MESSAGE FROM THE DEPARTMENT HEAD

BRANI VIDAKOVIC
H.O. Hartley Chair and Department Head

We’ve come through a year filled with challenges, but as you will see in this magazine, with successes as well. It is reassuring to know that our department can count on all of you regardless of what faces us.

On behalf of the Department of Statistics, please allow me to extend my personal and genuine appreciation to faculty, staff, students, alumni, donors, school administrators, and friends of the department for their many contributions.

In this newly designed edition of StatLinks, you will find information on several new faculty members, news about faculty promotions, and awards, many academic degrees awarded, and the fact that we are still consistently highly ranked among our peers.

Working with you this past year has been a pleasure and Texas A&M’s Statistics Department treasures your dedication, loyalty, and commitment.

A special thanks to Judith Moreno for reviving StatLinks once again. We look forward to many more exciting issues to come.
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NEW LEADERSHIP

Brani Vidakovic is H. O. Hartley Chair and Dept. Head of the Statistics Department at Texas A&M University. He graduated from the Statistics Dept. at Purdue University in 1992 and joined Duke University where he became a tenured Associate Professor.

In Fall of 2000, he joined the School of Industrial and Systems Engineering at Georgia Institute of Technology where he was promoted to Professor.

From 2018-2020, Dr. Vidakovic was the Program Director for Statistics at the National Science Foundation and joined Texas A&M University right after.

Daren Cline is the new Associate Department Head for Operations for the Statistics Department at Texas A&M University. Prior to this role, Dr. Cline served as the Interim Department Head.

Dr. Cline holds a Ph.D. in Statistics from Colorado State University. In 1983, he was a Visiting Assistant Professor at the University of British Columbia.

A year later, Dr. Cline moved to College Station and joined the Department of Statistics at Texas A&M as an Assistant Professor and has been part of the department ever since.

NEW FACULTY

Mohamed Aburweis
Instructional Assistant Professor

Thy "Tee" Dao
Lecturer

Seung-Yeon (Shawn) Ha
Instructional Assistant Professor

Sharmistha Guha
Assistant Professor

Scott Bruce
Assistant Professor

Trevor Harris
Assistant Professor

Jesus Arroyo Relion
Assistant Professor

Darren Homrighausen
Instructional Associate Professor

Scott Crawford
Instructional Associate Professor

Rajarshi Guhaniyogi
Associate Professor

Prasenjit Ghosh
Instructional Assistant Professor
FACULTY PROMOTIONS

Raymond Wong
Associate Professor with Tenure, 9/1/2020

Derya Akleman
Instructional Professor, 9/1/2021

Huiyan Sang
Full Professor, 9/1/2020

Irina Gaynanova
Associate Professor with Tenure, 9/1/2021

Rajarshi Guhaniyogi
Associate Professor with Tenure, 11/2021

TENURE REVIEW UPON HIRE
Dr. Alan R. Dabney, Associate Professor of Statistics, has been recognized with the 2021 Presidential Professor for Teaching Excellence Award, the most prestigious faculty honor bestowed by Texas A&M University in recognition of classroom performance. Dabney is the first recipient in the Texas A&M Department of Statistics’ history in being honored with the award. He was formally recognized on April 30 during the opening session of the 2021 Transformational Teaching and Learning Conference.

“Dr. Dabney and Dr. Chen have set a standard for others to follow at this university,” said Texas A&M Interim President John L. Junkins. Their extraordinary service to students is admired by those they have taught as well as their colleagues across Texas A&M.”

The prestigious award, established in 2003 by former Texas A&M President Robert M. Gates to underscore the importance of teaching at a major research university, provides for presentation each year of two Presidential Professor for Teaching Excellence Awards.

Like their predecessors, Dr. Dabney is recognized in perpetuity for his sustained excellence and fundamental contributions to student advancement in independent thinking, creative imagination, lifetime learning, and discovery-based knowledge.

Dabney joined the Texas A&M Statistics faculty in 2006 after earning his Ph.D. in biostatistics from the University of Washington that same year. He is known as an engaging professor and presenter with a reputation for dynamic and motivational instruction across all majors. He was appointed to a 2016-2019 Eppright Professorship and is one of two faculty advisors who helped lay the groundwork for Texas A&M’s Bachelor of Science in Statistics.

