

# Statistics News

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## Hello and Welcome to the Statistics News

Welcome to the fifth annual Department of Statistics newsletter! Our newsletter is a yearly effort to help alumni and friends learn about happenings in the department, and keep in touch with each other. It has been another eventful year and we have several news items to report, and updates from alumni to share. If you have not yet contacted us about your latest professional and personal information, please do so and we'll pass it along in the next newsletter.



## Kirk Steinhorst to Retire

**After 30 years with the University of Idaho, Kirk Steinhorst will retire on June 30, 2007.** Kirk graciously agreed to sit for an interview. Our thanks go to Ralph Neuhaus of the Mathematics Department for letting us borrow his tried and true questions.

### When did you first become interested in Statistics?

I was an undergraduate math major and I got to be a senior and looking at graduate school. Continuing in pure mathematics wasn't attractive but I had taken a bunch of computer science and statistics courses so I flipped a coin and ended up with statistics.

### What led you to decide to be a Statistics major?

It was a practical application of mathematics and the instructors that I had in statistics were better than the ones I had in computer science which was my other choice. It's amazing. Instructors shape a person's life. That's what

happened in this case. If the computer science guy hadn't been a dork, I might have been a computer scientist.

### Were your parents or siblings interested in Statistics or Mathematics?

My dad's an engineer so he has a pretty good math background. My brother was math/computer science major so he went the other route. Both my dad and one of my brothers were so inclined.

### Where did you go to college?

The University of Southwestern Louisiana, which is now the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. It's about 90 miles from Baton Rouge.

### Where did you go to graduate school and why?

I applied to grad school at Colorado State University. I went there because the statistics instructor that I liked in Lafayette had studied

## CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR CURRENT & RECENT GRADUATES

John Dugan - Spring 2007

Misti Fowler - Spring 2007

Man Li - Spring 2007

Debra Montgomery - Spring 2006

Katherine (Joey) Pavia-Jones - Spring 2006

Nataliya Plesha - Spring 2006

Ju Qiu - Spring 2006

Haiyan Qu - Spring 2007

Christian Eduardo Salas Eljatib - Spring 2006

Yabo Su - Summer 2007

Huei-Jin Wang - Spring 2006

Yun Zhang - Summer 2006

## CONGRATULATIONS TO CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION IN STATISTICS RECIPIENTS

Rajendra Anjanappa

Dustene Lee Cummings

Bharathkumar A. Kulandaisamy

Laura Paola Leites-Barrios

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**Steinhorst cont. from page 1**

under Frank Graybill at Oklahoma State. He suggested that I go to his alma mater which was Oklahoma State. But I said, "Wait. Your adviser has moved to Colorado State." So I actually followed his adviser to Colorado State.

**Has there been a particular teacher or professor who has motivated you or that you have especially enjoyed?**

There's two. That adviser was Frank Graybill who is world famous. I did my master's with him and he co-chaired my Ph.D. work. He's really an amazing fellow. The fellow I had my doctoral level probability and math/stat from was Duane Boes. He was one of the best lecturers I've had. Both Frank and Duane had a lot of influence on my career.

**What made you decide to come to the University of Idaho?**

People like where they go to graduate school in many cases. We were looking to get back into a setting like Colorado State. Land grant, next to the mountains, a nice place to live, a smaller community and this was that setting on the other side of the mountains. So it had all those components. Land grant being very important if you wanted to do projects in statistics.

**What courses do you enjoy teaching?**

I actually enjoy teaching all the courses. They're really so different. The 251 that we have is probably the most challenging course because of the breadth of the students and the lack of motivation. In terms of teaching, that's probably the most challenging course. Teaching the graduate courses you have people who are more motivated and more qualified to take the courses. They provide a great deal of satis-

faction to see them grow. I like the mix. I really do.

**What achievements in your career are you most proud of?**

I think on all three fronts that most faculty in statistics face, I've enjoyed the teaching: developing courses, watching students grow, interacting with students. The research that I've done has been in fun areas. Being at a research university I think it's an important component of a faculty member's job. Thirdly, in our case, the consulting is really exciting. There are really interesting problems out there that people have. Being in a statistics department you get to see a variety—not just one type. If you are a consultant for a company like General Foods or something, you work on a narrow bunch of problems. At a university, you get anthropologists and people from agriculture and natural resources and education and business. It's kind of an eclectic mix of interesting problems. I've probably done more work in natural resources but overall it's a huge mix of things. I think I get satisfaction out of all three areas: teaching, research, and consulting. It makes for a really satisfying mix.

