

**September, 2018**

**Department News for UNM Economics Alumni:**

I'm using the start of my seventh year as Department Chair (2008-2012, and 2016-present), to touch base with our many alumni, and share some Department news from 2017-2018. You can also keep up to date with Department news at our website: <https://econ.unm.edu>. I am proud to be connected to such an outstanding faculty and staff, and to watch our students go on to interesting careers and achievements.

With 21 faculty members (and 16.5 FTE faculty lines) in 2017-2018, the Department taught economics to approximately 3,000 UNM students, including 150+ undergraduate BA Economics majors, and 50 graduate students (Masters and PhD in Economics). With all these students, Department Administrator **Leah Hardesty**, and Administrative Assistant **Tami Henri** continued to keep a busy main office running smoothly.

In the last 12 years, since Fall 2006, the Department has granted over 550 BA degrees, 140 MA degrees and nearly 50 PhD degrees. Within the College of Arts and Sciences at UNM, the Department of Economics started offering: undergraduate BA degrees more than 100 years ago in 1916-1917; graduate MA degrees in the late 1920's (where **Thomas L. Popejoy (MA 1929)** was the first recipient); and the PhD degree more than 50 years ago in 1967-1968.

The Department also participates in the delivery of the undergraduate BA/MD program, and International Studies degree, as well as several interdisciplinary graduate degrees: the Master of Public Policy (MPP) degree, directed by Associate Professor **Melissa Binder**; and the Master of Water Resources (MWR) directed by Professor of Practice in water policy and governance, **John Fleck**.

Learning economics happens both inside the classroom and out in the world. With respect to the latter, for our undergraduate students, a successful winter-break study abroad opportunity in 2017-2018 was led by Professor **Alok Bohara** to Nepal. The trip was just part of the many activities of the Nepal Study Center directed by Professor Bohara. Other recent study abroad opportunities have also been led by faculty to Cuba, Nicaragua (Professor **Matias Fontenla**) and Germany (Professor **Christine Sauer**).

Once again, we are thankful for the leadership of Professor **Richard Santos** who served as our Undergraduate Director. Along with our award-winning Academic Advisor, **Meghan Lippert**, they provide advising support for our many undergraduates. While all our faculty participate in undergraduate teaching, we are also especially proud of our Lecturers (**Dave Dixon, Claudia Diaz Fuentes and Cristina Reiser**); these are continuing positions that focus on providing exceptional undergraduate teaching (and all hold PhD's).

Some of our recent undergraduates who have earned their BA degrees in Economics and gone on to graduate school include: **Lidiya Bayliyeva (BA, 2016)**, JD program at UNM Law School; **Michael Guarino (BA 2017)**; MS program in Applied Econometrics and Data Analytics in the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics at the University of Arizona.; **Connor Magnuson (BA,**



**2016**); PhD in Economics at University of Wyoming; **Katherine Gutierrez, (BA, 2016)**; PhD in Economics at UNM (and was awarded a national Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Fellowship to support her studies); **Savannah Carter, (BA, 2017)**, Masters program at Institut de Sciences Financières et d'Assurance in Lyon, France; and **Abhishek Mehta (BA, 2017)**, MBA program at Anderson School, UNM. Further, this past summer, **Braeton Smith (BA, 2009)** completed his PhD in mineral and energy economics at the Colorado School of Mines.

I always enjoy when I hear from proud parents on how any of our recent BA students are doing. Several recent updates include: **Tim Dougher (BA, 2011)**, Vice President, ETF and Sector Investment Strategy Fidelity Institutional Asset Management, Boston, MA; and **Alison Turner (BA, 2015)** Municipal Bonds Trader, Bank of New York Mellon.

As I try to keep up with social media tools, just some of my *Linked In* connections include the following UNM BA and/or MA Economics graduates, who represent some of the interesting careers and places our students matriculate on to: **Xavier Gomez-Maqueo (BA, 2015)**, Fiscal Analyst, International Monetary Fund in Washington DC; **Evan Landford (BA, 2013)**, E-commerce Specialist, with AlphaGraphics in Seattle; **Amber Riter (MA, 2009)**, Principal Forecasting Analyst at Portland General Electric; **Mary Clark (BA, 1998)**, Sustainability Manager, UNM Office of Sustainability; **Lance Stillwell (BA 2001)**, Business Development and Sales Representative. at AQUILIA; **Caroline Muraida (BA, 2014)**, pursuing a PhD at Stanford after earning a MEd in Environmental Health at Yale; **Brian Gist (BA, 2005)**, Director of Retail Credit Risk Review at PNC in the Pittsburgh area; **Jake Wellman (BA, 2013)**, Economist at Vivid Economics in London after earning a Masters degree at the London School of Economics; **Jessica Zotz (MA, 2012)**, Senior Analyst at Ross Stores, Inc; **Apsara Karki Nepal (MA, 2011)**, Poverty Analyst for the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, in Nepal, after earning her PhD at the University of Otago; and **Connor Payne (BA, 2011)**, Executive Vice President of Brown and Brown Insurance of New Mexico, Inc.