His previous teaching awards include the Texas A&M Association of Former Students Distinguished Achievement Awards in Teaching at both the college (2011) and university levels (2017) as well as the Montague-CTE Scholar Award for the College of Science in 2009.

“Dr. Dabney’s qualifications for this award are evident in his exceptional commitment to undergraduate students, his consistently high teaching evaluation scores, his innovative and influential textbook and teaching materials, his leading role in the development of an undergraduate major in statistics, and most recently, his dedicated departmental work as associate head for teaching excellence.”

- Dr. Branislav Vidakovic, Inaugural H.O. Hartley Chair, Professor, and Head of Statistics
We'd like to recognize Dr. Sang for her efforts in support of COVID-19 public health modeling efforts. In Fall 2020, Dr. Sang creatively engaged undergraduate students to develop an automated dashboard that displays the results of short-term COVID-19 daily case prediction models developed by the public health modeling team, and a view of the healthcare resources and vaccination status available throughout the State. This dashboard is used by the TAMU COVID Contingency Council and other local stakeholders to help with operational decisions. The capability to scrape a variety of web-based data sources and provide almost real-time situational updates is impressive. Moreover, the models have been consistently accurate in case predictions, so the dashboard is viewed as a highly dependable source of information.

Drs. Gaynanova and Wong were the recipients of The Presidential Transformational Teaching Grant (PTTG) program. The PTTG is a seed-grant program supported by the Presidential Excellence Fund designed to further the Texas A&M University commitments to the four pillars of advancing transformational learning; enhancing discovery and innovation, university as a community; and expanding impact on the state, nation, and world.

Texas A&M Institute of Data Science (TAMIDS) announced the creation of an Undergraduate Certificate in Data Analytics for the Petroleum Industry (CERT-DAPI), supported by a $1 million gift from ConocoPhillips. Texas A&M faculty members who contribute to the development and operation of the program will receive recognition as ConocoPhillips Data Science Faculty Fellows. Among those faculty is Shahina Rahman, who will receive an award for creating or redeveloping courses in the program. “We are honored to help advance data science education at Texas A&M and proud to equip the next generation with the vital data science skills necessary for solving critical challenges in our industry,” said ConocoPhillips CTO and Senior Vice President, Global Technical Functions Michael Hatfield.
DR. JUDITH EDMISTON MENTORING AWARD

IRINA GAYNANOVA

The Dr. Judith Edmiston Mentoring Award was established in 2020 and recognizes one faculty/staff member for their efforts in mentoring undergraduate students in the College of Science.

Dr. Irina Gaynanova was the recipient of his award for her dedication to mentoring undergraduate students. Some of her qualities include her innovation, initiative, enthusiasm, and emphasis on developing undergraduate students. Dr. Gaynanova has always demonstrated excellence in mentoring undergraduate students and demonstrates performance above and beyond what would normally be expected in their role.

SAVAGE AWARD

SHARMISTHA GUHA

The Savage Award, named in honor of Leonard J. “Jimmie” Savage, is bestowed each year to two outstanding doctoral dissertations in Bayesian econometrics and statistics, one each in Theory & Methods and Applied Methodology. The dissertation needs to make outstanding contributions with a novel Bayesian analysis of a substantive problem that has the potential to impact statistical practice in a field of application.

Dr. Sharmistha Guha was the recipient of this award for her thesis entitled “Bayesian Methods in Network Regression with Applications in Brain” (Supervisor: Abel Rodriguez) in Applied Methodology.
2021

Faculty Retirement

HENRIK SCHMIEDICHE
28 YEARS OF SERVICE

MICHAEL LONGNECKER
44 YEARS OF SERVICE

JEFFREY HART
39 YEARS OF SERVICE
Courtney Shuttlesworth is the undergraduate Academic Advisor for the Department of Statistics. Courtney earned a BA in English from Texas A&M University and is currently pursuing an MS in Higher Education Administration.

Judith Moreno is the Administrative/Events Coordinator for the Department of Statistics. She received a BBA in Management from Texas A&M University and her MBA in International Business from Texas A&M International University.

Kim Ritchie was the recipient of the 2021 12th Man Award in recognition of her long-term contributions to the Statistics department.

