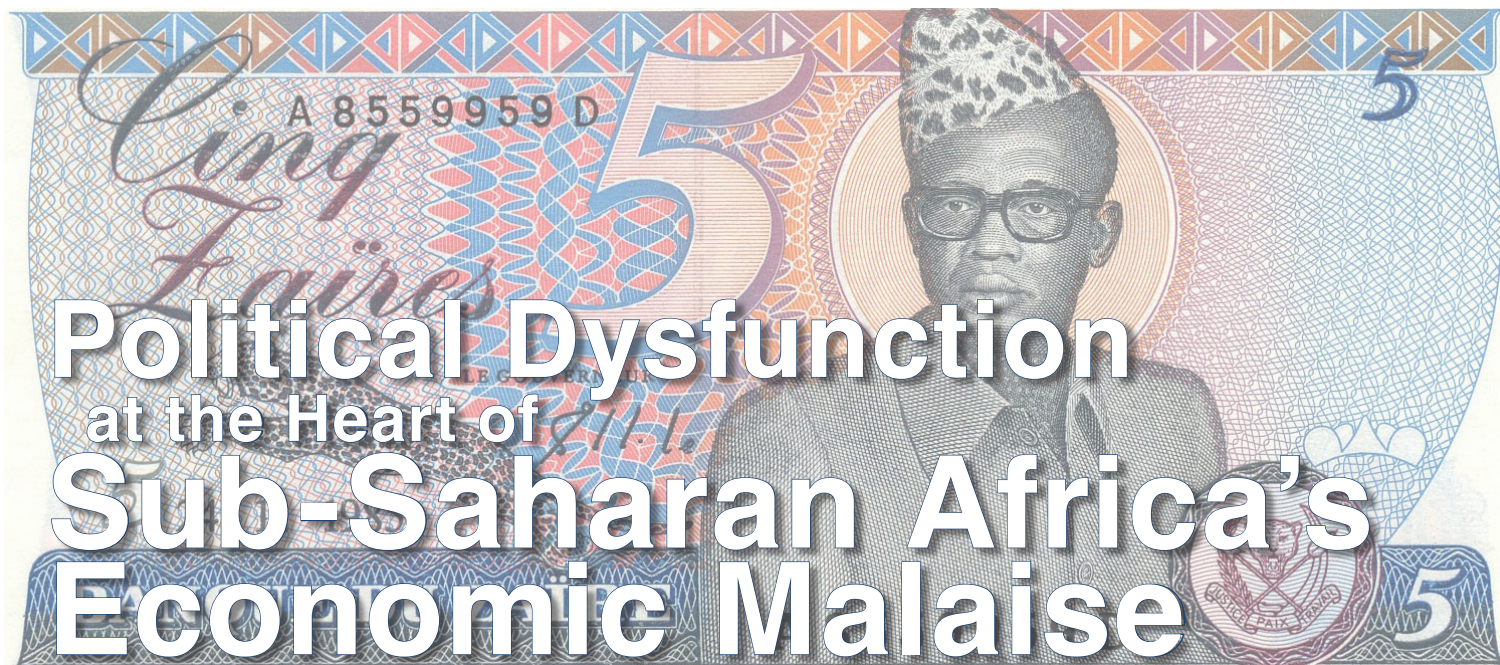


ECONOMICS UPDATE

VANCOUVER SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

Issue 4 Summer 2014



VSE Professors Patrick Francois and Francesco Trebbi Rethink African Autocratic Regimes

For those interested in the process of economic development among nations, few regions surpass Africa as simultaneously an area of immense potential and source of dismay to its post-world war economic failure. Indeed, many economists have referred to an “African growth tragedy.” Many researchers still puzzle at the fact that per capita income in Ghana and South Korea was the same in the early 1960s, while now they differ by an order of magnitude.

Political dysfunction lies at the heart of much of sub-Saharan Africa’s economic malaise. With very few exceptions, the story of politics on the continent is a litany of corrupt governments squandering the state’s resources, ministries run as fiefdoms, rampant nepotism in appointments ahead of the qualified, and severe underinvestment in the public goods and services required to support a modern functioning economy.

Given the prevalence of ethnic divisions within these countries, and the rare but dramatic and terrible examples of inter-communal conflict, a natural source of such poor governance is posited to be the “politics of ethnic exclusion.”

Former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan describes a widely held view: “It is frequently the case that political victory assumes a ‘winner-takes-all’ form with respect to wealth and resources, patronage, and the prestige and prerogatives of office. A communal sense of advantage or disadvantage is often closely linked to this phenomenon, which is heightened in many cases by reliance on centralized and highly personalized forms of governance.”¹

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a place of mind

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Vancouver School of Economics

ECONOMICS UPDATE

Issue 4 Summer 2014

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**All comments and feedback
are welcome.**

Welcome

BY MICHAEL B. DEVEREUX,
DIRECTOR OF THE VANCOUVER SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

As Director of the Vancouver School of Economics (VSE), I am very pleased to introduce the 2014 edition of *Economics Update*. This newsletter gives our readers an update on the many developments in the School over the last year. Additionally, we provide coverage of a small part of the exciting and important research that is being done by VSE faculty members, as well as many other initiatives that are ongoing in the School.

Last year was our first full year in our new identity as a School of Economics and, as the newsletter makes clear, the year was extremely eventful. As I described in last year's newsletter, we have launched a new degree program: the Bachelor of International Economics (BIE), a four-year degree specializing in international and development economics. Our first cohort entered the program in the fall of 2013, under the very energetic and capable directorship of my colleague Ashok Kotwal. By all accounts, the first year was a tremendous success. The first-year cohort is a remarkable group of young people, coming from more than 20 different countries. As this group now proceeds towards the second year of studies, we look forward to a new incoming cohort for the 2014-15 year.

Of course, while we are very enthusiastic about our new BIE program, it is still the case that our main task in the VSE is to support the education of our many thousands of BA students. As in past years, in 2013-14 we had a very strong group of BA honours and majors. As you will see by the update in this newsletter, VSEUS is an extremely active and innovative student organization, and is involved in many initiatives within and beyond the campus boundaries.

In September 2013 we celebrated the launch of the VSE with an inaugural conference, where six renowned scholars with Canadian roots gave presentations on major issues of economic development, labour markets, international trade, and other topics, with discussions and commentary provided by VSE faculty. The conference was widely attended by academic and non-academic participants.

The big piece of news from the last year is that the VSE will soon have a new home. UBC has made an agreement to purchase the beautiful and iconic Iona Building, and, after some renovations, to make this building the permanent home of the VSE. This allows us to centralize all our programs and activities under one roof, and offers a unique space for us to facilitate the development of new activities and programs.

As UBC alumni working in Canada or elsewhere, you will be very aware of the great economic and social changes taking place around the world. Old structures and expectations governing the labour market, education and society are in the process of rapid change. In the labour market, many traditional jobs are disappearing, and we have seen large and growing gaps in the rewards to the very highest paid relative to all others. In education, the advent of online communications and social media is profoundly changing the nature and definition of traditional learning technologies. As one of the central research and educational institutions in Canada, it is vital that we at the VSE "get in front" of these developments both in our research and in our educational practices. In this newsletter, you can learn all about the latest VSE research on trends in the Canadian labour market and the VSE initiatives on "flexible learning" technologies.

