



# Department of Statistics

Newsletter

Fall 2016



## Greetings from the Department Head

Dear Friends of OSU Statistics,

Welcome to the latest edition of our Newsletter. It is a special one as we pay tribute to our friend and colleague, David Weeks. We were lucky to have some former students relate to us how special David was in their lives. I hope you enjoy these reflections.

We were also lucky to celebrate two of our most distinguished alums at two Arts & Sciences Hall of Fame ceremonies. I was fortunate to be able to spend lovely evenings with Leroy Folks and three of his children in 2015. This past September, we honored Robert Easterling with the award.

As I enter into my fourth year as the head of Statistics, I've been blessed by having a wonderful faculty and staff, as well as an outstanding set of students. The job of head is challenging at times, but rewarding.

As always, please feel free to reach out when you visit Stillwater and the campus. We love to interact with our alumni.

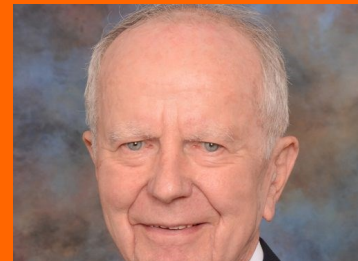
Warmest regards,

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## Distinguished Alumni

In September 2015 the College of Arts and Sciences honored distinguished alumni from each department in the College. Statistic alumnus Dr. Leroy Folks (MS 1955) was among those honored. After receiving his doctorate degree from Iowa State, Dr. Folks came back to work for the OSU Statistics Department for 37 years, serving as department head for many of those years. See <http://ashonors.okstate.edu/leroy-folks/>



Dr. Leroy Folks



Rob Easterling poses with his award and Statistics Department Head, Mark Payton, after the 2016 Honors Ceremony.

This year the College recognized Robert Easterling (PhD 1967) among the distinguished alumni. Rob joined the statistics group at Sandia National Laboratories after graduation. He enjoyed a long career at Sandia until his retirement in 2001. Since his retirement, Rob has been invited to teach introductory statistical methods courses at various institutions. In 2015 he authored a book, *Fundamentals of Statistical Experimental Design* dedicated to OSU statistics professors, Bob Morrison and David Weeks.

See <http://ashonors.okstate.edu/robert-easterling/>

# Faculty & Staff Notes

**Carla Goad** attended the NCCC-170 Annual Meeting at the University of Maryland in June 2016. This is a group of agricultural statisticians who seek opportunities to educate and serve the agricultural research community. She will be on sabbatical for the Spring 2017 semester. Her daughter Elizabeth is a freshman at Stillwater High. Carla stays active in her church and as a Girl Scout leader. Highlights from Girl



Scouts include a white-water rafting trip in Colorado.

**Ye Liang** is in his fourth year as an assistant professor at OSU. He is teaching Bayesian Analysis, Multivariate Analysis, Engineering Statistics and Survey Sampling. His recent research focus is statistical modeling for spatial data and longitudinal data that arise from climate sciences, agriculture and biomedical studies. He is working with two graduate students, Xijia Han and Longji Sun. He and his wife, Xi Yu, enjoy raising a beautiful two-year old daughter Chloe.



**Brenda Masters** continues in her role as University Accreditation Director. The accreditation review culminated last academic year with a visit from the Higher Learning Commission, which resulted

in reaffirmation of institutional accreditation for Oklahoma State for the next decade. She continues to teach one large section of STAT 2023 each fall and spring semester. Her dual role at the University offers a unique perception from both an undergraduate and central administration point of view.



**Adam Molnar** joined the faculty in August 2015. He earned his Ph.D. in mathematics education from the University of Georgia, with an earlier M.S. in statistics from the University of Chicago. His research focuses

primarily on education - teaching and learning of probability and statistics - although he has also completed projects in banking, communications, psychology, and social work. Adam currently serves as news editor for the International Association for Statistical Education. Outside work, he enjoys fast-paced travel, such as flying 25,003 miles in May 2016.

