



**Spring 2011 Newsletter**

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**Note from the Department Head**

Spring is finally coming to Bozeman! I hope that wherever you are, you're enjoying the changing season as you read our spring newsletter. It has been another busy year in the Department of Ag. Econ. & Econ. We completed two new faculty hires and continue our tradition of tremendous research output and our commitment to excellent teaching both on and off campus.

Research highlights this season include published work on topics ranging from Teacher Attrition to Natural Selection and from the New Deal to Conservation Easements. Faculty presented their work at dozens of locations around the state, nation, and world. Faculty outreach presentations included workshops focused on estate planning, sustainable food and bio-energy systems, teaching technology, and strategic business management.

Please join me in welcoming Drs. Mark Anderson and Eric Belasco, who will join the faculty this fall. Mark will replace Doug Young, who retired last year. Eric will replace two of our former colleagues, Dave Buschena and John Antle. With these two new faculty members, seven of our 18 faculty members are within their first three years at MSU. Needless to say, the department has a different look and feel than in the past, and we are all excited about this transformation.

At the end of the semester, a group of our students will travel with Professors Bekkerman, Watts, and Smith to Ukraine for the Agriculture in an Emerging Economy class. The students have been gaining an integrated perspective of the science, technology, production practices, product handling, product marketing system, and end uses for Montana cattle and beef. Other student highlights this spring include several presentations at the MSU Research Celebration and, of course, graduation. Over 30 students will complete their economics or agricultural business degrees this year. DAEE graduates are taking attractive jobs inside and outside Montana, as well as heading off to prestigious graduate schools. Congratulations, and best of luck as you leave the DAEE! Please stay in touch and stop by and see us when you get a chance!



Wendy Stock

**Commencement 2011**

In previous years there has been one main commencement ceremony for all MSU graduates. This year, the administration decided to try something new in order to honor all graduates in a more meaningful way. There will now be two main ceremonies held on Saturday, May 7<sup>th</sup> at the Brick Breeden Fieldhouse. The first ceremony will be from 9:00-11:00 am and will celebrate the Colleges of Agriculture (home to DAEE Agricultural Business Majors), Business, Education, Health and Human Development, Engineering, and returning MSU Alumni. The second ceremony will be from 1:30-3:30 pm and will celebrate the Colleges of Arts and Architecture, Gallatin College Programs, Letters and Science (home to DAEE Economics majors), Nursing, and University College.



For more information: <http://www.montana.edu/commencement/index.html#general>

## Publications



Rob Fleck

**Rob Fleck's** paper, "Natural Selection and the Problem of Evil: An Evolutionary Model with Application to an Ancient Debate," has been accepted for publication by *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science*. The paper develops a theoretical model rooted in economics and evolutionary biology, then applies the model to the "problem of evil" – in essence, the

question of whether a benevolent purpose could plausibly explain the design of a world that includes great evil. More specifically, the model considers an evolutionary process in which each generation faces a risk from a "natural evil" (e.g., predation, disease, or a natural disaster) subsequent to a basic resource allocation game. This allows both resource allocation and the natural evil to influence the number of surviving offspring. As the model shows, when the risk from the natural evil can be mitigated through the benevolent behavior of neighbors, the population may have increasing benevolence as a result of (i) greater risk from the natural evil and (ii) a greater degree to which selfish individuals transfer resources to themselves in the resource allocation game. The main implication is that a world with evolutionary processes (in contrast to a world of static design) can allow two factors that have traditionally been considered "evils" – namely, the indiscriminate cruelty of the natural world and the capacity for humans to harm each other – to promote desirable long run outcomes. Although the paper takes no position on religion, its conclusions inform the ongoing debate over religion and evolution: The idea of a benevolent God creating a world that allows great evil is made more plausible – not less plausible – by the fact that we live in a world of evolutionary change.

**Dominic Parker** wrote an article for inclusion in the *Encyclopedia of Resource, Energy, and Environmental Economics*. His article, co-authored with Wally Thurman (NC-State University), surveys the history of conservation easements in the United States and their current role in land conservation. The article highlights the economic drivers of the tremendous growth in easements in recent years. It also critically assesses the tax treatment of easements under federal and state laws as well as the requirement that easements be held in perpetuity. Parker and Thurman's article will appear in the Encyclopedia's volume on *Natural Resources Policy*.



