

# *Greetings from the University of St. Thomas Department of Economics*



December 28, 2019

Greetings from the University of St. Thomas Department of Economics! I hope this letter finds you well and enjoying the holiday season. I am excited to tell you about the great things that happened in our department in 2019.

First and foremost, I want to extend a heartfelt thank you on behalf of the faculty and students for your generous donations. Your donations have gone to the enhancement of our students' education through research, competitions, graduate school applications, and so much more. As faculty, it brings us the most joy to see our students thriving, and much of that is thanks to your contributions.

2019 was another busy year in the department. Let us start with the best news. We are experiencing a growth in the number of economics majors and we could not be more thrilled to teach even more future economists! In 2018-2019, we graduated more students than our 5-year average. This was a 15% increase over the previous year. Additionally, 50% of the data analytics majors, which is a new interdisciplinary major at St. Thomas, chose to concentrate in economics. You can learn more about the Department by watching a video posted on [www.stthomas.edu/economics](http://www.stthomas.edu/economics).

The next most exciting news of which, was our annual Chili Fest. The coveted trophy went to yours truly—and I do not ever intend to relinquish the title as Chili Fest Champ! We love being able to continue a tradition that faculty and students enjoy.

We also have exciting updates on our current and former students doing great things, the first of which is graduate program enrollment. **Alyssa Leraas** started the Master of Public Administration program this year in University of Oregon, while **Kevin Van Lieshout** is finishing a Master's in

Economics program at the University of Wisconsin, Madison this spring. **Anna Thom** finished her Master's at the University of Texas, Austin and is now working in Paris at the OECD. **Gabrielle Pepin** will also be graduating this spring, attaining a Ph.D. in Economics from Michigan State University. Additionally, Gabrielle has been accepted to participate in the "Economy of Francesco" Conference in Assisi, Italy. This conference is for young economists, entrepreneurs, and change makers from all over the world have been called by Pope Francis to come together to make the economy of today and tomorrow fair, sustainable, and inclusive. A warm congratulations to these young economists!

Another congratulations is in order to our students who participated in the UST Economics Data Competition in Spring 2019. This competition exposes our students to working with "big data", and our third annual competition saw massive success. The students competed for over \$1000 in prize money by conducting original research, analyzing real-world data, and communicating empirical findings to a panel of judges made up of Economics professors. This year, students used data from the *American Time Use Survey*, a nationally representative time diary survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. This year's student participants were **Jessica Mohr, Samantha Broten, Graham Mueller, Anne Sacket, Jessica Schreck, Maria Vitale, Tanya Fenn, Dilan Binger, Marcus Cundiff, Seth Glidewell, Tim Spilde, Natalie Del Ponte, Joseph Lam, and Jenna Karl**. Their faculty mentors were **Drs. Adam Check, Matthew Kim, Luz Saavedra, Tyler Schipper, Brad Wilson, and Hong Wu**.

Our students also participated in off-campus big data competitions. In the spring we sent a team to the Midwestern Undergraduate Data Analytics Competition at Winona State. Students **Seth Glidewell, Tim Spilde, and Joseph Lam** competed with a project on Minnesota Water Quality and were mentored by Dr. Adam Check. In the fall, eight students competed in the MinneMUDAC Challenge at Optum in Eden Prairie, with topic being the prediction of soybean prices. **Lindsay Curtiss, Alec Henriksen, Joe Lambrecht, Zachary LeVene, Anh Nguyen, Nick Pomije, and Tim Spilde** participated in the competition, mentored by **Drs. Adam Check, Monica Hartmann, Matt Kim, and Tyler Schipper**. We even had a couple of alumni, **Alyssa Toay** of General Mills and **Jake Mason** of Optum there to judge! I wonder who we will see next year.

Our students have also been actively engaging in research. **Will Hancuch** won the Best Student Paper competition at the 2019 Midwest Economic Association Annual Conference for his research titled, "Do Expansions to Parental Medicaid Cause Crowd-out?" He was mentored by **Dr. Matt Kim**. **Samantha Broten** was awarded a Young Scholars Grant for her research titled, "What History says about UK Economic Well-Being Following Brexit." **Dr. Adam Check** mentored this project. **Morgan Kaardal** and **Natalie Del Ponte** also conducted important research and were mentored by Dr. Tyler Schipper. Morgan was awarded a Collaborative Inquiry Grant, and she researched the link between fertility and female firm ownership. Natalie co-authored a paper with **Dr. Schipper** on the impact of Minneapolis' Minimum Wage Ordinance on bus ridership as a Community Partner with Metro Transit.

This past year we offered our students two opportunities focused on the importance of diversity in the field of Economics. These opportunities were to encourage women in economics. First, the Economics Department was honored to be part of the inaugural offering in **Dean Yohuru Williams'** newly created Titan Lecture Series with **Jennifer Kinkead**, owner of JELLA World Artist

Collections and member of the Board of Advisors for the College of Arts and Sciences, as the inaugural speaker. Ms. Kinkead talked to the students about her entrepreneurial background and shared how her business has grown and evolved over time and the lessons she has learned. We were very fortunate that the following Economics Department alumnae, **Nora Fitzpatrick '84, Marina Harland '03, Amy Klitzke '04, Bryna Krentz '06, Liz Weber '04, and Anna Zearley '08**, were able to take time out of their busy schedules to join our female majors to have fellowship over dinner prior to the lecture. As one might expect, Ms. Kinkead was quite inspiring for both students and alumnae. This was a great opportunity for our students to get inspired as well as network with our alumnae.