**What are your interests outside of Statistics?**

That's changed over the years. I played golf early on but I haven't played golf in years. I used to fish early on but I haven't fished in a number of years. Activities that I have now are bicycling, canoeing, and grandkids—not necessarily in that order.

**What are your goals for the next few years?**

I think there are some other things to do.

I've enjoyed, as I said, all three of the major aspects of my job. You notice I left out the fourth one which is university commitments and service. But I've enjoyed teaching, research, and consulting. But there are some other things that I would like to do. Traveling, projects that have been neglected around the house, genealogy and family research, and I will keep my hand in with some consulting.

**What do you see looking back over statistics at the University of Idaho and what do you see in the future?**

I think the past has been really checkered. There have been times when our program was growing, adding faculty, had good students and lots of momentum. There were other times when we couldn't get the resources. But that is a problem with a lot of departments at the University of Idaho. We're always behind the funding curve. So it's been up and down. One step forward and two steps back. Right now we're at a low point in terms of funding and energy, and I think that's an expression of where the university is after the Boise mess and other messes that have happened in the last couple of years. In the future I think we have to decide whether we want it to be an upswing or a downswing. That's why I thought the joint Ph.D. with WSU was a real opportunity to get some energy plugged into the system. It's something that we could never do on our own. It gives us an opportunity for growth. We're facing some real difficulties making it happen. I think it's a question of determination and innovation. If we applied a little ingenuity to the problem I think we could do it. Then the department will grow.

**Honoring Kirk Steinhorst**

Those who wish to make a gift to the University to commemorate Kirk's service are encouraged to do so. Rather than create a scholarship in his own name, Kirk has chosen to donate funds to the Dale Everson Scholarship Endowment. This will strengthen the Everson Endowment which still has not met minimum funding requirements after 10 years. Fortunately, we have been allowed to begin awarding scholarships from the endowment but an extra infusion of funds will ensure that scholarships can be awarded annually in perpetuity. Please make sure to note that your donation is for the Everson Endowment.

**Support the Department of Statistics**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

News (family, career, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I would like to support the outstanding students and faculty in the Department of Statistics.

Enclosed is my gift of \$\_\_\_\_\_.

Please designate my gift for:

Department of Statistics

Dale Everson Scholarship Endowment

If you'd prefer donating via credit card, please visit:  
<https://www.sites.uidaho.edu/gifts/>

Return form to: University of Idaho Department of Statistics, PO Box 441104, Moscow, ID 83844-1104.

## Deb Montgomery is First Everson Fellowship Recipient

The Dale Everson Statistics Fellowship Award is given to an outstanding student on the basis of excellence in and commitment to statistical consulting. Deb Montgomery was the first recipient of this prestigious award. On April 10, 2006, we celebrated Deb's accomplishments at The Broiler. Attending were Dale and Darlene Everson, the award sponsors, Deb Montgomery, Rick Edgeman and Barbara Olsen. Deb received a framed certificate and a scholarship for \$500.

*Pictured at right, Deb Montgomery accepts an award certificate from Chris Williams.*



## Two Recipients for Second Everson Fellowship Award



*Dale and Darlene Everson, John Dugan, Yabo Su and Kirk Steinhorst.*

**Yabo Su** and **John Dugan** each received the 2007 Everson Fellowship Award. The Dale Everson Statistics Fellowship Award is given to an outstanding student on the basis of excellence in and commitment to statistical consulting. On January 12, 2007, we held a lunch at The Broiler to honor Yabo and John. Attending were Dale and Darlene Everson, the award sponsors, John Dugan, Yabo Su, Jianjie Ma (Yabo's spouse), Kirk Steinhorst (award nominator), Rick Edgeman and Barbara Olsen. John and Yabo each received framed certificates and scholarships in the amount of \$350.

## Kirk Steinhorst honored at Spring Celebration

Retiring Professor Kirk Steinhorst has requested that no special event be scheduled in his honor. However, Kirk has agreed to attend the department's annual Spring Celebration. We will get together on Wednesday, May 9 from 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

If you have any greetings or reminiscences for Kirk, please send them as soon as possible to Barbara Olsen, Statistics Department, PO Box 441104, Moscow, ID 83844-1104 or e-mail to bolsen@uidaho.edu. Barbara will be putting together a memory book for Kirk.