Nick Parker



Greg Gilpin

**Gregory Gilpin's** article, "Reevaluating the Effect of Non-Teaching Wages on Teacher Attrition," was accepted for publication and is forthcoming in the *Economics of Education Review*. Researchers and policymakers continue to debate the causes of teacher attrition. Given that the composition of teachers, (continued above)

(continued from below) is constructed through teacher recruitment and retention efforts, understanding what causes teacher mobility is important. While there have been several areas of growth in this literature, one aspect that deserves particular attention is the relative importance of the teaching work environment versus the higher pay in alternative occupations for teachers. Greg's paper estimates the effect of the teaching vs. alternative occupation wage differential on the propensity to exit teaching. The analysis yields several noteworthy results. First, the majority of inexperienced teachers exit full-time teaching to enter the non-education sector or to exit the labor market to care for a family member. Experienced teachers tend to exit full-time teaching in order to enter administrative or non-teaching positions inside the field of education. The majority of former teachers with only one year of teaching experience exit the labor force to return to school as students. The teaching vs. alternative occupation wage differential has a significant effect - in the magnitude of a 2 - 3 percentage point increase in the probability of exiting the teaching profession for inexperienced teachers. This differential has no effect for experienced teachers. Finally, the results suggest that the work environment is a much stronger determinant of teacher attrition than the wage differential.

**Rob Fleck** and Andy Hanssen (Clemson University) wrote a chapter on "Judges" for the forthcoming *Elgar Companion to Public Choice II*, edited by Michael Reksulak, Laura Razzolini, and William F. Shughart II. The chapter describes the key functions of judicial institutions in well-governed countries and goes on to explain why it is so difficult to answer the pressing question of how to improve institutions in poorly governed countries. At a very fundamental level, setting up an effective judiciary presents a problem: The judiciary must be sufficiently independent and powerful to serve its purpose (which includes constraining the other branches of government), yet at the same time forebear from using this power to pursue private ends. Looking at well governed countries shows that, under the right conditions, judicial independence can be part of an incentive compatible system. Although it may be impossible for poorly governed countries to copy such systems, recent scholarship has done much to illuminate the key issues that need to be considered.



Anton Bekkerman

**Anton Bekkerman's** article, "Time-Varying Hedge Ratios in Linked Agricultural Markets" has been accepted and is forthcoming in *Agricultural Finance Review*. The paper investigates using a multivariate GARCH approach to estimating hedge ratios in wheat commodity markets. Portfolio analysis of Montana wheat prices indicates that accounting for spatial and temporal dependencies among prices in Montana markets can (continued on next page)

## Publications (continued)

(continued from previous page) improve optimal hedge ratio estimation and improve price hedging strategies.

**Rob Fleck's** paper, "The Political Economy of Progress: Lessons from the Causes and Consequences of the New Deal," was recently published by Stanford University Press in *Economic Evolution and Revolution in Historical Time*, edited by Paul W. Rhode, Joshua L. Rosenbloom, and David F. Weiman. The paper explains how the American South evolved from having poor political institutions (most infamously the widespread disenfranchisement of African Americans) and relatively low incomes, to having political institutions and incomes similar to those in the rest of the United States. The paper then goes on to explain why understanding the non-obvious causes of the South's political and economic transformation helps to explain the challenges faced by developing countries.

## Extension News



Marsha Goetting

"Think You Know Who Get's Your Property When You Die...Think Again" was the theme of a series of three workshops presented in Polson by **Marsha Goetting**, MSU Extension Family Economics Specialist, in partnership with Lake County Extension and the Greater Polson Community Foundation. Similar workshops were held in Big Fork in October and November.

Over 400 Montanans have attended the series. Future estate planning seminars for the general public are planned for fall and winter in Sidney, Lewistown, Great Falls, Baker, Ekalaka, Wibaux, Terry, Forestry Mini College in Missoula, Malta, Glasgow, Chinook, Shelby, and Miles City.