Finally, on a personal note, this will be my last introduction to this newsletter as Director. Over the last three years, I have been privileged to work closely with our many dedicated staff and faculty members. I thank them for the great personal support, as well as for giving me the distinct honour to act as Director of our School. I believe that the VSE is one of the finest Economics departments in the world, and I have the highest expectations for our future as a vital centre for teaching and research.



MICHAEL DEVEREUX
CREDIT: VARUN SARAN

Experimenting with Facebook in the College Classroom

Faculty Focus: Dr. Nisha Malhotra

BY NISHA MALHOTRA

Instructor Dr. Nisha Malhotra teaches several undergraduate courses, and is a strong advocate of using new technologies in teaching. Here, she discusses the evolution of one such technology into a learning tool for her students — and herself.

While discussing the nuances of regression analysis, I saw some of my students smiling. It wasn't a smile of understanding; it was a response to seeing a Facebook comment on their smart phone. I later learned that 99% of the students in the research methods class were Facebook users, routinely checking for updates 10-20 times a day. I asked them to refrain from checking their phones during class.

The next semester, I decided to embrace social media and created a Facebook page for the class, which was comprised of 25 students. It was actually fun and easy. In less than two hours I had created a page with relevant material for the course. For the sake of privacy, I kept the class page separated from my personal Facebook account.

For those who aren't familiar with Facebook, a page is really just like a blog for your posts. People join by clicking the "like" button and can then follow your updates. Members can post comments or submit their own posts.

I encouraged my students to join and discuss their research on our Facebook page. I visited the page each day to answer questions and post relevant articles. The page seems to be a natural addition to this course, which requires the budding researchers to discuss and review literature, data, and regression analysis.

Many of the students began participating instantly (though some never signed up). The students quickly formed study groups outside of class, exchanged articles, and helped each other. Overall, they performed better than the non-participating students. The discussions on Facebook

were commendable and carried over into face-to-face discussions. In class, students were interacting like never before and seemed more comfortable with each other as a result of the online interactions. Not only were the discussions in class livelier, but also the students were more insightful in discussing each other's research. After all, they knew the topics beforehand.

The only real problem was that not everyone joined our Facebook page. Consequently, for the next semester, I made it a course requirement. Participation grades were given for helpful suggestions and discussions via Facebook. Naturally, everyone joined, and the discussions were busy, though a few remained invisible except for doing the minimum to qualify for their participation grade.

This semester I gave students an option to either (a) have the participation score for both class participation and Facebook participation, or (b) have the participation score only for the class. They chose (a) but requested that a Facebook group be used instead of a page. I had no idea what the difference was between a page and a group, but I soon found out.



NISHA MALHOTRA
CREDIT: VARUN SARAN

The next day, after wrapping up with a class of about 180 students, a bunch of them approached me and asked if I use Facebook. "Yes, I have an account," I said.

They asked, "Would you be comfortable joining our Facebook group for this class?"

"You have a Facebook group for my class?" I was intrigued.

"Not the whole class, just 12 of us. We try to help each other with the material."

CONTINUED, PAGE 17 >>



CREDIT: VSE

Does Canada Still Have a Middle Class?

Canadian wage and employment patterns differ sharply by gender and region

In the last edition of Economics Update, we learned about the impacts of the recent US recession on the middle class. In Canada, questions also are being raised about the middle class in regards to job polarization and its effect on household earnings. Here we learn more about these issues via recent research by VSE faculty and alumni, taking a multi-decade look at the question.

Between 1970 and 2005, the share of total earnings in the Canadian labour market going to middle-class workers fell significantly, while the earnings share of higher-earnings workers rose. What is influencing this trend? Does this mean the middle class is disappearing in Canada?

A study by VSE Professor David Green and York University Assistant Professor Benjamin Sand (UBC Ph.D. Econ '09), entitled "Has the Canadian Labour Market Polarized?", analyses movements in wage inequality and employment and wage polarization across occupations in Canada for the last four decades. The authors find that Canada has also experienced faster growth in employment in both high- and low-paying occupations relative to those in the middle since 1981, but, in contrast to what occurred in the U.S. in the 1990s, wage rates did not exhibit polarization.

Using Canadian Census and Labour Force Survey data covering the period from 1971 to 2011, the researchers find that wages at the 90th percentile grew roughly 15 percent, whereas wages of workers at the 10th percentile fell about five percent. In other words, the long-term pattern reveals a straight increase in wage inequality with workers at the bottom of the wage distribution losing ground relative to those in the middle, who, in turn, lost ground compared to the highest paid workers. Interestingly, the median real wage shows almost no real growth over the last quarter century.

Canadian employment patterns have been similar to those in the U.S. as both countries experienced some labour market polarization in the 1980s and 1990s, with a stalling of that pattern after 2000. The polarization before 2000 is also consistent with results from the U.K. and Europe, and, for all countries, these patterns are argued to have been generated by technological change associated with the information technology revolution. The standard argument is that IT-related technologies increase demand for more workers in the top earning occupations while displacing workers in middle paying occupations, such as those in manufacturing. Since much of the discussion of polarization has been built around U.S. pat-

"In top-end occupations, the patterns for males are similar to those in the U.S., with a stalling of employment growth. But for females, employment in these occupations continues on a strong trend throughout the 2000s."

terns, the researchers use U.S. Census data to provide a benchmark for the Canadian patterns they uncover. They document the polarization in the U.S. labour market in the 1980s and 1990s but show that after 2000, employment growth in top-end occupations has stalled.

In Canada's case, wage and employment patterns after 2000 differ sharply by gender and region. In top-end occupations, the patterns for males are similar to those in the U.S., with a stalling of employment growth. But for females, employment in these occupations continues on a strong

trend throughout the 2000s. The authors show some evidence that this is due to growth in the public sector and that in the private sector employment for females in top-end occupations has also stalled.

For middle- and lower-paid occupations, the wage and employment patterns in Ontario are somewhat similar to those in the U.S. That is, there are declining wages and employment in middle-paying occupations such as those in manufacturing, and increasing employment but declining wages in the service occupations at the bottom of the wage distribution. In Western Canada, by contrast, wages increased in all occupations after 2000 and employment rose in good-paying blue-collar jobs. Thus, the researchers argue that Canada has experienced some of the same technology effects as in the U.S. but that the resource boom has moderated the negative part of those effects. In the end, while Canada is experiencing some of the same effects of technological change on the labour market, the combination of the resource boom and government spending has meant that Canada's version of those effects has been much less harsh.

VSE Professor David Green's research interests centre around determinants of the wage and employment structure.

UBC alumnus Benjamin Sand (Ph.D. Economics '09) researches labour and public economics, and applied econometrics.

This article is an excerpt from Labour Market Matters (May 2014), a publication of the Canadian Labour Market and Skills Researcher Network (CLSRN). Reprinted with permission. Written by Vivian Tran, CLSRN. www.clsrn.econ.ubc.ca

A Community College Instructor Like Me

Race and ethnicity interactions in the classroom

BY FLORIAN HOFFMANN

The achievement gap between historically underrepresented minority students and non-minority students is one of the most persistent and vexing problems of the educational system in North America. In 2010 the U.S. Department of Education released a report showing that African-American, Latino and Native-American students have substantially lower test scores, grades, high school completion rates, college attendance rates, and college graduation rates than non-minority students. The link between education and labour market success is strong. Ethnic and racial disparities in educational outcomes can therefore be expected to have strong implications for inequality of labour market outcomes.

