at Oxford University.

Caren Grown is currently on leave as the Senior Gender Advisor for the Bureau of Policy, Planning, and Learning at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). She led a process to update USAID’s Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy, which hadn’t been updated for nearly 30 years. The new policy makes an evidence-based case that gender equality and women’s empowerment are essential for better results in development. She also helped lead the creation of a new Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (see http://feedthefuture.gov/sites/default/files/resource/files/weai_brochure_2012.pdf), a useful tool for measuring the impact of the Feed the Future Initiative, the U.S. Government’s global hunger and food security initiative.

Mary Hansen has been working on a project to collect data from original court records that will significantly advance knowledge about the causes and consequences of bankruptcy. The long-term goal of the project is to produce a data set representative of all bankruptcy cases filed between 1898 and the advent of electronic court records in the 1990s. The data set will include details of the progress of cases through the legal system and details of the liabilities and assets of households and businesses. The procedures have been tested in three pilots funded by AU, the Institute for New Economic Thinking and the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation.

Alan Isaac’s research interests now include agent-based modeling, which he uses to explore the intergenerational transmission of wealth inequality and certain epidemiological questions.

Walter Park was on sabbatical during the 2011-2012 academic year. He spoke at a World Intellectual Property Organization-sponsored conference held at the National Research Center in Cairo, Egypt in November of 2011, and at a conference organized by Public Citizen at the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade negotiations meeting in Dallas, TX in May of 2012.

Kara Reynolds has been working on a series of papers investigating the degree to which trade protection can impact firm investment, a topic which she had the pleasure of expounding upon to the justices of the Court of International Trade at their annual retreat in the Fall of 2011. Her paper with alum John Palatucci, analyzing the effectiveness of the Trade Adjustment Assistance program, received a great deal of press and Congressional attention during the most recent debate as to whether to expand funding to the program.

Mary Hansen (right, with Kara Reynolds) lands NSF grant for HPC to expand researchers’ computing power
Department Notables
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Martha Starr is serving as President of the Association of Social Economics in 2012; her responsibilities included organizing the ASE’s program at the 2012 ASSA meetings in Chicago, including a plenary address by Robert Shiller, and co-organizing the Association’s 14th World Congress held at the University of Glasgow, Scotland, in June 2012. Articles of hers have recently appeared in Economic Inquiry, Economics Letters, the Journal of Economic Issues, and the Review of Middle East Economics and Finance (coauthored with AU PhD Ghazi Joharji). At the 2013 ASSA meetings in San Diego, she and PhD student Manuel Buitrago will present their research on gender, ethnicity and the Great Recession.


Jon Wisman has completed several projects with current PhD students. His article with Kevin Capehart, “Creative Destruction, Economic Insecurity, Stress, and Epidemic Obesity,” was re-published by Oxford University Press in February 2012 as the lead chapter in Insecurity, Inequality, and Obesity in Affluent Societies. A chapter written with Nicholas Reksten, “Rising Job Complexity and the Need for Government Guaranteed Work and Training,” is scheduled to appear in The Job Guarantee: Toward True Full Employment this coming December; and one with Matt Davis, “Degraded Work, Declining Community, Rising Inequality, and the Transformation of the Protestant Ethic in America: 1870-1930,” is forthcoming in American Journal of Economics and Sociology. He is currently completing several other projects addressing aspects of inequality, employment and ecology.

Alumni News

Ohan Balian, who got his doctorate at AU several years ago, is now a Senior Economic Advisor to the Palestinian National Authority. He had been living in Dubai, but was eager to move home.

Talip Kilic has been working in the Development Economics Research Group at the World Bank since completing his PhD at American University in 2008. The focus of Talip’s work has been on the collection and analysis of data as part of the Living Standards Measurement Study -- Integrated Surveys in Agriculture (LSMS-ISA) project, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. His co-authored paper (with Carletto and Kirk)--”Nontraditional crops, traditional constraints: The long-term welfare impacts of export crop adoption among Guatemalan smallholders”--won the International Association of Agricultural Economists award for the Best Paper published in Agricultural Economics in 2011.

Yun Kim is Visiting Assistant Professor of Economics at Trinity College, and has a forthcoming article, “Household Debt, Financialization, and Macroeconomic Performance in the U.S., 1951-2009” in the Journal of Post Keynesian Economics.

Ron Cronovich, who graduated from AU with a BA in Economic Theory in 1988 and later earned his PhD at the University of Michigan, is now chair of the Economics Department at Carthage College in Kenosha, Wisconsin.

Arslan Razmi, who received his PhD from AU in 2004, is now a tenured Associate Professor at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, where he teaches and does research on macroeconomics, international trade, and economic development.

We have other recent PhDs with interesting positions: Bahattin Buyukshahin is employed at the International Energy Agency in Paris, Rabia Ferroukhi at the International Renewable Energy Agency in Abu Dhabi, Heath Henderson at the Inter-American Development Bank. In academic positions, Aaron Pacitti and Ashley Provencher are both at Siena College.

A former Economics MA student (1992), José Alfredo Blanco, is based in Guatemala City as a Monetary Operations Expert with the IMF.

Stay in touch with Economics at AU

If you have news to share in our next newsletter, or simply want to contact us, you can email Bob Feinberg at feinber@american.edu, or call at 202-885-3788.

To learn more about supporting the Department with a gift, please contact Dave Wiemer in the College of Arts and Sciences Office of Development and Alumni Relations via email at wiemer@american.edu, or by phone at 202-885-2986. All gifts are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law and can be designated towards several important initiatives including the Economics Department’s General Fund, the Info-Metrics Institute, the Barbara Bergmann Fellowship, or scholarship funds in memory of former faculty members Jose Epstein and Frank Tamagna.