## Students Awards 2006

Each year, an outstanding graduate student in Statistics is chosen for the department's American Statistical Association (ASA) Award. In 2006, we were able to recognize two students. The 2006 recipients were **Huei-Jin Wang** and **Haiyan Qu**. Along with a one-year subscription to the ASA publications, Huei-Jin and Qu each received a framed certificate. For the third year, the department recognized students for outstanding service in the Statistics Assistance Center. Recipients of Making a Positive Difference Awards were **Dan Agte**, **Deb Montgomery** and **Renae Shrum**. Along with a framed certificate, these students also received gift certificates to amazon.com.

All the awards were presented at the annual Spring Celebration on Wednesday, May 10, 2006 in the Brink Faculty Lounge.



## Students Awards 2007

In 2007, three Statistics graduate students were recognized as outstanding and chosen for the department's American Statistical Association (ASA) Award. The 2007 recipients were **Erkan Buzbas**, **Man Li** and **Yabo Su**. Along with a one-year subscription to the ASA publications, Erkan, Man and Yabo will each receive a framed certificate. These awards, along with others, will be presented at the annual Spring Celebration on Wednesday, May 9, 2007 in the Brink Faculty Lounge.

## External Review

A seven-year cycle of periodic program review facilitates future planning and furthers the relationship between the University's mission and goals and education programs.

In the external program review process, the unit faculty and staff conduct a self-study of the program relative to defined criteria, gathering both qualitative and quantitative information for this purpose. A review team then assesses the program quality with respect to the questions and criteria provided, as well as the role of the program in the University environment relative to the University's role and mission, and goals.

The Department of Statistics underwent an external review in 2006. A self-study report was completed in late April 2006. In late May 2006, an external review team visited campus. The team included Mike Jacroux, professor and chair of the Department of Statistics at Washington State University; Dallas Johnson, professor and former chair from the Department of Statistics at Kansas State University; and Geoff Vining, professor from the Department of Statistics at Virginia Tech. The review team spent three days meeting with faculty from within and outside the department, staff, graduate students and administrators.

On the whole, the external review team found that the department is doing good work with minimal resources. They encouraged the University to invest in the Department of Statistics in order to achieve its aspirations in terms of collaborative research. The external reviewers encouraged the University to hire three new professors upon Kirk Steinhorst's retirement. Reviewers strongly supported the department's plan to establish a joint Ph.D. program with the Department of Statistics at Washington State University. They also encouraged the University to consider merging the statistics department of the two universities within the next 10 years. Reviewers recommended that the University provide the department with additional teaching assistantships in support of the new Ph.D. program. They also favored more support for the Statistical Consulting Center in order to strengthen interdisciplinary research throughout the university.

## Haiyan Qu Interns at AquilaVision Inc.

AquilaVision Inc. is a technology transfer company located in the Business Incubators of the University of Idaho and the University of Montana. The business provides comprehensive, state-of-the-art GIS technology to clients in need of specialized equipment and highly trained personnel. The AquilaVision team includes experts in geographic information sciences, statistical analysis, environmental sciences, engineering and project management. AquilaVision Inc. has the capabilities to design and operate satellite communications with secure real-time data relay, interpret, process, and deliver detailed data and imagery using an array of remote sensing instruments, provide precise and accurate geospatial datasets, and develop, implement, and administer sound management strategies and decision support for homeland security, law enforcement and natural resource operations.

Haiyan Qu has been part of the Research and Development Team at AquilaVision for eight months. His work focuses on predicting invasive species movement using spatial network modeling. The objective of this project is to accurately predict invasive species movement using spatial network models that incorporate topographic factors such as slope, aspect, soil texture, and vegetation indices related to plant community. Qu also is working on the design and development of the next generation of air-borne camera sensor systems. Qu finds this work to be interesting and fun. He is learning the power of statistics in the real world.

## Undergraduate Francisco Martinez Interns at SEL

Francisco Martinez is an undergraduate Marketing/Production/Operations Management major with minors in Spanish and Statistics. During the Fall 2006 semester, he completed an internship with Schweitzer Engineering Laboratories (SEL) in Pullman. The internship course was originally designed for graduate students, but we were able to modify it to enable Francisco to take advantage of an opportunity to work at SEL. This internship not only met, but exceeded Francisco's expectations. It was a great opportunity to improve his skills, and to put into practice what he has learned while pursuing his degree. Francisco was assigned to manage a portion of the Quality Data Department projects. He was able to enhance his statistical analysis skills associated with advanced problem solving techniques for identifying causal variables for problems and verifying corrective actions.