A popular, though highly controversial, policy prescription to address these disparities is to expand the representation of minority instructors at all levels of the educational system. This is backed by theories from economics, psychology and sociology that suggest individual behavior is influenced by the availability of role models, the presence of stereotype threats, and the potential for discrimination against underrepresented socioeconomic groups. Whether these theories are relevant for explaining racial and ethnic disparities in educational outcomes remains an open question.

In a recent study with my co-authors (Rob Fairlie from UC Santa Cruz and Philip Oreopoulos from the University of Toronto) entitled “A Community College Instructor Like Me: Race and Ethnicity Interactions in the Classroom” (forthcoming in *The American Economic Review*), we offer the first systematic empirical study of minority interactions between students and instructors at the post-secondary education level. We have collected a new and rather unique administrative panel data set with detailed information on instructors and students from one of the largest and

most ethnically diverse community colleges in the United States, located in the San Francisco Bay Area. A major advantage of the data set is that it follows students and instructors for several academic quarters, so that we observe academic outcomes of students and class-level outcomes for instructors in multiple classes. We can thus test if minority gaps in student outcomes are systematically smaller in classes that are taught by minority instructors. Importantly, this research design allows us to address the concern that minority students are enrolled in courses with different grading standards than non-minority students. It also mimics the situation of standardized testing since we are comparing students who take a course with the same instructor at the same time.

“A popular, though highly controversial, policy prescription to address these disparities is to expand the representation of minority instructors at all levels of the educational system.”

To strengthen our case for a causal link we exploit an institutional feature at the community college that creates groups of students who have a low standing on registration priority lists for exogenous reasons and therefore have limited opportunities to choose the instructor they want to be taught by. We show results from a battery of tests suggesting that our research design comes close to generating “randomized assignment” of students to instructors.

We find that the minority achievement gap is indeed smaller in classes taken with minority instructors for several course outcome measures. Minority students



FLORIAN HOFFMANN
CREDIT: VARUN SARAN

obtain better grades, are less likely to drop a course, are more likely to pass a course, and are more likely to have a good grade. These gaps are reduced by 20 to 50 percent with a minority instructor and translate into longer-run impacts on taking subsequent courses in the same subject, major choice, retention, and degrees.

We also explore if these results are generated by instructors reacting to students, possibly because of conscious or unconscious discrimination, or by students learning better if they are matched to instructors who share their race or ethnicity. Policy makers are likely to be concerned about the latter. After all, policy interventions in the educational system should have favourable impacts on student learning. We use the rich information in our data set to address this question. Most importantly, we find that our results hold if we focus on objectively graded courses such as those relying on multiple-choice exams, suggesting that students are reacting to the race and ethnicity of the instructor rather than the other way around. Hence, our results provide strong evidence for minority students gaining from being taught by a minority instructor, at least in

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New Home for the VSE

The iconic Iona building

We're moving! The Vancouver School of Economics will be saying goodbye to our offices in Buchanan Tower and relocating to the iconic Iona Building, remaining on UBC's Point Grey campus.

"The magnificent Iona Building is ideally suited for the Vancouver School of Economics," says Dr. Gage Averill, Dean of Arts. "It is a treasure that will provide an inspiring setting for our faculty and students."

UBC is purchasing the 1927 stone-faced building from the Vancouver School of Theology (VST) for \$28 million. The Iona Building has been the property of the VST, an independent theological academic institution that leased the land from UBC in 1927 for 999 years. Following a recent comprehensive review, the VST's

board concluded that its programs require different facilities and approached UBC to discuss a possible sale.

Iona will provide UBC with new academic space as various initiatives draw more students, faculty and staff to its Vancouver campus. UBC will use the building and land primarily for university institutional and academic use, with the Faculty of Arts' Vancouver School of Economics as the main occupant. The building also will continue to house student residences.

"The Iona building will house all activities linked to the VSE, such as the new Bachelor of International Economics (BIE) program, including a new large classroom and special lounge," says Dr. Nicole Fortin, who is representing the VSE on a planning committee to prepare for the move.

Nicole continues, "This will enhance the BIE students' learning experience by facilitating interactions between students and access to instructors. The building will also include additional lounges for Economics honours, majors and graduate students, an abundance of informal learning spaces, and computer labs dedicated to student research activities and experimental projects."

The 99,663-square-foot building at 6000 Iona Drive is a landmark on Vancouver's Point Grey peninsula. It features inspirational views of the North Shore mountains and Howe Sound from the two modern seminar rooms and adjacent terraces located in its iconic tower. The move-in date is anticipated for early 2016, pending finalization of renovations.



IONA BUILDING, THE SOON-TO-BE HOME OF THE VANCOUVER SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS
CREDIT: VST

New and Noteworthy

Highlights of recent news about our faculty, students, alumni and staff

VADIM MARMER WINS UBC KILLAM TEACHING PRIZE



VADIM MARMER
CREDIT: VARUN SARAN

Congratulations to Associate Professor Vadim Marmer, winner of a 2013-2014 UBC Killam Teaching Prize. The highly prestigious and competitive prize recognizes all aspects of outstanding teaching at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

"I am very honoured to receive this prize," says Vadim. "I love teaching and feel very privileged to have this opportunity to share my knowledge and passion about my work with students."

Vadim came to UBC in 2005 after completing his Ph.D. at Yale University. He teaches at the graduate and undergraduate levels, and has taught nearly 1,000 students at UBC since 2005. Vadim's main area of research is econometrics, a difficult but vital subject for any economist to master. Econometrics is concerned with causality. It is a set of tools and ways of thinking which allow economists to extract causal relationships from the vast array of data available in today's information economy in order to understand economics, and, more broadly, human behaviour.

Vadim's research focuses on topics of misspecification, weak identification, estimation and inference in auctions, and nonlinear and non-stationary time series. Since 2005, he has published ten scholarly papers — including seven papers in the

Journal of Econometrics, a leading scholarly journal in econometrics.

"I believe that teaching is closely connected to research," Vadim notes. "Interactions with students inside and outside the classroom force me to look differently at familiar topics, thus inspiring new research. Indeed, teaching is the best way to learn."

FRANCESCO TREBBI WINS TWO MAJOR RESEARCH PRIZES



FRANCESCO TREBBI
CREDIT: VARUN SARAN

VSE Associate Professor Francesco Trebbi has received the Rae and the UBC Killam research prizes.

The Rae Prize is awarded to the Canadian economist with the best research record during the last five years. The UBC Killam Research Prize recognizes his outstanding research and scholarly contributions to his field and the UBC community.

"The 2014 Rae Prize recognizes his work in empirical political economy in particular, with reference to lobbying, regulation, voting, and coalition formation, which specifically has contributed to our understanding of the recent financial crisis," notes Dr. Gregor Smith, chair of the Canadian Economic Association's selection committee. "His highly-cited work has appeared in such outlets as *The American Economic Review*, *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, and *Econometrica*."

Francesco's primary research and teaching interests are in political economy and macroeconomics (monetary and fiscal policy). Part of his research revolves around the political economy of development, especially political institutions and their design. He also works on the political economy of consolidated democracies, including elections and campaign finance, housing and banking regulation, and lobbying.

A graduate of Harvard University with both an M.A. (Economics) and a Ph.D. (Economics), Francesco has been teaching economics at UBC since 2010. He is a Research Associate at the National Bureau of Economic Research, a Fellow of the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research, and co-editor of the *Journal of Public Economics*.

