



## Fall 2008

The budget situation on campus tends to dominate discussions these days, in a negative way. Yet many positive things are happening in the Department, especially on the personnel front where we hired five exceptional faculty members last year. Two of those folks - Kathy Baylis and Craig Gunderson - are featured in this newsletter. Others will be featured in future newsletters. Happy Holidays!!

Robert J. Hauser  
Head of Department

## Personnel

- The Department Head search is underway. Please direct all questions and suggestions to the Department Faculty Advisory Committee (DFAC) members **Amy Ando, Darrel Good, Madhu Khanna, Scott Irwin** (Chair), **Angela Lyons**, and **Gary Schnitkey**.
- December 1 was the application deadline for our financial planning and management faculty position. About 165 applications are now being reviewed by search committee members **Mary Arends-Kuening** (Chair), **Kathy Baylis, John Braden, Philip Garcia**, and **Craig Gundersen**. This is obviously a time-consuming effort on their part, and we very much appreciate it. Mary and I will be interviewing candidates selected by the Committee at the Allied Social Science Association (ASSA) Meetings.
- Congratulations to **Alex Winter-Nelson** for his well-deserved promotion to Professor.
- **Alex Winter-Nelson** is also the Department's new Graduate Program Director. I am happy that Alex is willing to take on this responsibility, and I am grateful to **Carl Nelson** for his service during the past four years. With Carl's help, the curriculum and student quality of our program are better than ever. Thanks, Carl, for your leadership.
- Welcome to new faculty members **Kathy Baylis, Craig Gundersen, Andrea Martens** and **Lia Noguera**.
- We welcome **Ed Feser** and **Geoff Hewings** into ACE as zero time faculty members. Those of us who have worked with Ed and Geoff know of their exceptional scholarship and tireless work ethic. Thanks, Ed and Geoff.
- **Randy Westgren**, good friend and colleague for 30 years, will join the University of Missouri in January as the Mary Agnes McQuinn Chair of Entrepreneurial Leadership in the Department of Agricultural Economics. It's a great opportunity for Randy and Lynn, and we will miss them greatly.

## Awards and Recognitions

- **Yunhee Chang** and **Andrea Beller** won the 2008 Applied Consumer Economics Award for their paper, "Child Support Across State Lines: Distance, Interstate Enforcement, and Welfare Reform."
- **Bob Thompson** will be inducted into the New York State Agricultural Leaders Honorary. Bob was also selected by the Purdue Alumni Association as a 2009 recipient of its Certificate of Distinction.
- **Paul McNamara** was a recipient of this year's Champaign-Urbana International Humanitarian Awards.
- **Hayri Onal** and Robert Briers won the Best Publication in Forestry Award of INFORMS (Institute for Operations Research/Management Science) 2008 for the article, "Optimal Selection of a Connected Reserve Network" in *Operations Research*.
- **Peggy Grossman** received the 2008 Professional Scholarship Award from the American Agricultural Law Association for the article, "Anticipatory Nuisance and the Prevention of Environmental Harm and Economic Loss from GMOs in the United States" in the *Journal of Environmental Law and Practice*.
- Congratulations to **David Allspach**, who was selected for this year's C.J. Elliott Award.
- **Scott Irwin** was elected to the Agricultural and Applied Economics Association Board.
- I am now Interim Director (25% time) of the ACES International Office.

## Miscellaneous

- Many thanks to the **IT group**, and particularly **Pam Splittstoesser**, for leading the effort to improve our web site. After several months of development, the new version has been released. It is now much easier to navigate, and the content - especially for the academic programs - was improved considerably.
- I am pleased to report that State Farm Insurance recently committed significant support to our new financial planning program.
- The Department faculty retreat was held on December 15 at the I-Hotel, providing an opportunity to discuss the "state of

the Department," as well as various short- and long-term opportunities and issues.

- The "budget crisis" is "evolving" with plenty of rumors and speculation. Stay tuned for facts.

## Academic Program

Congratulations to the following faculty who were named to the "List of Teachers Ranked as Excellent" for Spring 2008.

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| <b>Mary Arends-Kuenning</b> | ACE 474: Econ of Consumption            |
| <b>David Bullock</b>        | ACE 503: Equilibrium and Welfare Econ   |
| <b>Paul Ellinger</b>        | ACE 199: Undergraduate Open Seminar     |
| <b>Alex Lo</b>              | ACE 161: Microcomputer Applications     |
| <b>Urvi Neelakantan</b>     | ACE 445: Intermediate Personal Fin Plan |
| <b>Hayri Onal</b>           | ACE 567: Adv Programming for App Econ   |
| <b>Paul Stoddard</b>        | ACE 232: Management of Farm Enterprises |
| <b>Ron Warfield</b>         | ACE 199: Undergraduate Open Seminar     |
| <b>Alex Winter-Nelson</b>   | ACE 254: Economic Systems in Africa     |
| <b>Alex Winter-Nelson</b>   | ACE 454: Econ Dev of Tropical Africa    |
| <b>Alex Winter-Nelson</b>   | ACE 594: Seminars and Workshops         |

## Gundersen Research Focuses on Issues of Poverty

Craig Gundersen said there were several good reasons to join the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Economics. Like so many other children of University of Illinois alumni (his father celebrated his 50th reunion this year), Gundersen said he's always had a 'soft spot' for the U of I. But first and foremost, he said, "There's a lot of exciting work going on in this department that overlaps nicely with my research agenda. This is just a good fit for me."