Ultimately, what made this a superb experience for Francisco was working with the people who first introduced him to this project. In a short time, Francisco was able to start working on the project with minimal supervision. He found it rewarding to complete work that was of interest to key executives. Francisco found working for SEL to be a valuable experience.

## Faculty and Staff News

**Rick Edgeman** presented a keynote address at the 11th World Congress for Total Quality Management on December 4, 2006, in Wellington, New Zealand.

**Timothy Johnson** was promoted to associate professor of statistics, with tenure.

**Paul Joyce** taught a course on The Genetic Theory of Adaptation in November at the Center for Evolutionary Biology at Uppsala University in Sweden.

**Oz Garton** was awarded the prestigious Arthur S. Einarsen Award by the Northwest Section of The Wildlife Society for his outstanding service to the wildlife profession and his dedication to wildlife resources.

**Kirk Steinhorst and Chris Williams** attended the Joint Statistical Meetings in Seattle in August 2006.

**Chris Williams** is now the director of the Bioinformatics and Computational Biology Program.

## Meet our New Graduate Students

**Nathan Brindza** joined the department in Fall 2006. He is originally from Utah and used to be a fisheries biologist. Nathan now works as an outreach specialist for the Idaho Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR) Office.

**Erkan Buzbas** joined the department

in Spring 2007. He is originally from Turkey. Erkan also is pursuing a Ph.D. in Bioinformatics and Computational Biology.

**Xiuru Sun** joined the department in Fall 2006. She is originally from China.

**Wei Wei** joined the department in Fall 2006. She also is pursuing a Ph.D. in

Mathematics. Wei is originally from China.

**Hui Yan** joined the department in Fall 2006. He is originally from China.

**Xue Zhao** rejoined the department in Spring 2007 after a three-year break. She completed a master's degree in Plant Science at Idaho in 2002.

## Alumni News

**Juan Fan** started a job as a SAS programmer at Epsilon in Boston, Mass., in January of last year. In the middle of the year, she was promoted to Statistician. Juan's husband lived and worked in San Jose, Calif., so they had a difficult time dealing with the long distance relationship. Juan recently took a job as a Customer Information Management (CIM) Analyst for HSBC Card Services in Salinas, Calif. Juan and her husband have chosen to live halfway between their two companies. It's a bit of a commute but Juan reports that the traffic is not too bad. She's happy to no longer need to travel across the country to see her husband.

**Hua Feng** lives in Gainesville, Fla. She works as a statistical research coordinator for the Department of Pharmacy Practice in the Center for Pharmacogenomics at the University of Florida. She mainly focuses on genetic association studies related to cardiovascular disease and asthma. Hua is responsible for statistical plan and power estimation in grant proposals, candidate single nucleotide polymorphism and gene selection as well as disease risk prediction, statistical analysis and research reports.

**Allan Hicks** is working on a Ph.D. in Fisheries at the University of Washington under the supervision of Ray Hilborn, studying stock assessment issues of orange roughy, particularly in New Zealand. Allan's research takes him to New Zealand for three months of the year where he undertakes stock assessments, performs analysis of fisheries data, and attends assessment working groups which ultimately provide advice to the Minister of Fisheries. He hopes to complete his Ph.D. late this year.

**Anne Shih Jacobson** is still a senior biostatistician at Celera. She and her husband, Lew, recently got a new puppy, Sophie, an Australian and Bor-

der Collie mix. They recently celebrated their Keeshond, Heartbreaker's 15<sup>th</sup> birthday. Between a 1-year-old puppy, a 15-year-old senior and two cats, they stay busy and enjoy life. Last spring, they vacationed in Paris and Amsterdam. Anne had a great time on her first visit to Europe. She loved the Keukenhof Garden in Holland. Anne also found Parisians to be very nice and helpful people!

**Jar Shang Jong** is a senior account executive with Taylor Nelson Sofres, a market research company. Jong is in charge of data analysis for FMCG (fast moving consumer goods), which is under the company's World Panel Department.