As a Rae Prize recipient, Francesco joins an elite group of 11 economists that includes five other faculty members from VSE (Thomas Lemieux (1998), Mike Peters (2002), Hao Li (2006), Paul Beaudry (2008), and Michael Devereux (2010)).

VIKTORIA HNATKOVSKA WINS CWEN RESEARCH PRIZE



VIKTORIA HNATKOVSKA
CREDIT: MAURICIO DRELICHMAN

Associate Professor Viktoria Hnatkovska has won the Canadian Women Economists Network (CWEN) Young Researcher Prize.

"I am delighted and honoured to be the recipient of the 2014 CWEN prize," says Viktoria. "It is very rewarding to see my research recognized and welcomed by my peers. It encourages me to continue pursuing questions that I find interesting and important."

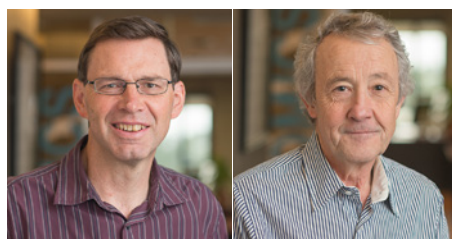
Viktoria obtained her Ph.D. from Georgetown University, and joined the faculty at UBC in 2006. Her work focuses on international finance and macroeconomics, as well as development economics, with a particular focus on India. Issues she has examined in India include the changing relationship of the caste system with intergenerational mobility and inequality.

Viktoria has an extensive publication record that includes the *Journal of International Economics*, *Journal of Econometrics*, *The Journal of Human Resources*, and *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*. Her work has received a considerable amount of media attention in outlets such as *The Economist*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The New York Times*.

The CWEN Young Researcher Prize is awarded every two years in recognition of research excellence by a young woman economist. The research prize was established in 2010, making Viktoria the third recipient of the award, an honour she now shares with VSE Associate Professor **Matilde Bombardini** (2012 recipient).

DAVID GREEN AND CRAIG RIDDELL APPOINTED IRPP RESEARCH FELLOWS

Professors **David Green** and **Craig Riddell** have each been appointed as a Research Fellow of the **Institute for Research on Public Policy (IRPP)**. Research fellows contribute to the IRPP's programs by providing advice and counsel on strategic research directions.



DAVID GREEN CRAIG RIDDELL
CREDITS: VARUN SARAN

In this role, they are co-directing the **IRPP-Canadian Labour Market and Skills Researcher Network** research initiative on the causes and policy implications of growing income inequality in Canada. Together they bring a wealth of expertise to the initiative, with their work on determinants of the wage and employment structure, skills formation, immigration and inequality.

THOMAS LEMIEUX RECEIVES BANK OF CANADA FELLOWSHIP



THOMAS LEMIEUX
CREDIT: VARUN SARAN

Congratulations to Professor **Thomas Lemieux**, recipient of a 2014 **Bank of Canada Fellowship Award**. Thomas is recognized internationally as an influential labour economist.

"The Bank of Canada is delighted to present the Fellowship Award to Professor Lemieux, a truly creative researcher and a world leader in the study of labour markets and wage inequality," says Stephen S. Poloz, Governor of the Bank of Canada. "His name is already a fixture in labour economics textbooks, and his current research agenda will continue to address some of today's most important

and topical issues in economics and public policy."

The Bank of Canada's Fellowship Program is designed to encourage leading-edge research and the development of expertise in Canada in a number of areas critical to the Bank's mandate: macroeconomics, monetary economics and international finance, as well as the economics of financial markets and institutions, including their financial stability.

Thomas has written extensively on labour markets and earnings inequality in Canada, the United States and many other countries. He has made major technical contributions to the methodology of empirical research in labour economics and is widely credited as the leading authority on decomposition methods in this field. His current research focuses on exploiting regional variation within countries to answer a number of important questions connected to unemployment and the evolution of wage inequality in the aftermath of the Great Recession.

Thomas is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and also of the Society of Labor Economists, and a founding co-editor of *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*. He is currently serving as President of the Canadian Economics Association, which awarded him the Rae Prize for outstanding research in 1998, and is the incoming Director of the VSE (as of July 1, 2014).

JOSHUA GOTTLIEB BECOMES AN NBER FACULTY RESEARCH FELLOW

Assistant Professor **Joshua Gottlieb** has been appointed as a Faculty Research Fellow of the National Bureau of Economics Research (NBER), the leading nonprofit economic research organization in the U.S. In becoming a Fellow with the NBER, Joshua joins a distinguished group of researchers that

includes 24 Nobel Prize winners and eight of his colleagues at VSE.



JOSHUA GOTTLIEB
CREDIT: VARUN SARAN

Joshua conducts research in applied microeconomics, public finance, health care, and urban/real estate economics. His research work has been published in *The American Economic Review*, *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity*, and *Journal of Economic Literature*.

KEVIN MILLIGAN APPOINTED FELLOW-IN- RESIDENCE WITH C.D. HOWE INSTITUTE



KEVIN MILLIGAN
CREDIT: VARUN SARAN

Associate Professor [Kevin Milligan](#) has been appointed a Fellow-in-Residence with the [C.D. Howe Institute](#) (effective May 22, 2014).

“Kevin Milligan is highly accomplished, with a keen sense for policy-relevant topics in public and labour economics. His expertise in tax and labour market issues, and his focus on human capital — including the economics of children and the elderly — will be a valuable asset to the Institute,” says William Robson,

President and CEO of the C.D. Howe Institute.

The C. D. Howe Institute is an independent nonprofit Canadian research organization whose mission is to raise living standards by fostering economically sound public policies. It is a source of essential policy intelligence, distinguished by research that is nonpartisan, evidence-based and subject to definitive expert review.

In addition to his appointment as Fellow-in-Residence, Kevin will also serve as an academic advisor to the C.D. Howe Institute’s Fiscal and Tax Competitiveness Program.

CHARLES BLACKORBY AND MARGARET SLADE APPOINTED FELLOWS OF THE CEA

Professors Emeritus Charles Blackorby and [Margaret Slade](#) have each been appointed as a Fellow of the [Canadian Economic Association \(CEA\)](#).

“Charles Blackorby and Margaret Slade are two outstanding scholars who had a deep and lasting influence in their respective fields of research,” says CEA President Dr. Thomas Lemieux. “The CEA is delighted to award them the Association’s highest honour, the title of Fellow, for their career achievements and their contribution to the advancement of economic research in Canada.”

Charles’s research interests have focused on microeconomics theory, social choice, welfare economics, and public finance. Margaret’s research is concerned with applied problems in industrial organization, especially those requiring the analysis of data, and in both horizontal (same product market) and vertical (buying and selling) relationships and policies.

Created in 2010, the title of Fellow of the Canadian Economic Association is conferred to recognize the achievements and contribution to the discipline of the most prominent economists who have spent a significant portion of their career in Canada. The CEA has only awarded 10 fellowships, with half of them being granted to faculty from the VSE. With their appointments as Fellows, Charles and Margaret join Professor Emeritus Anthony Scott, Professor [Erwin Diewert](#), and Professor Emeritus [John Helliwell](#) in earning this honour.

NANCY GALLINI TAKES ON NEW ROLE



NANCY GALLINI
CREDIT: MAURICIO DRELICHMAN

Dr. Nancy Gallini is the new Director, pro tem, of the Peter Wall Institute at UBC. Her appointment is for a one-year term, effective July 1, 2014.