In terms of undergraduate curriculum, we will continue to offer a full set of traditional face-to-face (F2F) course offerings; but, we have been carefully and slowly adding a select set of quality-checked online (ONL) undergraduate course offerings, which are in high demand by students who want that flexibility. Pedagogical oversight has been provided by Senior Lecturer **Cristina Reiser** and Lecturer **Dave Dixon**, who have both been exceptional teachers in both F2F and ONL formats. As part of those efforts, the Economics Department is launching a fully online economics minor this Fall 2018 as part of UNM's Managed Online Program (MOP). Check out the webpage and the brand new video, starring **Dave Dixon**: <http://unmonline.unm.edu/programs/supporting-curriculum/index.html>. Other participating faculty include Professor and Senior Associate Dean **Phil Ganderton**, Associate Professor **Matias Fontenla**, and Assistant Professor **David van der Goes**.

The 2017-2018 academic year appears to have been some kind of record by Economics faculty with 44 peer-reviewed research articles. Areas of heavy research concentrations included environmental and resource economics, health, education and public economics, poverty and development. Spurred by an active group of Assistant Professors (**Ben Jones, Andrew Goodkind, Xiaoxue Li, Sarah Stith, Kira Villa, and David van der Goes**), there were also important continuing contributions by senior faculty, with lots of co-authored papers with graduate students.



Research was supported by external grants, including new 2017-2018 funding secured by Professor **Janie Chermak**, Professor **Richard Santos**; Associate Professor **Melissa Binder**, Associate Professor **Brady Horn**, Assistant Professor **David van der Goes**, Assistant Professor **Ben Jones**, Lecturer **David Dixon**, and Lecturer **Claudia Diaz Fuentes**. As the faculty pursue additional external grants going forward, recent good news was received that UNM was part of a 5-year, multi-institutional, interdisciplinary EPSCoR grant award from the National Science Foundation to study modernizing the electricity grid and increased use of renewable energy. From the Economics Department, Professor **Janie Chermak** and Assistant Professor **Ben Jones** are participating, and we expect the grant to provide significant research support for Economics graduate students

Professor **Alok Bohara** served as our Graduate Director in 2017-2018, with Professor **Janie Chermak** taking over these leadership duties in 2018-2019. Our placements of recent PhD graduates include: **Kristina Piorkowski (PhD, 2018)**, Analytics Associate IV, Presbyterian Health Care Services; **Joaquin Alfredo-Angel Rubalcaba, (PhD, 2018)**, Assistant Professor, Public Policy, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; **Justin Whetten (PhD, 2018)**, Analytics Consultant, Presbyterian Health Care Services; **Chris Erwin (PhD, 2018)**, Postdoctoral Fellow, Auckland University of Technology; **Soumi Roy Chowdhury (PhD, 2018)**, Associate Fellow, National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER), India; **Michael O'Donnell (PhD, 2018)**, Senior Research Scientist, Bureau of Business and Economics Research, UNM; **Qihua Ma (PhD, 2017)**, Economic Model Analyst, Fannie Mae; **Juliette Guemmege Tayou (PhD, 2017)**, Wealth Investment Management Team, Wells Fargo; **Brandon Bridge (PhD, 2017)**, Economist and Director of Forecasting, Bureau of Business and Economic Research at the University of Montana; **Bern Dealy (PhD, 2016)**, Economist, Food and Drug Administration; **Wenmei Guo (PhD, 2016)**, Senior Pricing Analyst, EZ Boo; and **Dadhi Adhikari (PhD, 2016)**, Director of the South Asian Institute for Policy Analysis and Leadership. To take a look at current positions for many of our PhD graduates, over the last 25 years, see: <https://econ.unm.edu/job-placement.html>.

Recent research lectures in the Department included several provided by former graduates including: **Pallab Mozumder (PhD, 2005)**, Associate Professor at Florida International University; and **Jason Hansen (PhD, 2009)** Economist at the Idaho National Laboratory.