**Get a Grip on Your Money:** In response to the downturn in the economy, MSU Extension teamed up with Montana Credit Unions for Community Development and the First Interstate BancSystem Foundation to provide Montanans with a packet of financial resources to help them become more effective financial managers. Over 2,070 copies were distributed throughout Montana as a result of the media picking up on the story.

The topic of estate planning has been a popular requested program for MSU Extension Specialist **Marsha A. Goetting**. During the year she has presented 52 programs on a variety of estate planning programs with over 1,550 participants in Montana.

Information on these and other programs is available at:

<http://www.montana.edu/extensionecon/>

## Presentations

**Jason Pearcy** was an invited guest and presented, "Bargains Followed by Bargains: When Switching Costs Make Markets More Competitive" at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis in February.



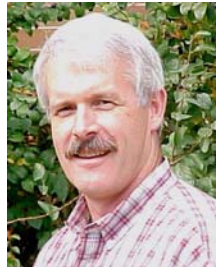
Jason Pearcy



Rob Fleck

This past January, **Rob Fleck** and Andy Hanssen (Clemson University) presented their paper, "How Tyranny Paved the Way to Wealth and Democracy: The Democratic Transition in Ancient Greece," at the American Economic Association meetings in Denver.

**Randy Rucker** presented, "Contracting for Pollination Services: Birds Do It, Bees Do It . . . Let's Specialize and Exchange" (co-authored with Walter N. Thurman) at the Contracting for Ecosystem Services Conference held in Chapel Hill, N.C. in November. This paper examines the contracting issues that pollinator service markets face and address them by recounting and analyzing the history of contracting for honey bees in North America. It also recounts and analyzes the history of commercial development of several more minor bee species.



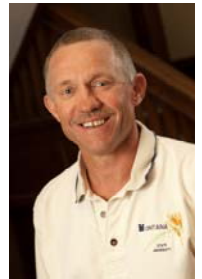
Randy Rucker

At the March Montana Bankers Association Agricultural Bankers Conference held in Bozeman, **Gary Brester** presented, "The Proposed GIPSA Rule."



Greg Gilpin

In November, **Gregory Gilpin** traveled to the University of Texas at Dallas to present, "Reevaluating the Effect of Non-Teaching Wages on Teacher Attrition."



Gary Brester

**Christiana Stoddard** presented her research, "Trends in American Indian Education Outcomes" at the Association for Education Finance and Policy in Seattle in March.



Chris Stoddard



## Presentations (continued)



Wendy Stock

Wendy Stock presented her paper, "Completion Rates and Time-to-Degree in Economics Ph.D. Programs," at the Society of Economic Educator meetings in New Orleans in February. The paper is forthcoming in the *American Economic Review Papers and Proceedings* in May 2011. The paper tracks eight years of graduate school progress for 586 individuals who entered one of 27 economics Ph.D. programs in fall 2002. Among the paper's findings: by October 2010 (8 years after starting their Ph.D. study), 59 percent of the fall 2002 entering cohort had earned a Ph.D. in economics at the university where they initially matriculated, 37 percent had dropped out, and 4 percent were still writing their dissertations. Outcomes differed widely by prestige of graduate program. Only 15 percent of students who enrolled at economics Ph.D. programs ranked in the top 15 dropped out within two years, while 40 percent of students who enrolled at programs ranked below 31 dropped out within two years.



Chris Stoddard

Christiana Stoddard was an invited participant at a symposium, "Why has Schooling Been Publicly Funded in the United States?" held in conjunction with the Association for Education Finance and Policy conference in Seattle in March.

This past March, Gary Brester presented, "Outlook: Where Are We At and Where Are We Going?" at the Risk Management Strategies for Livestock and Grain Producers meeting in Townsend.



Gary Brester



Marsha Goetting

At the Extension Pre-conference for the Association for Financial Counseling and Planning Educators Conference in November, Marsha A. Goetting presented, "Using Response Clickers for Audience Feedback and Inter Activity for Financial Management Programs."

Gary Brester presented, "Do Strategic Business Management Issues Apply to Ranching?" at the 2011 Winter Grazing Seminar of the Gallatin Conservation District in Bozeman.