Nancy will bring many years of academic leadership experience to the role, including her service as Dean of Arts at UBC (2002-2010). Her research focuses on the economics of intellectual property, competition policy, strategic alliances, licensing, and patent policy. She has served on editorial boards of *The American Economic Review* and the *International Journal of Industrial Organization*, and is currently a member of the SSHRC Council and the Mitacs Research Council. Nancy has also worked with the Competition Bureau and Industry Canada on projects related to Canada’s patent and competition policies.

NEW FACULTY MEMBERS



JESSE PERLA
CREDIT: VARUN SARAN

TOMASZ SWIECKI

Welcome to Assistant Professor Jesse Perla and Assistant Professor Tomasz Swiecki as the VSE's newest faculty members.

Jesse's core research interest is in macroeconomics and growth from the perspective of the firm, with an emphasis on the role of information diffusion. He obtained a Ph.D. in 2013 from New York University.

Tomasz's main area of research is international trade, with a particular interest in trade issues seen from the macro-development perspective. He received a Ph.D. from Princeton University.

over the graduate program. Over the years she has helped it grow and today she is the manager of what is ranked as one of the best graduate programs in North America. This award is in recognition of a job well done.

ECONOMICS GRADUATE WINS GOVERNOR GENERAL'S SILVER MEDAL



BEHROOZ GHORBANI
CREDIT: ARTONA GROUP STUDIO

A special congratulations to 2014 Economics graduate Behrooz Ghorbani on receiving the Governor General's Academic Medal (Silver). The Governor General's Academic Medals recognize the outstanding scholastic achievements of students in Canada. They are awarded to the student graduating with the highest average, and are the most prestigious awards that students in Canadian schools can receive.

Behrooz is the seventh graduate from UBC's Bachelor of Arts in Economics programs to win the prestigious award. He was also honoured in February for his academic achievements with a Wesbrook Scholarship. Behrooz graduated in May 2014 with a Bachelor of Arts degree (major in Economics and major in Mathematics).

"It was a great honor to receive the Governor General's Silver Medal," says Behrooz. "This represents all that I have accomplished at UBC and will motivate me to continue my tradition of excellence in the future."

"I owe much of my success to the training I received at VSE," continues Behrooz. "Under the supervision of the School's faculty, I was given the opportunity to do independent research projects in financial economics and econometric analysis of large datasets. Next year I will begin my Ph.D. studies at Stanford University, where I will be using the skills that I have learned at VSE to help researchers and practitioners overcome challenges faced in the analysis of high-dimensional financial data."

ECONOMICS STUDENT WINS MAJOR AWARDS AND ATTENDS G20 YOUTH FORUM



HASSAN BHATTI

Congratulations to UBC student Hassan Bhatti (dual major Economics and Physics), winner of both the 2014 Nestor Korchinsky Student Leadership Award and the Margaret Fulton Award. Hassan is the first international student to win both of these very prestigious awards.

The Nestor Korchinsky Student Leadership Award recognizes a student who embodies the spirit of leadership and initiative at UBC and potentially in the wider community. The recipient is chosen by a committee of students and staff.

The recipient of the Margaret Fulton Award is chosen based on nominations from students and senior staff members, and is awarded to an outstanding

MAUREEN CHIN WINS STAFF AWARD



MAUREEN CHIN
CREDIT: JEFF VINNICK

Congratulations to Maureen Chin on being the very worthy recipient of the Dean's Award for Staff Excellence. Maureen came to the VSE from UBC Hospital in 1987, and in 1988 she took

individual (student, faculty, or staff) who has made a contribution to student development and the university community.

“I am privileged to study at UBC on a full International Leaders of Tomorrow scholarship. I strongly believe if you have the privilege of knowledge and resources, you have an obligation to use it to create positive change — this belief has strongly guided me both at UBC and in the wider community,” says Hassan. “I feel honoured to receive these awards. I strongly feel that my peers, mentors, and UBC staff share this award with me as without their support this would have not been possible.”

Hassan was also chosen as a student representative for Canada at the G20 Youth Forum this summer in Germany. The forum is modelled after

the World Economic Forum. It is unusual for a student to be chosen as a delegate. Hassan produced a paper on international economics that he presented at the event.

BA GRADS RECEIVE PRESTIGIOUS SCHOLARSHIPS

Kudos to Jefferey Mitchell and Krisha Lim.

Jefferey is the 2012-2013 recipient of a Premier Undergraduate Scholarship and a Wesbrook Scholarship, specifically the Harry Logan Memorial Scholarship and the Harold B. & Nellie Boyes Memorial Scholarship. Together the awards are valued at \$7,300. Jefferey graduated

from the Faculty of Arts in 2013 with majors in International Relations and Economics.

Krisha has received a \$1,000 scholarship and the Wesbrook Scholar designation, through the Wesbrook Scholarship fund. Krisha graduated in 2013 with a major in Economics and minor in International Relations.

The Premier Undergraduate Scholarships and Wesbrook Scholars are very prestigious designations, given to senior students demonstrating outstanding academic performance, leadership, and involvement in student and community activities.

Support the Vancouver School of Economics

As part of UBC's *start an evolution* campaign, the Vancouver School of Economics invites alumni and friends to support thinking that can change the world.

At Canada's top-ranked economics school, students have remarkable opportunities to learn how governments, organizations and individuals affect the economy and our collective well-being. This project includes:

- Bursaries and scholarships to support students
- The flagship Bachelor of International Economics program
- Research that addresses the needs of a shifting global economy
- A Career Centre to facilitate job placements and career mentorship

Join us to create a world-leading institution that will deepen our understanding of the economic climate. This can be as simple as *volunteering your time* or as generous as *making a donation*.

startanevolution.ca

Credits: Jeff Vinnick



Conference Launches VSE Public Outreach Activities

Alumni, faculty and students gathered at VSE's launch event

The VSE hosted a full-day academic conference last fall at UBC Robson Square, with an agenda of renowned international speakers joined by faculty from the School and Sauder School of Business. The agenda included four seminars, a keynote luncheon address, a keynote alumni address and a reception.

The sold-out event launched the VSE's community outreach activities, under our new mandate as a School to participate in public dialogue on pressing economic questions and policy debates. Over 150 alumni, donors, faculty, and UBC Economics students were joined by guests from business, government and broader academic communities to participate in lively discussions throughout the day.

Guest speakers included UBC Economics alumni Rob Feenstra (UC Davis), who delivered the alumni keynote, and David Card (UC Berkeley), who was the lunch keynote speaker. Seminar presenters were Nathan Nunn (Harvard University), Dave Donaldson (MIT), Martin Eichenbaum (Northwestern University), and Scott Taylor (University of Calgary).

To see the full program, speaker and discussant bios, please go to: www.economics.ubc.ca/vse-events/event/2013-fall-conference-3/

Please bookmark the VSE's event calendar page to keep informed of upcoming events: www.economics.ubc.ca/community/news-events/events/

We look forward to seeing you at future events!