Penny Jackson was the recipient of the 2021 College of Science Outstanding Staff Achievement Award which recognizes staff members for their dedication, enthusiasm, accomplishments, and contributions.
Anant M. Kshirsagar Endowment

The Anant M. Kshirsagar Endowed Fellowship was established in 2010 to provide one or more fellowships to full-time students in good standing and pursuing a degree in statistics.

Emanuel Parzen Graduate Research Fellowship Award

The Emanuel Parzen Graduate Research Fellowship Award was initiated in 2000 to recognize graduate students who have demonstrated exemplary research, above and beyond what is expected for graduation.

Ruth & Howard Newton Memorial Graduate Student Teaching Award

The Ruth J. and Howard F. Newton Graduate Student Teaching Award recognizes the hard work of graduate assistants that is crucial to the teaching programs of the department.

William S. Connor Award

The William S. Connor Award was initiated by the Department of Statistics and it is presented to the graduate student whom the faculty deems the most outstanding among those students passing the preliminary examinations during the current year.

DID YOU KNOW?

*27%* Graduate and Ph.D. Students

*73%* Graduate and Ph.D. Students

MS

Ph.D.

Ph.D.

Ph.D.

2019-2020

2020-2021

2021-2022
Fall 2021 Colloquiums

Krishnakumar Balasubramanian
Assistant Professor
Department of Statistics
UC Davis

Sumit Mukherjee
Associate Professor
Department of Statistics
Columbia University

Katherine Calder
Professor and Dept. Chair
Dept. of Stats & Data Sciences
University of Texas at Austin

Joshua Cape
Assistant Professor
Dept. of Statistics
University of Pittsburgh

Giacomo Zanella
Assistant Professor
Dept. of Decision Sciences
Bocconi University

Pratyaydipta Rudra
Assistant Professor
Department of Statistics
Oklahoma State University

Li Ma
Associate Professor
Dept. of Statistical Science
Duke University

Cynthia Rush
Assistant Professor
Department of Statistics
Columbia University

Shankar Bhamidi
Professor
Dept. of Statistics and Operations Research
University of North Carolina

Bo Li
Full Professor and Dept. Head
Department of Statistics
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
SFSN WEBINARS

JEFFREY S. MORRIS
Professor
Division of Biostatistics
Perelman School of Medicine

"A SEAT AT THE TABLE: THE KEY ROLE OF BIOSTATISTICS AND DATA SCIENCE IN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC"

VEERA BALADANDAYUTHAPANI
Professor
Department of Biostatistics
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

"DRUGS, DATA AND ME: BAYESIAN INTEGRATIVE APPROACHES TO ENABLE PRECISION MEDICINE"

FACULTY SPONSORED SEMINAR

HIMCHAN JEONG
Assistant Professor
Department of Statistics and Actuarial Science
Simon Fraser University, Canada

"A NON-CONVEX REGULARIZATION APPROACH FOR STABLE ESTIMATION OF LOSS DEVELOPMENT FACTORS"
The Department of Statistics would like to thank Drs. Longnecker, Schmiediche, and Hart for their years of service to the department and the University.
Dr. Spiegelman came to Texas A&M in 1987 as an Associate Professor in the Department of Statistics.

Dr. Spiegelman, Distinguished Professor of Statistics at Texas A&M University, was designated the Regents Professor Award for 2018-19 by The Texas A&M University System Board of Regents.

Dr. Spiegelman was one of the nation’s leading forensic statisticians and had a huge impact in reforming evidentiary standards in criminal prosecutions.

Dr. Spiegelman’s wife and daughter—Katherine and Abigail—were presented the award from Dean Johnson and Dr. Vidakovic. Many friends and colleagues joined the ceremony.

“Cliff was a leading applied statistician of his generation”

-Dr. Valen E. Johnson, Distinguished Professor of Statistics and Dean of Science
2021 VIRTUAL AGGIE REUNION

STATA SOCIAL
"I believe Texas A&M is an example worth emulating for American society in its transition from a small, all-white, largely conservative school to one of the country's largest research universities that has really opened up and embraced all cultures without sacrificing its values and integrity. It truly is a role model for our nation and world."

-Dr. Ersen Arseven '74, Texas A&M statistics graduate and donor
"TO ACHIEVE GREAT THINGS, TWO THINGS ARE NEEDED: A PLAN AND NOT QUITE ENOUGH TIME"
-LEONARD BERNSTEIN

The Statistics Department created seven workgroups for SOAR which included:
-Staff
-Faculty
-Masters Students
-Undergraduate Program
-Ph.D. Program
-Communications
-Research

The Department of Statistics attended a strategic retreat this Fall. The goal of the strategic retreat was to share and discuss ideas and initiatives that will shape our 5 - 10 year strategic plan, using the SOAR strategy.