## Presentations (continued)

This past November, Gregory Gilpin presented, "An Empirical Investigation on the Quantity and Quality of Teachers" at the Southern Economics Association Conference held in Atlanta, Georgia.



Greg Gilpin

In January, Rob Fleck traveled to Tucson, Arizona to speak on environmental economics at the George Mason Judicial Education Program's Advanced Law and Economics Institute.

## Departmental Scholarships Awarded

The Department of Agricultural Economics and Economics is pleased to announce the recipients of this year's scholarships:

Bryan Vadheim, Chase Young, Kelsey Kincheloe, Alyssa Peck, Christopher Fisher, Bryan Bailey, Alix Wittmayer, Ann Marie McLean, Shay Richter, Cody Jurenka, Kevin Johnson, Colter Brown, Kurt Fredenberg, Taylor Richter, Nick Hall, Julie Wichman, Lucas Woods, Evan Derks, Tyrel Obrecht, Allison Cruz, Jana Haynie, Veronnaka Klamert, Andrew Page, Sara Lawson, Scott Saunders, Shelby Miller, Brandon Kuehn, Katelyn Dynneson, Chateau Christensen, Mark Boyd, Nicholas Metcalfe.

### CONGRATULATIONS!

#### Department Donors and Memorials this Year Include:

The Myrick Scholarship

Joe Somers Memorial Scholarship

Steve Stauber Honorary Scholarship

Gilbert Giebink Memorial Scholarship

\$17,150 in scholarships will be awarded and donors and recipients will be recognized at the annual College of Agriculture Annual Awards Scholarship Banquet to be held in October 2011.

## Awards



Joel Schumacher

**Joel Schumacher and Marsha Goetting** were recently awarded a grant of \$31,125 from United Way Worldwide and the FINRA Investor Education Foundation. This grant provides an education series on basic money management, investments, retirement planning, and estate planning for employees of MSU satellite campuses and other

working Montanans. Sessions will be offered in-person in Bozeman, and as "live webinars" to rural host locations and individuals. Sessions will be archived online to accommodate viewing at times that are convenient for participants unable to attend the live webinars.



Marsha Goetting



Vince Smith (pictured right)

**Vince Smith** is the recipient of the 2011 USDA Bruce Gardner Award for his original research on the agricultural crop insurance industry and other contributions to policy analysis. The award is given annually in recognition of the scholar's outstanding contributions to the USDA's mission.

The work for which Dr. Smith received the award was initiated during his six month sabbatical from the university, during which he served as a visiting scholar in the USDA Office of the Chief Economist in Washington D.C. The work investigates the causes of the rapid 300 percent increase in federal government payments to the agricultural insurance industry for delivering federally subsidized crop and livestock insurance programs between 2001 and 2010, and which exceeded \$3 billion in 2010. The work also investigated the consequences of substantially reducing payments to the private sector for the program's integrity. The findings indicated that a substantial reduction in payments (in excess of \$1.5 billion) would probably have no impact on farmer access to federal insurance products.

Economics major, **Abe Burnett** was awarded a \$750 grant by MSU's Undergraduate Scholars Program to conduct research with guidance from his mentor, Professor **Joe Atwood**. His research focused on, "Traders in the Sugarscape: The Efficacy and Efficiency of Utilizing R and F# for Agent-Based Modeling."

**Gary Brester** has been selected as a Western Agricultural Economics Association Distinguished Scholar this year.

(continued above)



Gary Brester

(continued from below) This award recognizes individuals who have made an enduring contribution over their career to agricultural, resource, and/or environmental economics in the west and who have demonstrated excellence in applied economics research. Gary will be recognized at the WAEA Distinguished Scholar Awards Ceremony in Banff this summer.

**Chris Stoddard** won MSU's Cox Faculty Award for Creative Scholarship and Teaching this year. This university-wide award is given to recognize a substantial record of scholarship and teaching, and a demonstrable union of superior research with excellence in upper division/graduate instruction. Dr. Stoddard was recognized for her publication of careful, high-quality research, primarily focusing on gaining and communicating a better understanding of the determinants and impacts of public policies, and for her rigorous classes that earn her high praise from her students and colleagues. Chris was recognized at the MSU Spring Convocation this past January.