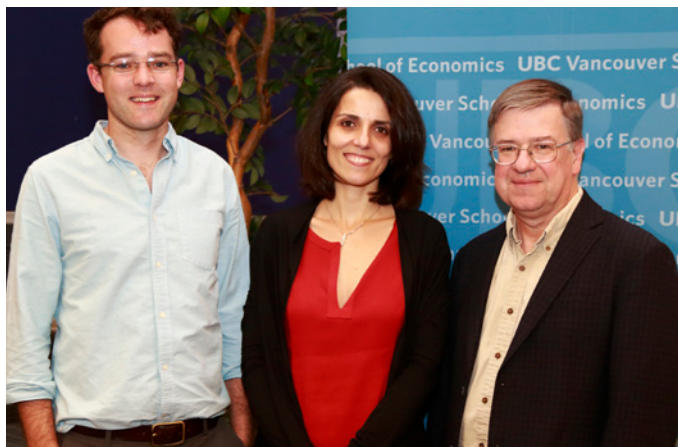


TOP: SPEAKERS PROVIDED CONFERENCE DELEGATES WITH MANY KEY INSIGHTS INTO THEIR RESEARCH, PROVOKING LIVELY DISCUSSIONS EVEN AFTER THE PRESENTATIONS ENDED. HERE, VSE'S MICHAEL DEVEREUX (C) AND PAUL BEAUDRY (R) DEBATE A POINT WITH PRESENTER SCOTT TAYLOR.

MIDDLE: LUNCHEON KEYNOTE SPEAKER DAVID CARD.

BOTTOM: MANY THANKS TO THE STUDENT VOLUNTEERS WHO HELPED WITH THE EVENT, INCLUDING VSE PH.D. STUDENT MARIA TITO, SEEN HERE HELPING WITH AN AUDIENCE QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION.

ALL CREDITS: JEFF VINNICK



TOP ROW: VSE DIRECTOR MICHAEL DEVEREUX; UBC ECONOMICS ALUMNUS AND KEYNOTE SPEAKER ROB FEENSTRA (L) WITH ERWIN DIEWERT (R).

MIDDLE ROW: PRESENTER DAVE DONALDSON (L), DISCUSSANT MATILDE BOMBARDINI, AND SESSION CHAIR BRIAN COPELAND (R); SESSION CHAIR PAUL BEAUDRY (L) WITH DISCUSSANT KEITH HEAD AND PRESENTER SCOTT TAYLOR (R).

BOTTOM ROW: SESSION CHAIR HENRY SIU (L) WITH DISCUSSANT VIKTORIA HNATKOVSKA AND PRESENTER MARTIN EICHENBAUM (R); PRESENTER NATHAN NUNN (L) WITH DISCUSSANT SIWAN ANDERSON AND SESSION CHAIR PATRICK FRANCOIS (R).

ALL CREDITS: JEFF VINNICK



AT THE VSE CONFERENCE AND LAUNCH
CREDITS: JEFF VINNICK



Hence, a prevalent view of African politics is the so-called "big man" rule: where a paramount leader, surrounded by cronies, doles out privileges to his co-ethnics in return for their support, and systematically excludes the rest. This of course breeds resentment and inter-ethnic rivalries which — at the very least — lead to favoritism and undeserving allocations and — at its worst — to bloodshed.

"VSE Professors Patrick Francois and Francesco Trebbi show that the simple 'winner takes all' or 'big man' conception is wrong and offer a rethinking on the internal organization of African autocratic regimes."

In *How Is Power Shared In Africa?*, a collaborative project with Ilia Rainer of George Mason University, VSE Professors Patrick Francois and Francesco Trebbi show that the simple "winner takes all" or "big man" conception is wrong and offer a rethinking on the internal organization of African autocratic regimes.

The VSE researchers utilize recently collected data on the ethnicity of each cabinet minister in fifteen African countries from 1960 to 2004. This data reveals a surprisingly great deal of ethnic inclusiveness in cabinet allocations. African cabinets tend to represent ethnicities in rough proportion to their population shares. Though there is a premium to the ethnicity of the leader, it tends to be small — around two seats out of 25 per cabinet. Cabinets always contain representatives from larger ethnicities, and rarely exclude ethnic groups amounting to anything exceeding five percent of the population. Incidentally, bigger ethnic groups are slightly more likely to be included but also receive slightly fewer seats per population member. These patterns are remarkably stable through time and prevalent across the full sample of countries, almost without exception.

The authors develop a theory to explain these patterns of allocations, which they link to elite patronage, and test it with their novel data. The focus is on the survival incentives for the autocratic leader. If there is a common trait among dictators of any shape and colour it is that they want to stay in power and stay alive.

The authors model the decision making of a dictator choosing how to allocate positions in government amongst the elites of various ethnic groups. The elites of each ethnic group are assumed to influence whether non-elite members support the government. The dictator includes elites from different ethnic groups to shore up support from their non-elite, and this allows the leader to deter revolution attempts by the groups that are not represented. But once brought into the government, elites then find themselves with occasional opportunities to seize power themselves via coups. Cabinet posts are thus allocated amongst these elites in order to dissuade them from acting on their coup opportunities. The theory developed shows that the need to circumvent external threats via revolution and internal threats via coups leads to a unique set of ministerial allocations by ethnicity, which every leader will implement when in power.

The model makes stark predictions about the numbers of seats by ethnicity that any specific leader will allocate, and allows the authors to test the model's predictions on their unique data set. The results are striking. By estimating the model's parameters from independence to 1984 for each country, the authors extrapolate and predict allocations by ethnicity for cabinets formed from 1985-2004 with a high degree of accuracy. Essentially, by only using information from the 1960s through the 1980s, they can predict — almost perfectly — the number of seats that a particular ethnicity will obtain in cabinets formed from the 1990s and beyond.

The researchers are careful to emphasize that they "do not take these findings to imply that proportionality in government reflects equality of political benefits trickling down to common members of all ethnicities. African societies are hugely unequal and usually deeply fragmented. Our findings imply that a certain fraction of

each ethnic group's upper echelon is able to systematically gain access to political power and the benefits that follow."

This research suggests a rethinking of the ways in which ethnicity may lead to Africa's political stagnation. Rather than it being the case that ethnic contestation leads to political dysfunction, the authors instead see a great deal of ethnic inclusion in African cabinets at the elite level. Though the simple winner-takes-all view is rejected, ethnic politics may be playing a more insidious role. The elite of all ethnicities are generally present at the table, but the distribution of benefits to non-elites seems to flow through their elite representatives, and not through the impartial functioning of ministries.

"Rather than it being the case that ethnic contestation leads to political dysfunction, we instead see a great deal of ethnic inclusion in African cabinets at the elite level. Though the simple winner-takes-all view is rejected, ethnic politics may be playing a more insidious role."

As such, the elites have great incentive to solidify their own positions of power and access by maintaining ethnic rivalries and allocating the perks of office within their own groups. Such rivalries ensure that non-elites from an ethnic group cannot support other political leaders, nor will they demand public goods or services — that would benefit all citizens. They want their share of the private benefits doled out by the leader, and these can only be accessed via the elites of their own group who are invited to sit at the leader's table. This entrenches the power of elites as they are the sole gatekeepers of access, and shores up their own positions of power within their communities while at the same time



allowing them access of the lion's share of benefits from the state's bureaucracy.

"Elites have great incentive to solidify their own positions of power and access by maintaining ethnic rivalries and allocating the perks of office within their own groups."

Related research is ongoing at VSE. The authors are using their data and related models to investigate the transition of African nations between dictatorship and democracy. Unlike previous literature on this issue, which has focused on the role of aggregate economic conditions, they focus on power sharing and bargaining. They are also further investigating the inner workings of the executive branch of African autocracies, particularly the selection and termination of cabinet ministers. As in *How Is Power Shared In Africa?*, the goal remains to offer new perspectives on the political economy of development.