In terms of local New Mexico community engagement, a noteworthy development was the Evaluation Lab's Inaugural Summer Institute, led by Associate Professor **Melissa Binder**; The Evaluation Lab is connected to the interdisciplinary MPP program, and helps community-based, non-profit organizations with program evaluation. With statewide coverage, more than 17 organizations (and 65 individuals) participated in the inaugural Summer Institute. This was recently covered by UNMNews: <https://news.unm.edu/news/inaugural-summer-institute-draws-statewide-support>

After long and distinguished careers at UNM, with numerous important contributions in teaching, research and service, we will be seeing three faculty members leave the department. Professor **Christine Sauer** and Professor **Kate Krause** will both be retiring from UNM as of December 2018. Professor **Jennifer Thacher** left the Department at the end of the 2017-2018 year to pursue opportunities in the private sector. We wish them all the best in their future endeavors, and thank them for all they have done for the Department and our students. We know they will all stay connected to the Department, as other Professors Emeriti like **David Brookshire** and **Ron**



**Cummings** continue to do (e.g., serving on student committees or occasionally teaching a class). On a sadder note, Professor Emeritus **David Hamilton** passed away in late 2016. He taught at UNM for 60 years (1949-2009) and his love for teaching economics, and improving lives, remains an inspiration to all of us (<https://econ.unm.edu/common/documents/david-hamilton--santos-updated-.pdf>).

We are also proud of our many alumni for the contributions they make in their careers and community. Alumnus **Therese Grijalva (PhD, 2000)** was our Distinguished Alumni Award winner for 2017-2018. She was recently named as Distinguished Presidential Professor, at Weber State University in Utah, where she has taught and conducted research in economics for many years. Therese gave an inspirational speech to our graduating students at the annual Convocation Ceremony in May 2018. Also of note, alumnus **Ryan Mummert (BA, 1995)** is currently serving as Assistant Treasurer, and Investment Committee Chair (2014-2018) for the UNM Foundation. Ryan is currently Senior Vice President, Family Wealth Director at Morgan Stanley in Albuquerque, NM. Finally, **Jeff Bjarke (BA, 2006)** is currently a Consulting Manager at Moss Adams, LLP in Albuquerque; Along with **John Tysesling (PhD, 1986)** at Moss Adams, he has helped facilitate several internships. Other alumni who stopped by for short visits in the Department included **Gary Bednorz (BA, 1987)** and **Mike Kominiak (BA, 2001)**. As with hearing from all our alumni, in 2017-2018 it was good to see Therese back in the Department to receive her award, chat with Jeff and John over the phone, have lunch and re-connect with Ryan, and meet with Gary and Mike in the Department.

The Department is deeply thankful for highly-valued annual donations and gifts by alumni, especially through a run of difficult UNM budget years. Of note, significant contributions made by alumnus **Derek Brumfield (BA, 2000)** have helped to improve the technology (e.g., Smartboard and operating system) in our lab (room 1004), where all our undergraduate and graduate econometrics classes are taught. In off hours, the lab is open during the day for student use. Department funds were also used to make this room ADA compliant and expand the number of connected computers from 12 to 18. Also of note, significant contributions by alumnus **Charles Lehman (BA, 1965)** provided a GIS workstation for student access (in nearby Parrish Library), and will be used going forward to support an enhanced annual Convocation Ceremony, which is held each spring graduation in the courtyard, as well as replacing the technology (Smartboard and operating system) in our high-use classroom (room 1052).

A number of endowed funds continue to provide annual support to a variety of undergraduate and graduate students. These endowed funds include the: [Alfred L. Parker, PhD Economics Scholarship Fund](#); [Gerald J. Boyle Memorial Graduate Student Award in Economics](#); [Raymond Stuart Award in Economics](#); and [Julian S. Duncan Scholarship in Latin American Economic Studies](#). Interested alumni and friends can also make contributions to the: [Economics Chairman's Fund](#); [The Nepal Study Center Fund](#); [Nepal Study Center \(NSC\) Study Abroad Fund](#); and the [Medical Economics Review and Evaluation Research Fund](#). All alumni and friends are welcome to make contributions to any of these funds, and we appreciate all the support provided to our economics students.

Looking forward to 2018-2019, the Department expects to be temporarily moved out of the Economics Building in Summer 2019, while much-needed repairs are completed to overhaul the





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failing HVAC systems and lighting throughout. There appears to be some opportunity to open up, re-model and re-envision some poorly used space in the building to help create more inviting learning commons and study areas for both undergraduate and graduate students. While the structural funds appear to be in place, the Department is seeking funding to furnish these learning commons. For interested alumni, donations can be made to the Chair's Fund listed above. The goal is to make inviting spaces for tutoring and study so that students can spend time before and after classes and throughout the day. We want students in the building and around the Economics faculty as much as possible.

Sincerely,

*Robert P. Berrens*

Robert Berrens  
Professor and Chair





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