Chris Stoddard



Duane Griffith

**Duane Griffith** won MSU's *Excellence in Outreach Award* this year. This university-wide award is given to recognize especially significant outreach achievements and extensive, mature outreach programming. Duane made very significant contributions to the Montana agricultural community by developing analytical software and conducting workshops on a very complex farm program, average crop revenue election (ACRE) that was introduced in the 2008 Farm Bill and became available to farmers in 2009. Duane also played a lead role in developing the nationally acclaimed *Ag in Uncertain Times* webinar-based extension program. The program, developed by outstanding extension economists from across the nation, has enabled literally thousands of producers to cope with critical financial decisions that have resulted from the national financial crisis that began in late 2008. Duane was recognized at the MSU Spring Convocation in January.

**Doug Young** (Professor Emeritus) was the recipient of a 2011 Award for Excellence. He was nominated for this award by **Jonathan Sheehy** a DAEE agricultural business major. The MSU Alumni Association and the Bozeman Chamber of Commerce sponsored the award. Honored students were nominated by faculty in their college or department. In turn, the award-winning students each selected a mentor who is honored with them.



Doug Young

## In Other News...



Vince Smith

**Vince Smith** has been appointed a visiting scholar for the next 12 months with AEI (American Enterprise Institute) and will work to address farm policy issues. So far he's given seminars at the University of Kent (Canterbury, England), University of Manchester, and the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) in Paris. These seminars focused on agricultural insurance in developing countries and drew on collaborative work with Dr. Joseph Glauber (USDA, Chief Economist), **Myles Watts**, and the Gates Foundation. Vince will be traveling to Malawi in May in collaboration with IFPRI (International Food Policy Research Institute) economists to examine risk management options for small holder subsistence farmers. In July, he will attend a conference in Lima, Peru as a keynote speaker on agricultural insurance delivery and regulation issues. USAID (United States Agency for International Development) and the University of California-Davis are co-sponsors of this conference.



Joel Schumacher

A case study entitled, "The Flathead Electric Cooperative: What is the Price of 'Green'?" was co-authored by DAEE Extension Specialist **Joel Schumacher**, DAEE professor **Gary Brester**, and Dr. Mike Boland of the University of Minnesota. The case was presented to Dr. Brester's sophomore- and senior-level agribusiness management classes (approximately 80 total students) on April 19. Ross Holter, Supervisor of Energy Services for the Flathead Electric Cooperative (FEC), joined the class via a conference call. The case study focused on FEC's decisions to voluntarily participate in the State of Montana's Renewable Portfolio Standard with respect to distributing renewable electrical energy. The interaction between Ross and the students provided for a lively debate over efforts to reduce electricity usage, distribute reliable power, limit electricity prices, and satisfy growing demands for renewable and non-renewable electric power.

Congrats to **Jesse Tufte**, (BS Econ '10), who is starting the Master's in Public Administration (MPA) program at MSU this spring. Good luck!



Gary Brester



Jesse Tufte

## In Other News (continued)...



Wendy Stock

**Wendy Stock** organized the 2011 American Economic Association Committee on Economic Education annual poster session on active learning techniques in economics. The session brings together economics educators from around the world to share innovative interactive teaching techniques for economics classes. This year's session included over 35 presenters and over 100 participants. Popular presentations included, "Teaching Externalities with a Performance-Enhancing Drug Game," "Landmine Clearance as a case for Principles of Economics," and "Using Tweets to Teach."

Congrats to **Tyler Wiltgen** (MA Econ '08) who started a new job as Director of Campaign Development for Montana State's Athletics programs this year.



Tyler Wiltgen

## DAEE Alumni In Washington

The DAEE has several recent alumni working on Capitol Hill in Washington D.C. Pictured below are (L to R): **Brychan Manry** (BS Economics 2010) staff assistant for Senator Max Baucus; **Justin Folsom** (BS Economics, 2010), executive assistant to Senator John Tester; **Eric Roberts** (BS Economics and Finance 2010) and **Kevin Ward** (BS Economics 2010), who are both interning for the Senate Finance Committee. Good work!