¹ UN General Assembly, *General Assembly - Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization, the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa*, 13 April 1998, A/52/871-S/1998/318.

the short and medium runs. This is possibly the most striking result of our study and provides the first quasi-experimental evidence for ethnic and racial interactions on the post-secondary level.

Our focus on the community college system is novel since most educational research in economics uses data on primary or secondary education, or student outcomes in selective four-year colleges. Yet, community colleges enroll nearly half of all students attending public universities, provide workforce training, and serve as an important gateway to four-year colleges. In fact, in some states, including California, nearly half of all students attending a four-year college previously attended a community college, and transfers from community colleges to the California State University (CSU) system, for example, are projected to increase by 25 percent over the next decade.

Fortunately, our data set also records if a course is transferable to the CSU system or University of California (UC) system. We can thus test if our results are likely to carry over to more selective post-secondary educational institutions. We find that our results remain unchanged if we estimate our statistical models of student outcomes using a sample of courses that are transferable to the CSU and UC systems. This strengthens the external validity

of our results and suggests that they are likely to apply more generally.

"We find that the minority achievement gap is indeed smaller in classes taken with minority instructors for several course outcome measures."

However, the policy conclusions of our study are complicated by the finding that students appear to react negatively when matched to instructors of a different race or ethnicity. Hence, hiring more instructors of one type may not necessarily be beneficial for all students and does not necessarily improve college-level student outcomes.

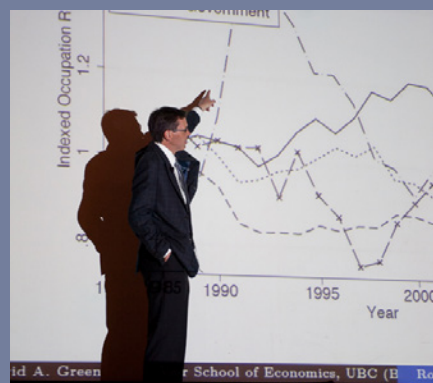
Dr. Florian Hoffman is an Assistant Professor at the VSE. Since 2012 he has been a member of the Human Capital and Economic Opportunity Working Group within the Becker-Friedman Institute at the University of Chicago. His research interests include the importance of student-instructor interactions for academic achievement at the post-secondary education level.

ROBOTS, RESOURCE BOOMS, AND BARISTAS: TRYING TO PREDICT THE FUTURE JOB MARKET FOR UNIVERSITY GRADUATES

Professor David Green

discusses what this all means for the job prospects of university graduates in a free podcast.

More info here:
<http://econ.sites.olt.ubc.ca/?p=6919>



VSE Professor Patrick Francois is a Senior Fellow of the Institutions, Organizations and Growth Program, Canadian Institute for Advanced Research. His current research focuses on problems in development economics, with a particular interest in political economy.

VSE Associate Professor Francesco Trebbi's primary research and teaching interests are in political economy and fiscal policy. He is a Research Associate of the National Bureau of Economic Research, and a Fellow of the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research.

"I would love to," I told them.

"It's a 'closed' group, we'll add you to it," they said.

WHY A FACEBOOK GROUP?

This time I set up a Facebook group for the research methods class and everyone joined. I set it to be an open group, thinking that these discussions might be helpful for other sections. Some students were concerned about the open status of the group and thus created anonymous Facebook accounts to join the group.

The participation and discussion rates were higher than ever, and more problem-solving and other requests for help with the course were made. This module helped achieve what face-to-face, three-hours-a-week interaction could not. I have decided to make this technology a permanent feature in my course. However, next semester, we will have a closed Facebook group.

This is what I have learned:

- A Facebook page creates a public presence online. Anyone on the

Internet, even those that don't have a Facebook account, can view this page. By default, comments can be viewed by anyone on the Internet. (Pineda)

- Students tend to be concerned about their online persona — saying something unintelligent is a big concern for them. (Selwyn) As a result, they are less likely to participate on a Facebook page than in a closed group.
- Facebook groups resemble an online café with walls to the rest of the online community, allowing students to (a) chat in real time, (b) discuss in virtual time, and (c) share materials through straightforward file upload.
- Facebook groups can be open (public), closed (require administrator approval for joining and only members can read the posts), or secret (only members can see the group, who's in it, and what's being posted).
- Students prefer a closed group. They are apprehensive about asking questions in open groups where their

Facebook friends can judge them as scholastically inept. (Selwyn)

- As for the benefits of creating a Facebook group for your course, not only am I seeing better online interactions and face-to-face discussions, but it's a fantastic way to get mid-semester feedback from the students.

References:

Pineda, Nick. "Facebook Tips: What's the Difference Between a Facebook Page and Group?" *Facebook blog* (2010)

Selwyn, Neil. "Faceworking: Exploring students' education — related use of Facebook." *Learning, Media and Technology*, 34.2 (2009): 157-174.

Dr. Nisha Malhotra has an M.A. from the Delhi School of Economics and a Ph.D. from the University of Maryland. She manages a YouTube education channel that focuses on economics and serves as a resource for students at UBC and beyond. Her current research interests focus on maternal and child health.

Need Feedback - Your thoughts on having had a facebook account for your Econ 457 course. Also, please let me know if you 'don't' want to be quoted in our econ newsletter. look forward to hearing from you.
Thanks

Like · **Comment** ✓ Seen by 12



Shayda Mae I think it's a great venue for sharing thoughts, ideas, etc. and for keeping in touch beyond the classroom.

August 15, 2013 at 12:42pm · Edited · Like · 1



Oren Lyle i agree with shayda - plus Nisha your involvement in the group kind of forces it to be more active than if it was just us

August 15, 2013 at 12:59pm · Like · 1



Jeff Mitchell Shayda and Oren both raise good points. I would just add that it's especially useful when you suddenly get a flash of inspiration hours after the class discussion is over that you'd still like to get critiqued by others, or randomly discover something else pertinent in another class or through surfing the web that is an interesting contribution to the debate

August 15, 2013 at 1:29pm · Like · 1



Daniel Babcock I have nothing new to add but let it be known that I agree with the previous points

August 15, 2013 at 2:20pm · Like · 1

December 7, 2013 at 5:31pm · Like · 1



Fate Mynl i do think i prefer the closed group. if it had been a public page, i probably would have been a bit more hesitant to post questions. the closed group has the privacy aspect that i think encourages participation, like was mentioned in the article you referenced

December 7, 2013 at 6:30pm · Like · 2

FACEBOOK DISCUSSION AMONG MEMBERS OF DR. MALHOTRA'S CLASS
CREDIT: NISHA MALHOTRA, USED WITH PERMISSION FROM QUOTED FACEBOOK USERS



a place of mind
THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Vancouver School of Economics

Alumni Profile

Steve Hollett, M.A. Economics (1971)

Economics Update recently caught up with Steve on life after UBC and where his Econ degree has taken him.

What other degrees have you received?

I have a BSc (Math and Computer Science) from UBC.

Why did you choose to do Economics at UBC?

As an undergrad at UBC, a good friend recommended economics to me as being complementary to my math background. The more I got into economics, the more I enjoyed the problem solving and critical thinking challenges it offered.

What are you doing now, work-wise?