**Kedar Koirala** moved with his family back to Moscow in August 2006, after a good teaching experience at Owens Community College in Toledo, Ohio. Kedar is now pursuing a Ph.D. in Civil Engineering and is a research assistant with the Civil Engineering Department. Kedar has started his research work on medium range weather forecasting in southern Idaho and uses many statistical methods in modeling and forecasting weather.

**Chris Lighty** is still living in Sandpoint, Idaho and working at Coldwater Creek as a Business Intelligence analyst. Currently, she does reporting and analysis for the Marketing and E-Commerce departments. Chris has had the opportunity to support several different departments during her two years with Coldwater Creek. Learning about different parts of the company and working with new people keeps Chris on her toes and happy.

**Nataliya Plesha** is still at the University of Idaho working to finish her Ph.D. in Natural Resources. Her son, Darchyk, just turned five.

**José Miguel Ponciano** completed the Ph.D. in Bioinformatics under Paul Joyce's guidance in May 2006. José then began a post-doc with Professor Mark L. Taper from the Ecology Department at Montana State University in Bozeman. He is working on state-space models and stochastic population dynamics modeling. José will be cutting his post-doc short because he has been hired as a tenure-track faculty member at a very good statistics and mathematics research center in Mexico, called CIMAT ([www.cimat.mx](http://www.cimat.mx)), in Guanajuato ([www.guanajuatocapital.com](http://www.guanajuatocapital.com)). It's a beautiful place and José and his wife, Marcela, are delighted to go back and work in their beloved Latin America. José starts there in August 2007, so he's already begun preparing his classes.

**Ju Qiu** is currently living with her family in Pullman, Wash. and is applying to area Ph.D. programs. She and her family welcomed a new baby girl, Alayna Jiggi, on March 8, 2007.

**Richard Remington** started Quantified Inc. in late 2006. Current projects include: statistical support for an Idaho non-wadeable streams water quality study based on a 3-year Regional EMAP survey ([www.epa.gov/emap/remap](http://www.epa.gov/emap/remap)); a skin infection study for the Boise VA Medical Center; a resource selection study of Mexican spotted owls for the Hubbs-SeaWorld Research Institute; and a habitat monitoring study on the Lower Owens River Project ([www.lorp.info](http://www.lorp.info)).

**Christian Salas** completed his master's degree in Statistics in Spring 2006, then moved with his wife, Lilita, to New Haven, Conn. Christian began his Ph.D. in Biometrics at Yale University in Fall 2006. In May 2007, Christian and Lilita are expecting their first baby. They are very happy and looking forward to welcoming their little princess. During Fall

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## Alumni News cont. from page 5

2006, Christian was a Teaching Fellow with the Department of Statistics and now is a Teaching Fellow for the course: Statistics for Environmental Sciences, with the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies.

**Michelle Tschida** is still in Seattle, Wash. working for Washington Mutual. She now has switched to working as an analyst for the marketing department. Marketing data is fun, but it is different for Michelle because the dependent variable is often binary. They have lots of data with lots of records. They also have many different data sources. Getting the data and cleaning it can be a challenge. Michelle is learning proc SQL and SQL to help with this and has been learning more about databases. Michelle received her ASQ Six Sigma Black Belt last year.

**Aiyuan Xie** recently moved

from Birmingham, Ala., to Louisville, Ky, to take a new position as an Actuarial Analyst at Humana, a managed healthcare / health insurance company. Before Aiyuan came to her new job, she went back to China for the first time in almost six years. Aiyuan has been very grateful for the education and learning experience that the University of Idaho Statistics Department provided her.

**Jianping Yuan** has been working for Maritz Research as a marketing research analyst in Minneapolis, Minn., since March 2006. She is a member of their marketing sciences team which Maritz calls "Stats People." Jianping says that Maritz is a good place to work. She also says that all the statistics courses she took from the University of Idaho are very important and useful. Courses such as Multivariate Analysis, Regres-

sion, Experimental Design, Sample Survey Methods, SAS Programming, and so on have been a big help to her. Jianping appreciates that our department offered these courses because she couldn't have gotten her job without even one of them.

**Jianying Zhang** is a fifth year Ph.D. student at Purdue University. She will graduate 2007-2008.

**Lifen Zhou** went on a fun trip to Alaska last summer. Her daughter is going to graduate from college in June and plans to pursue a law degree. Lifen's son is now in middle school. This makes her feel old. Lifen is still at Amgen and enjoys being a biostatistician.