Along with the Titan Lecture Series, we were pleased to be able to send three of our outstanding young students to the inaugural Women in Analytics Leadership Conference at the University of Iowa this fall. **Kim Ferrari, Katie Kaardal, and Morgan Dammann** participated at the conference, which was an excellent opportunity for women interested in business analytics to network with women in the industry, learn about opportunities and challenges women face in the industry, and understand the importance of a woman's perspective in the work force. All three students agreed that it was an outstanding opportunity and were grateful to be able to go. We were so proud that they represented UST and the department so well.

Lastly, our Economics Club Officers deserve recognition for all they have done this year. **Lindsay Curtiss, Christopher McSweeney, Hannah Peterson, Dominik Ruzinka, Tim Spilde, and Nolan Stutelberg** put on a fabulous series of events this year for their fellow students. They organized a Seniors Tell All event that was geared toward underclassmen interested in economics. The panel of seniors answered questions and gave advice on how to get the most out of their major/minor. The club also hosted events in which faculty and outside speakers would discuss current economic issues throughout the year. The hit of the year was their "Food with Faculty" event, in which a Thanksgiving lunch was served, and students could mingle with faculty to get to know them better outside the classroom. On behalf of the faculty, I cannot express enough gratitude for the officers' hard work enhancing the students' experience at St. Thomas. We will miss them when they graduate, and the workforce is lucky to have them!

Don't worry, the students aren't doing *all* the exciting things the department. The faculty have also been accomplishing their research goals. **Dr. Deborah Rho** has published work in the *International Indigenous Policy Journal*, titled, "Police Stops and searches of Indigenous People in Minneapolis: The Roles of Race, Place, and Gender" as well as "Immigrant Earning Assimilation in the United States: A Panel Analysis" to be published in the *Journal of Labor Economics*. **Dr. Suzanne Wisniewski** published her work, "Teachers in Developing Countries" in *The Economics of Education 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, A Comprehensive Overview*. **Drs. Luz Saavedra and Robert Riley** published, "Is International Trade Relevant to Social Trust Formation? Evidence from Cross-Country Analysis" in the *International Economic Trade Journal*. I was also able to publish my work with **Dr. J. Roxanne Pritchard** in *Sleep Health: Journal of the Sleep Foundation*, which included "Calculating the contribution of sleep problems to undergraduates' academic success" and "Should universities invest in promoting healthy sleep? A question of academic and economic significance."

I promise I am almost done telling you about the department's good news! I have exciting curriculum updates to share. The Department of Homeland now recognizes the B.S. in Mathematical Economics as a STEM degree! **Drs. Agapitos Papagapitos and Brad Wilson** have added a section on climate change to their study abroad course to Australia. This new component analyzes the effect climate change has on the coral reef. This year, the department created a brand-new study abroad opportunity. Our department teamed up with the Political Science Department to create the first embedded study abroad program at St. Thomas. This new course was cross-listed between the two departments and taught by **Dr. Renee Buhr** (Political Science) and myself. The course examined the effects of Brexit on Northern Ireland's economy and politics. Students did their studies on campus in February and March and visited Northern Ireland for site visits over spring break. The course was incredibly successful, and we are excited to offer it again in 2021!

Just kidding, I still have more good news to share. **Dr. Matt Kim** and his ECON 337 (Economics of the Public Sector) collaborated with the Sustainable Communities Partnership and the City of Cottage Grove to show students how they can use economics to fulfill UST's mission of advancing the common good. The students evaluated the effects of a subsidy program to incentivize water conservation. The City of Cottage Grove will use the student analysis of the impacts of the subsidy program to revise and expand a larger-scale subsidy program in the future. It was a great success for the city and a great learning opportunity for the students!

Also getting involved with the mission, is **Dr. Terry Langan**. He, **Father Larry Snyder** (Vice President of Mission), and three other colleagues developed a year-long seminar called "Engaging the Mission" for St. Thomas faculty. Seminar participants meet semi-monthly to discuss selected readings tied to Catholic Higher Education, concluding with a trip to Rome to see how the church lives out social Catholic thought in practice.

Our faculty have also taken on new roles and assumed old roles. **Dr. Michael Walrath** is now the Faculty Director of Academic Policy and Curriculum, and **Dr. Matt Kim** is now the Director of the Data Analytics Program! Congratulations to the both of them. **Dr. Agapitos Papagapitos** is still the Mayor of UST and heading Faculty Affairs. **Dr. Joe Kreitzer** has returned to the department and is back in the classroom. He wears different t-shirts to every class depending on the lecture topic. My favorite one says, "If at first you don't succeed, try doing what your economist told you to do the first time!" There is no better quote than that. He has also started making his own economic shirts with graphs and tables, and we can't wait to see what he does next.

The department has also had some new additions as well as losses. This fall, **Dr. Andrea Sorensen** joined the department. She is an experimental economist, who is already a great addition to the department. **Chelsea Petersen**, a fellow Tommie (Political Science and Communications and Journalism), returned to UST this summer as our new department administrative assistant. She runs the department efficiently, and we are grateful for all she does for us. We are also excited to have alumni join us in the classroom for spring 2020. **Andrew Larsen '02, Mark Jadin '10, and Linnea Graham '16** are returning as adjuncts. It is so special to have Tommies teaching the next generation.

We are also grateful to have **Adam Bares '13** from Data Nu Nord teach an Applied Data Viz course to our majors at no cost to them again. This semester, **John Toraason '19** joined Adam in teaching that course. Finally, **Dr. Rob Riley** left us and is now the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs at St. Joseph's College in New York City. We miss him dearly and wish him all the best!

It has been wonderful to share with you this fantastic year of so many wonderful things happening in the department! The students, faculty, and I look forward to another and even better great year in 2020. On behalf of the department, I wish you and your family a wonderful holiday season and a prosperous new year!

Sincerely,

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