SOAR is based on Appreciative Inquiry (AI) – an approach to organizational change that differs from traditional problem-solving strategies.
Statistics
Thanksgiving Potluck
Holiday Party
Dr. Murphy's award was presented on December 6, 2021, due to rescheduling and the pandemic.
### SPRING 2021

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<td>B.S.</td>
<td>Aaron T. Austin</td>
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<td>Casey Sutton</td>
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<td>Arjun Ravikumar</td>
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<td>Yan Zhong</td>
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<td>Huijuan Zhou</td>
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<td>Daniel Zilber</td>
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<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>Biraj Guha</td>
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<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>Sean Plummer</td>
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<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>Pallavi Ray</td>
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### FALL 2021

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<td>John Niehaus</td>
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<td>Linying Zhang</td>
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<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>Ngoc Anh Dao</td>
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Former Students

ROBYN BALL

Robyn Ball, a former Texas A&M Statistics Ph.D. student, started a new journal developed through a subcommittee of the American Statistical Association (ASA).

This Special Issue on “Statistical Consulting and Collaboration” will serve as the bridge between statistics and other professions and disciplines.

DENNIS W. KING

STATKING Clinical Services, Cincinnati, OH is among the top 100 companies from around the world selected for the 15th annual Aggie 100 which honors the fastest-growing companies owned or operated by former students of Texas A&M University.

The company was founded in 1989 by Dennis W. King, Ph.D., PStat, TAMU ’88, and has conducted over 500 clinical trials for the regulatory approval of drug and medical device products.

EILEEN KING

The National Institutes of Health has awarded a five-year, $28 million grant to Cincinnati Children’s to serve as a data management and coordinating center for the Rare Diseases Clinical Research Network. The RDCRN program is meant to advance medical research on rare diseases by providing support for clinical studies and fostering collaboration, study enrollment, and data sharing.

The center will be led by Eileen King, Ph.D., Division of Biostatistics and Epidemiology, and two other senior scientists at Cincinnati Children’s.
MICHAEL H. KUTNER

Distinguished biostatistician, teacher, mentor, and consultant Michael H. Kutner has been named the recipient of the ASA’s Karl E. Peace Award for Outstanding Statistical Contributions for the Betterment of Society. The award was established in 2012 with the mission to recognize persons “who have made substantial contributions to the statistical profession and to society in general.” Presented each year at JSM, the award is one of the highest honors a statistician can receive.

KATHERINE ENSOR

Katherine "Kathy" Ensor is the 2022 Elected ASA President. Dr. Ensor, an expert in many areas of modern statistics, develops innovative statistical techniques to answer important questions in science, engineering, and business focusing on the environment, energy, and finance. She holds a BSE and MS in Mathematics from Arkansas State University and a Ph.D. in Statistics from Texas A&M University.

BO LI

Bo Li is the recipient of the 2020 H.O. Hartley Award. Dr. Li is a Department Chair and Professor of the Statistics Department at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. After graduating with a Ph.D. from Texas A&M University, Dr. Li did two years as a post-graduate scientist at the Institute for Mathematics Applied to Geosciences (IMAGe) at National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR).
Three Texas A&M Science Academic Programs Ranked Among World’s Top 50

Statistics paced the College of Science, coming in at 18th worldwide and 15th among U.S. universities within the 200 total global institutions ranked in the discipline according to the Shanghai Ranking 2021 Global Ranking of Academic Subjects (GRAS).

Most Affordable Online Master’s in Statistics
WHAT'S NEXT?

- SOAR vision and execution for the next 5-10 years
- Hiring multiple tenure-track Assistant Professors for Fall 2022
- Academic Program Review in April
- Colloquiums and seminars
- Conferences
- 2022 Aggie Reunion

We will continue to keep you posted on events and special conferences hosted by the department.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Please help us verify your contact information and stay connected to receive future online issues of StatLinks.

Email us at statlinks@stat.tamu.edu and let us know if your contact information has changed or if you wish to be added or removed from the StatLinks listserv.