Other DAEE alumni in Washington D.C. include **Dori Allard** and **Eli Stoltzfus** at the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and **Eric Engen** at the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System.



Brychan Manry, Justin Folsom, Eric Roberts, and Kevin Ward

## Students Present at MSU Student Research Celebration

Several DAEE students presented their research at the annual MSU Student Research Celebration in April.

**Jamie Krushensky, Alice Hecht, Drew Dewolf, Camilla Armijo-Grover, and Heather Smart** presented *Academic Student Success within an Introductory Economics Course: A Gender Based Study*, which examined the effect of peer mentor gender on student performance in ECNS 101. Since Fall 2009, an optional one-credit class (ECNS 105) led by junior and senior level economics majors (i.e., peer mentors) has been offered to students concurrently enrolled in ECNS 101 at MSU. After controlling for differences in students' academic preparation and demographic characteristics, the study found that ECNS 105 students who were paired with female mentors earned 4.43 percentage-point higher grades in ECNS 101 than students paired with male mentors, but there was no evidence to suggest an influence of mentor-student gender match on student performance in Introductory Economics. **Wendy Stock** mentored the students on this research.



Jamie Krushensky and Drew Dewolf

**Abraham Burnett** presented *Traders in the Sugarscape: The Efficacy and Efficiency of Using R and Fortran for Agent-based Modeling*. This project studied the efficacy and efficiency of using two programming languages (R and Fortran) for conducting agent-based modeling and simulation (ABMS). ABMS is a relatively new scientific method that allows researchers to study problems that would be impractical, too expensive, or unethical to study using traditional methods. In order to ascertain the effectiveness of utilizing R and Fortran, Burnett recreated the classic Sugarscape model by Epstein and Axtell to introduce a Trader class. The introduction of a Trader agent type into the Sugarscape is expected to resolve the out-of-equilibrium market behavior observed in runs of the original model. **Joe Atwood** mentored Abe's research.

**Heather Smart** presented *The Impact of Sales Taxes on R.V. Sales*. Her study serves as a spring-board to examining the impacts of sales taxes on purchasing behavior by examining recreational vehicle (R.V.) purchases. Heather used information from the 2002 and 2007 Economic Census, the Current Population Survey, and annual state tax and vehicle registration data to study the relationship between R.V. sales and sales taxes. The results of the study are explained using the economic theories of elasticity of demand and the income effect. **Myles Watts** and **Doug Young** mentored Heather's research.

**Laura Villegas** presented *Developing under the curse of Coltan*. Coltan is a mineral used to manufacture electronic capacitors, which are widely used in cell phones, computers, and other electronic equipment. Coltan is highly profitable to mine and extract, but these profits have been associated with the finance of ongoing civil war in the Congo. A reserve of coltan was found in Columbia in 2009. Laura's research examined varying models of ownership structure that the government of Colombia could adopt in order to maximize and retain coltan-generated revenues. Her study also examined how the country could manage coltan-associated rents in order to further social and economic development.



Laura Villegas

## 2011 MSU STUDENT RESEARCH CELEBRATION



## Faculty Spotlight



Nick Parker

For this newsletter, the DAEE has put the spotlight on Assistant Professor of Economics, Dr. Nick Parker:

### **How did you end up in the DAEE?**

I had lucky timing. I was a Master's student in the department from 1999-2001 and a Ph.D. student at U.C. Santa Barbara from 2005-2009. I was thrilled to learn the department had open positions when I was on the job market in 2009.

After interviewing for positions at other universities it became clear that MSU is an ideal fit for me. It is an outstanding department with a long history of scholarship in my core research areas.

### **What are your current research topics of interest?**

One of my research projects highlights the importance of predictable contract enforcement on American Indian reservations. On some reservations creditors can use state courts to enforce loan repayment but on other reservations tribes have exclusive jurisdiction. The data shows higher volumes of credit and lower loan application denial rates on reservations where states have jurisdiction. These findings do not necessarily imply that tribes should submit to state jurisdiction, but they do suggest potential benefits to tribes that choose to replicate some dimensions of state legal institutions. My other research focuses on the effects of government policies on natural resource use. One study assesses the influence of federal and state tax codes on the quantity and quality of conservation easements donated to land trusts by landowners. Another assesses the ways in which different commercial fishery policies can encourage or discourage wasteful races to catch fish. I am also studying the political economy of environmental regulations and interest group formation with Bryan Leonard, a graduate student at MSU.

