



December 28, 2018

Greetings from St. Thomas to wherever this letter reaches you across the world. For those who do not know me, I am the Chair of the Economics Department. My graduate institution has an annual newsletter and it is something that I look forward to reading each year about updates on the department. I thought we should have one for our department as well. Here is the inaugural edition.

I wanted to start off thanking you for your gifts to the Department of Economics. Because of your generosity, we can fund many learning opportunities for our students such as student research, attending competitions, gaining research experience as research assistants, and paying for graduate school applications to just name a few. Thank you!

We have had a busy year. Let us start with the most important information. **Dr. Luz Saavedra** won the chili contest and is now the proud owner of the coveted trophy for the next year. (Yes, faculty are really that competitive for that trophy.)

**Dr. Craig Marcott** retired in May after working at St. Thomas for more than 36 years. He is deeply missed and enjoying retirement fully. We are very lucky to have **Drs. Terry Langan and Joe Kreitzer** back in the department. Terry returned to the classroom this semester. Given that he has always been a great teacher, I was not surprised that his spring classes were the first to be filled up. Joe is on sabbatical and will return to the classroom next year. Our most recent hire is **Dr. Ho-Ching (Angela) Mak** who joined the department last year. Her research focuses on healthcare economics. And we are so thankful to have **Loren Langan** again in the classroom this year fostering love of economics in the next generation.

We sent four alumni off to graduate school this past fall. They are:

- **Linnea Graham** (University of Minnesota, M.S. in Applied Economics)
- **Shannon Heitkamp** (Columbia University, M.S. in Epidemiology)
- **Nicole Niedringhaus** (Boston College, M.S. in Applied Economics)
- **Kevin Van Lieshout** (University of Wisconsin, Madison, M.A. in Economics)

We wish them and all others pursuing graduate studies that we are not aware of the very best.

Faculty have been busy publishing their co-author work. Dr. **Suzanne Wisniewski** published her study "What Education Policies and Programs Affect Learning and Time in School in Developing Countries?" in *Review of Education*, while Dr. **Matthew Kim** published his work "The Effect of Parental Medicaid Expansions on Children's Health Insurance Coverage" in *Contemporary Economic Policy*. Dr. **Tyler C. Schipper**'s work "Strict Duality and Overlapping Productivity Distributions between Formal and Informal Firms" was published in

the *Journal of Development Economics* and my study with Dr. Roxanne Prichard (UST Psychology), "Calculating the contribution of sleep problems to undergraduates' academic success," can be found in the SLEEP Journal.

The College of Arts and Sciences has just added an **interdisciplinary major in Data Analytics** spearheaded under the leadership of Dr. Matthew Kim. Students take core courses in computer science and statistics along with domain requirements, which are the courses in a chosen area of study such as economics. We are very excited about the opportunities this brings our students. To give economics students more practice cultivating skills to conduct independent original research, analyze real-world data, and communicate empirical findings, the Economics Department hosted their second annual data competition. This year the data was provided by the Twin Cities Metro Transit. First place was awarded as a tie between "Park and Ride Placement" by **Regina Burroughs, Jessica Mohr, Austin Swenson**, and faculty advisor, Dr. Matthew Kim, and "Policy and Ridership: The Effects of Minimum Wage" by **Natalie Del Ponte, Alyssa Leraas, Anna Thom**, and faculty advisor, Dr. Tyler Schipper. Other projects included: "Lateness of Route 2 in the Metro Transit System," by **Kathryn Foltz, Kevin Van Lieshout**, and faculty advisor, Dr. Tyler Schipper, "Recommended Locations for the Next 50 Bus Shelters," by **Amanda Baumgart, Jessica Schreck, David Moe**, and faculty advisor, Dr. Matthew Kim, "Where People Want to Go," by **Marcus Cundiff** and faculty advisor, Dr. Luz Saavedra. Thanks to all the participants, faculty advisors, judges, the Sustainable Communities Partnership, Metro Transit, and those who attended for making DataCom 2018 a huge success!

Economics students also competed in the **2018 MinneMUDAC Challenge** sponsored by the Twin Cities Big Data, Data Science and Analytics Community. We sent two teams of students to compete against fifty other undergraduate teams from different Midwestern colleges and universities. The focus of this year's competition was to predict the number of voters who would cast a ballot in the 8 Congressional Districts across Minnesota. Each team had to construct models to predict the number of voters and the accuracy of their predictions were taken into consideration in determining the overall winner. The students were Regina Burroughs, Natalie Del Ponte, **Seth Glidewell, Jenna Karls, Joseph T Lam, and Tim D Spilde**. Their faculty mentors were economics professors Drs. **Adam Check**, Monica Hartmann, Matthew Kim, and Tyler Schipper. **Jake Mason** (B.A. in Economics) of Optum was a judge along with the faculty at the competition. Hope to see more of you at next year's competition as judges.

We also sent another team to the **2018 Midwest Undergraduate Data Analytics Competition** at Winona University. Seth Glidewell, **Kiran Goswitz, and Jorgen DeJarlais** had 24 hours to analyze the data to gain a deeper understanding of the characteristics that influence season ticket sales for the Minnesota Wild. (Yes, they worked through the night in some big auditorium.) Do not worry. Their faculty mentor Dr. Adam Check got to stay in a hotel room.

As all of you know, the Economics Department has been taking students to study in Australia since the mid-1990s. **Drs. Agapitos Papagapitos and Brad Wilson** will be there in January. Due to the program's success, the Economics Department has expanded their **study abroad** offerings. Students now can study economics in Botswana led by Dr. Suzanne Wisniewski as well in China for the first time led by **Dr. Deborah Rho and Dr. Hong Wu**. Students will be going back to the visit the Great Wall of China and learn about the Chinese economy again in January 2020. Dr. Renee Buhr (UST POLS) and I are leading a course on Brexit and will be visiting Northern Ireland during this upcoming spring break when the UK is leaving the EU. Exciting times! I think we need a study abroad course just for alumni don't you think!

Yes, I still have more to tell you. As part of our curriculum, the Economics Department have worked to develop our students' understanding of **acting for the common good**. This year three courses have integrated sustainability projects allowing students to use their training to solve real world problems for PLACE, a nonprofit organization with a mission to create affordable living. Students in my *Law and Economics* course explored legal issues concerning affordable housing policies in Eugene, Oregon. Dr. Kim's Economics of the Public Sector students analyzed variables included in traditional affordable housing models in comparison with systems- based affordable living models to provide the building blocks for further economic analysis and public policy questions. Finally, my Managerial Economics students reviewed PLACE's bank proposal for their EcoVillage and provided recommendations to better communicate to lenders the economic benefits and costs of their development proposal. What a wonderful opportunity for students to both learn economic principles and apply them to help an organization that is improving the world we live in the Twin Cities. See the department webpage if want to read about past projects, such as Dr. **Michael Walrath's** class with the City of Elk River.

Finally, economics alumnus Adam Bares (B.S. in Business Economics '13) graciously has returned to campus to teach a pilot class on Tableau – a data visualization software tool that allows users to work interactively with data. We are looking for ways to continue offering this noncredit class after the pilot concludes. We are so lucky to have alumni who want to provide the next generation more learning opportunities.

Feel free to follow the Department on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/USTecondept/>) and on LinkedIn (<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/13556524/>). You can always share a job posting on the LinkedIn Group to alert economics alumni for employment opportunity at your company. Also feel free to email me internship or job postings for econ majors and minors and I will forward them your announcement.

May I wish you and your family all the very best in the coming year!

Monica Hartmann  
([hartmann@stthomas.edu](mailto:hartmann@stthomas.edu))