I'm semi-retired and consulting on major public infrastructure projects. In particular, the business case, deal structuring and procurement phases.

How has your economics training proved useful to you in your work life?

I can honestly say that I have used my economics training every day since leaving UBC. Apart from the obvious tangible skills I learned, life is all about making trade-offs and constrained maximization decisions in an informed environment.

What do you enjoy doing when you're not working?

Travelling ranks high and, of course, hanging out with our grandchildren. We have a large country home in the Southern Interior that provides the perfect access to many all-season outdoor activities. I also dabble in acoustical music.

What was your most memorable class in Economics at UBC?

Hmmm, that's a tough one. I'd have to go with the advanced econometrics course that Marc Nerlove gave when he spent the summer of 1971 at UBC. A close second would be John Helliwell's macroeconomics or Erwin Diewert's math economics class.



STEVE HOLLETT

What are your favorite memories from your time at UBC?

I was fortunate to be at UBC from 1965 to 1971. It was a time of tremendous change, social awareness and driving energy everywhere. My favourite memory, however, was meeting my future wife-to-be and enjoying the many good times of campus life together. We were married at Cecil Green in 1969 and will celebrate our 45th anniversary this year.

Congratulations to the Class of 2014!

Convocation for UBC's Bachelor of Arts degree was May 23, 2014, at the Chan Centre. Graduates from Economics included 337 students from honours, majors, combined majors, and minors programs.

A special acknowledgement to our graduate award recipients:

- Adrien Jourdain (major in Honours Economics), winner of the Joseph A. Crumb Prize, who wrote the best honours graduating essay, "Import Competition from China and Labour Markets: Evidence from French Departments." Adrien also won the Robert Mills Clark Memorial Scholarship, awarded to an undergraduate student in the fourth year of a major or honours program in economics who has demonstrated excellence in economics and in their academic program in general.
- Ning Ding (major in Mathematics and Honours Economics), winner of the Hector Gordon Munro Scholarship in Economics, an award given to a student in Economics entering their final year in the B.A. program who has demonstrated excellence in economics and in their academic program in general.
- Xiyue Ju (major in Mathematics and major in Economics), winner of the Dal Grauer Memorial Scholarship for demonstrated excellence in economics and in their academic program in general.

Transcending Borders

Student Focus: Koon Peng Ooi

BY SHANNON O'ROURKE

Born and raised in Malaysia, Koon Peng Ooi decided to pursue his education at UBC due to its strong Economics program and the International Leaders of Tomorrow (ILOT) scholarship. By his third year of studies, Koon Peng has already participated in two International Service Learning (ISL) programs in Uganda and developed a strong relationship with a local primary school for deaf children.

Coming to UBC with a background in peer mentoring and community service, Koon Peng immediately began looking for ways that he could get involved in these areas. UBC's ISL program proved to be the perfect fit.

"When I first met with an ISL advisor she told me about the different programs in detail, and the ISL program just captivated me," he says. "Even though I was then only in my first year, I was very interested and the advisor encouraged me to apply for the program."

Koon Peng was accepted to the ISL placement "Literacy, Community Libraries, and Primary Universal Education" in Uganda, where he taught English and computer lessons to secondary school students in the library of Kitengesha Village. He was

also introduced to other local schools and organizations, one of which was the Good Samaritan School for the Deaf, a primary school for deaf children. Reflecting back on the first time that he visited the school, Koon Peng says that he fell in love with the place and the students, and immediately knew he was going to return.

Koon Peng and a fellow ISL team member Nidhi Joseph began visiting the school during any free time they had, and began to learn Ugandan Sign Language in order to communicate with the students. In order to encourage more integration between deaf and hearing students, Koon Peng began spending the last ten minutes of his library reading sessions teaching the hearing students sign language.

"In the beginning, we would see the deaf students and the hearing students looking at each other, but they were unable to communicate. I actually saw hearing students begin to interact with the deaf students, and that really made me so happy," he says.

When his three-month ISL placement ended, Koon Peng returned to study at UBC, but maintained his relationship with the Good Samaritan School for the Deaf. With the help of the International Students Association at UBC, he

organized a fundraising dinner for the school to help out with their financial situation.

Reflecting on his summer in Uganda, Koon Peng felt a strong desire to return and work with the school once again. He was able to do so through another ISL placement. This time, he took a course with an ISL component, *Economics 492C: The Economics of Sustainability*, taught by VSE's Dr. Catherine Douglas. With the help of an ISL advisor, he was able to return to Kitengesha Village and the Good Samaritan School for the Deaf to do his case study for the course and help the organization on a more administrative level.

"I think these ISL placements have helped me learn so much about myself," Koon Peng says. "ISL has taught me to think critically about the things that you do and about creating impact."

This story was originally published in ArtsWire, Faculty of Arts website, Oct. 9, 2013.



VSE ECONOMICS STUDENT KOON PENG OOI, AT FAR RIGHT, WITH SOME OF THE STUDENTS HE WORKED WITH DURING AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT LEARNING PLACEMENT.
CREDIT: KOON PENG OOI

Student Life

Poverty and Urban Planning Explored at ESA Conference

The Vancouver School of Economics Undergraduate Society (VSEUS) hosted the Livability in Vancouver conference last January at the UBC Learning Exchange. Through a range of panels, the well-attended event promoted an understanding of the complex issues of poverty and economic development in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES), while fostering conversations around solutions to achieving livability.

The conference focused on the current Local Area Planning Process undertaken by the City of Vancouver. This plan will define the future zoning and composition of the neighbourhood. The varied perspectives presented by organizations currently involved in social programs helped attendees better see the challenges of the DTES as well as its assets, which are sometimes overlooked.



JEAN SWANSON, CARNEGIE COMMUNITY ACTION PROJECT
CREDIT: MATT BELL

Representatives of Mission Possible and the Carnegie Community Action Project spoke at the event, emphasizing the sense of community and lack of feeling "judged" appreciated by DTES residents, in addition to acknowledging their difficult circumstances.

Other organizations participating in the event included the City of Vancouver, the



CHRIS, DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE REPRESENTATIVE
CREDIT: MATT BELL

Hastings Crossing Business Improvement Society, and the Building Community Society.

"As an economics student, I especially appreciate that this conference helped me consider not only how new businesses change the local economy but also how they affect people living in an area," says Saskia Vaisey, a Bachelor of International Economics student who helped organize the conference.

Attendees also heard the stories of formerly homeless DTES residents. This session in particular provoked a meaningful



SASKIA VAISEY
CREDIT: MATT BELL

discussion. Hearing their experiences, as well as the input of other presenters, helped students in attendance to apply classroom studies to the real world results of economic policies.

"VSEUS really wanted to create an opportunity where students can see how economics is applied to address social problems that exist locally. I think that we've successfully done that through our Livability in Vancouver conference," says Viet Vu, VSEUS President. "Thank you to everyone who helped organize the event and who attended."

We want to hear from you!

Do you have an idea for a future article in *Economics Update*?

Please send us your suggestions, or submit your own article for potential publication.

Do you want to share your thoughts on something featured in *Economics Update*? Send along your comments, reactions, or opinions.

Are you interested in learning about opportunities to support the School?

Drop us a line, we'd love to hear from you!

Do you want to get involved in alumni events or volunteer your time with current students?

Please let us know and we'll help you connect with your old classmates or the Vancouver School of Economics Undergraduate Society.

Contact us:

econ.alumni@ubc.ca