### **What led you to study economics?**

I've always had an interest in analytical puzzles but also in history, politics, and psychology. By the time I was a sophomore in college, I realized that economics was the perfect discipline for bridging my interests. Much of the discipline is concerned with allocating scarce resources efficiently; this is a problem engineers encounter all the time. But, there is a human dimension of economics that makes the subject much more interesting (and complex) to me.

### **What are your favorite classes to teach and why?**

I have fun teaching all of my classes, but for different reasons. My *Principles of Microeconomics* course is for freshmen and sophomores. Most students who sign up for the class do not plan to major in economics and may even dread taking this class. I enjoy the challenge of trying to turn these students on to economics. My *Development Economics* course is for juniors and seniors who are majoring in economics or agricultural business. We discuss challenges faced by a large percentage of the world's population, and I enjoy encouraging students to think critically about controversial topics. For example, we have had lively discussion about why bans on child labor may decrease educational attainment among impoverished children in the developing world.

### **What do you like to do in your spare time?**

I like to explore Montana with my wife Lora, my 3 year-old daughter (Ilda), and my 1 year-old son (Theo). The kids live in the moment and this forces us to shift our attention there as well. We have a lot of fun!



## Teaching Assistant Offices Now Open!

The DAEE is proud to announce the opening of our Teaching Assistant Offices located on the first floor of Linfield Hall. Our teaching assistants now have access to four small offices, each equipped with a computer and whiteboard to use when meeting and working with economics students. The office area also boasts a common area with several large whiteboards and round tables with a plentiful supply of chairs for students to study and work on projects together.



## Retired Faculty Spotlight: Dick McConnen

Dick McConnen, a former DAEE faculty member and Department Head, was born in Sidney, Montana in April 1930. This may not seem to be particularly significant, except for the fact that his family was really from Richey, Montana. But Richey didn't have a hospital, and the roads were bad from spring rains, so Dick's mother took a train to Sidney a couple of weeks before he was born.

Dick's family owned the hardware-implement store in Richey where they sold John Deere equipment. They also farmed and had some livestock. Dick has fond memories of growing up, especially the horses they used for recreation. When Dick was in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, his father retired, sold the business and moved his family to Billings. *(continued on next page)*

## Retired Faculty Spotlight (continued)

(continued from previous page) Dick attended the Catholic High School for a year, but due to friends and wanting to “try something else,” he switched to the public high school.

After graduating from high school, he enrolled at Montana State University in 1948 with the idea of becoming a veterinarian. He ended up in the College of Agriculture and earned his degree in agricultural economics. Professors Maurice Kelso and Chet Baker had an especially strong influence on Dick. Although he finished his degree early, he had a conundrum... he had promised four years to ROTC, so he HAD to stay in school and pursue a Master’s degree.

Following school, Dick was commissioned as a lieutenant and sent to the Infantry School at Fort Benning, Georgia. He was later stationed at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri and then sent to Germany for a year. In total, he served his country for two years before being discharged right around the time the Korean War was winding down.

After getting out of the military, he decided to attend UC-Berkeley, because Chet Baker was from Berkeley and spoke very highly of the program. Dick earned his Ph.D. in the late 1950s and found himself once again at Montana State University, but this time as an assistant professor of agricultural economics. After a few years, he headed back to Berkeley where he received a Fulbright Fellowship and spent a year in Dublin, Ireland. He also worked for the U.S. Forest Service. He eventually returned to MSU, where he met and married Charmaine, mother of their two daughters.

Dick served as Department Head from 1968-1978. One fond memory was the department hosting 2,000 ag economists for the American Agricultural Economic Association’s annual meetings in 1968 – it snowed in August, of course!