Gundersen came to the U of I from Iowa State University, where he was an Associate Professor in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies and a Cooperating Member of the Economics Department. Prior to that, Gundersen was in Washington, D.C. at the Economic Research Service of the USDA for seven years.

Gundersen is an associate professor with a research and teaching appointment. His overall research agenda deals with issues of poverty. "Within that," he said, "there are two specific areas I'm interested in. First of all, I look at issues of food insecurity and hunger in the United States. "Food insecurity is a measure established by the USDA to ascertain whether or not, due to economic constraints, families have enough food to eat."



Dr. Craig Gundersen

"Why are some families food insecure?" Gundersen said. "What are some of the determinants of food insecurity and what are some of the consequences?"

One project in particular, a National Research Initiative grant funded by the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service of the USDA, looks at the impact of stress and food insecurity on childhood obesity, and especially how those two factors affect low-income children.

Gundersen's second research area examines the impact of food assistance programs, in particular the food stamp programs. "Who participates and who doesn't?" he said. "How effective are these programs?"

Gundersen said national surveys show the number of people who report using food stamps is about 15 percent less than administrative data on those same numbers. "That influences your interpretation of the effectiveness of food stamps, so that's another area that has to be addressed," he said. Gundersen's work on food assistance program participation is funded by the Economic Research Service of the USDA.

Gundersen and his wife, Lisa, have three children; Diego (12), Faith (10), and Van (8). Gundersen said he enjoys playing tennis, and he follows college football closely, "but all of my spare time is spent doing things with my family."

Gundersen said the family is enjoying living in Champaign-Urbana. "When we lived in Washington, D.C., we liked the big city, but it was a long commute. And Ames, Iowa was just a little bit small. So this has been nice. It's big enough to have a lot going on, but small enough to make life easier."

## Baylis Will Concentrate on Ag Policy and Trade

After Kathy Baylis received her undergraduate degree in economics from the University of Windsor, she went to work for the National Farmers Union in Canada. When she was asked to review a new piece of legislation changing crop insurance subsidies, she realized she needed more education.

"I had enough economics that I understood some of the issues in a big picture way, but I just couldn't get my head around it," said Baylis. "So I went back to get my master's degree in agricultural economics at the University of Saskatchewan."

Baylis thought that would be the end of her formal education, but as luck would have it, she loved academic life.

"Up to that point, I hadn't realized that academics were doing hands on, applied policy work that could actually make a difference in the world," she said. "That's what got me hooked."



Dr. Kathy Baylis

Baylis went on to the University of California at Berkeley to earn her Ph.D. in agricultural economics. She spent five years on the agricultural faculty at the University of British Columbia.

"It was an interesting place, because there aren't departments. The ag economists were down the hall from the plant scientists and the entomologists," said Baylis. "That was great, because I learned a lot about things I never would have been exposed to otherwise, for instance, the market structure for plant genetics."

But Baylis is very happy to be in a department where she has access to colleagues and Ph.D. students in her field.

"There were a lot of things I enjoyed about the University of British Columbia," Baylis noted, "but the lack of colleagues meant that I didn't feel I was doing as good of work as I could be if I was in a place with a little more peer support. Here I work with people on projects that are in my realm of interest."

Baylis is an assistant professor, and she has a research and teaching appointment. Her research focuses primarily on agricultural policy and trade.

"I have a very active interest in ag policy," said Baylis. "Along with Andrew Schmitz (University of Florida) and Hartley Furtan (University of Saskatchewan), I've published a textbook on Canada-United States farm policy. I also do a bit of trade work. Coming from the Canadian context, you just can't do agricultural policy without trade."

Some of Baylis' research projects include looking at the effects of NAFTA on Mexican agriculture, the Canada/US/Mexico tomato trade, and how ag environmental policy relates to trade.

Baylis also teaches ACE 251, The World Food Economy. "In a time where there are multiple food crises, there's a lot of motivation for the class," she said. "We look at issues of world food policy and how US policies, and the European Union policies, affect the world food trading system. We talk about the environmental constraints to expanding production, and some of the changing food demands."

Because ACE 251 is a general education course, Baylis said the class is a diverse group, with ACE and non-ACE students alike. "We get a lot of different perspectives - urban and rural - in the same class. It's really fun."

As a transplanted Canadian, Baylis has found that Illinois is a great place to bike and camp.

"I can get to the countryside in a split second," she said. "The area's really pretty, traffic's not an issue and it's flat - I worry more about wind than hills. I've also been camping in southern Illinois. We went to the Garden of the Gods, and I thought, wow, this is Illinois? It's just striking."

Baylis enjoys playing the violin, and hopes to track down a local blue grass band that she can play with on occasion. "I let that slide when I was at the University of British Columbia, so I'd like to carve out a bit of time to play again," she said. "It's a great way to exercise a different part of the brain."

Newsletter Credits: Robert J. Hauser, Senior Editor. Leanne Lucas, writer, Pam Splittstoesser, coordinator. Unless otherwise indicated, photos are courtesy of College of ACES staff photographer David Riecks.

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