Although times were tough financially, Dick worked hard to change the scope of the department. When he became head, there was only one general economist, macro wasn’t taught, and faculty also included specialists in sociology and rural sociology. During his tenure, the general economics faculty expanded to half a dozen, including Rick Stroup, Terry Anderson, PJ Hill, Mike Copeland and Doug Young. Dick says he worked hard to create a positive relationship between the general economists and the “aggies.”

After finishing his stint as department head, Dick moved to Arizona and ran a project for four years with the Consortium for International Development funded by USAID. He also worked 4 years in Pakistan in the early 1990’s with the Ministry of Food and Agriculture in the Economic Section.

After eventual “retirement,” Dick enjoyed helping establish the Sourdough trail system around Bozeman. He also did more international work in Brazil and Ethiopia.

Dick definitely enjoyed teaching, especially with students who showed a real interest in agricultural business, because those were the ones that pushed their professors to do a really good job!

Congratulations to Dick on a fine career, and thanks for all of your contributions to MSU and the community.



Retired faculty and Dept. Head Dick McConnen, Wendy Stock, and Doug Young

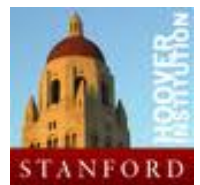
## Away on Sabbatical...



Rob Fleck

**Rob Fleck** is visiting Stanford University’s Hoover Institution for the academic year. He is there to conduct research on the interaction between democracy, judicial institutions, and economic performance. In one set of papers, Rob is working with Andy Hanssen (Clemson University) to extend their work on the transition to democracy in ancient Greece. In a different

but related set of papers, some of which are joint work with Jamie Brown (Iowa State University) and Andy Hanssen; Rob is examining the causes and consequences of New Deal policies. The overarching goal of this work is to explain the conditions under which “good institutions” (stable democracy, the rule of law, and clear property rights) evolve and allow societies to thrive.



## 2011 Outstanding Seniors



**Camilla Armijo-Grover**  
Economics



**Jonathan Sheehy**  
Agricultural Business

These students will be honored and will receive a plaque for their outstanding work as students both in and out of the classroom at the DAEE graduation reception May 6, 2011.

**CONGRATULATIONS!**

## Congratulations Graduating Seniors!

Congratulations to all our graduating seniors!  
Fall 2010, Spring and Summer 2011

### Economics Majors:

Camilla Armijo-Grover	Kristian Miller
Abraham Burnett	Matthew Morley
Nicole Burnett	Sophie Mumford
Mitchell Grove	Akihiro Naito
Brandon Hess	Michael Oren
Alexey Kalinin	Ryann Rivard
Levi Lacock, (2 <sup>nd</sup> Major)	Paula Shoup
Haley Landeen	Michael Tarrant
Kaitlin Macdonald	Laura Villegas

### Agricultural Business Majors:

C.J. Carpenter	Kirstin Lee
Reid Edwards	Troy Mills
Mitchell Grove, ( 2 <sup>nd</sup> Major)	Jeremy Myers
Ashley Hartsook	Alena Ogg
Allison Jenkins	Dylan Robbins
Colleen Johnson	Jonathan Sheehy
Cody Joyce	Brandon Uffelman
I.K Westbrook	Levi Lacock

## Congratulations Graduating Master's Students!

Four Students completed course and research requirements for the DAEE Master's Program this year.

**Vanessa Elizondo**, Thesis: "An Economic Analysis of the Wild Horse and Burro Program." Advisor: Randy Rucker and Tim Fitzgerald.

**Katherine Burns**, Thesis: "The Effect of Chapter 7 Bankruptcy Exemptions on Divorce." Advisor: Chris Stoddard.

**Mitchell Reese**, Thesis: "The Impact of Tribal College Movement on Native American Educational Attainment." Advisor: Chris Stoddard.

**Nathan Braun**, Thesis: "Examining the EU ETS EUA-CER Price Spread. A Structural Approach." Advisor: Tim Fitzgerald.

## Help Support Agricultural Economics & Economics

A gift to the department is a great way to support student and faculty endeavors.

Donations can be earmarked for student scholarship funds, faculty research, the M.L. Wilson lecture series, and more.

For more information about making a donation to the department, contact:

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Compiled by Rebecca Barnick.*