**Mindy McCann** is Graduate Coordinator for the department. She has also been elected Vice Chair of Faculty Council for 2016-2017 and will serve as Chair for 2017-2018 and as Past Chair for 2018-2019. She continues to enjoy teaching graduate courses for the department. Her research interests continue to involve multiplicity issues and have recently included some collaborative work that has also led to additional statistical research projects. Her oldest daughter, Megan, is a freshman at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln this fall, so she is now experiencing being the parent of a college student! Her younger daughter is a sophomore and will be driving soon, but she has a few more years before she "leaves the nest".



**Nishantha Samarakoon (Sam)** earned his PhD degree from Kansas State University in July 2011. He joined the faculty as a Visiting Assistant Professor in August 2011. Sam

is originally from Sri Lanka where he earned his both BSc and MS degrees. He moved to the USA in 2005. His research interests focus on Measurement of Errors in Models and Multivariate Statistical Methods. Sam is currently teaching Statistics for Experimenters I and II for graduate students and Engineering Statistics for undergraduate students. He is married to Disna who is currently reading for her PhD in Materials Science & Engineering at OSU Tulsa. Their 3-year old son, Matheesha, attends Pre-K.

**Cara Brun** was hired as a staff advisor for undergraduate students. Cara taught math at Perkins-Tryon High School and just finished her Masters in Mathematics at OSU.



The Department of Statistics announces the retirement of Dr. Ibrahim (Abe) Ahmad. Abe joined the faculty in 2008 and served as department head for five years. At press time for this newsletter, the details of a retirement reception for Abe had not been finalized. We will have finalized plans for honoring Abe and celebrating his career available soon.



# Student News

**Justin Packard** (BS 2016) was selected as the recipient of the Chesapeake Energy Scholarship in Fall 2015.

This scholarship was specifically awarded to students in the STEM fields of study: Statistics, Mathematics, Physics, and Chemistry.



**Xiaowei Hu** (MS 2015) was selected as the recipient of the Morrison Award for outstanding Masters graduate for 2015. Xiaowei is continuing her doctoral studies at OSU.

On April 8, 2016 The OSU Cheer Squad placed second in the NCA Collegiate National Championship Finals in Daytona. Congratulations to statistics students **Drake Stafford** (SR) and **Jeff Swensen** (MS) who are members of the Cheer Squad.

**Derek Wietelman** (BS 2016) completed a BS in Statistics with a minor in Math and a BA in Political Science with a minor in Environmental Economics. Derek was named the Outstanding Senior for the Department for 2016 and was also named one of the Top 10 Seniors for the College of Arts and Sciences. Derek is continuing his graduate studies in Environmental Policy and Natural Resource Management at Indiana University's School of Public and Environmental Affairs.



His statistics education is being put to use in his assistantship at the IU Center for Survey Research providing data analysis for researchers.



# Alumni Update

**Ole J. Forsberg** (Ph.D. 2014) joined Knox College of Galesburg, IL, as a tenure-track Assistant Professor of Mathematics – Statistics in August 2016. (The Department was fortunate to have Ole as a visiting assistant professor for two years. We wish him well in his new position!)

**Tamanna Hossein** (MS 2015) is working as a business analyst for Loan Depot in Irvine, CA. She loves her job and finds it challenging.



**Russell Andrew** (MS 1990) currently works at Alcon Labs in Texas.

**Jamie Tate** (BS 2015) was hired as a data analyst by Life Church in Edmond, OK.

**Vrinda Nair** (MS 2009) works as the Lead Mathematical Statistician for the U.S. Census Bureau in Washington DC.

**Joyce (Seeliger) Lambert** (BS 1979, staff 1997-98) is now the Business Intelligence Manager at Ditch Witch in Perry, OK. Joyce has been with the company since 2000.

**Desiree' McCullough** (PhD 2001) has been at The University of Tennessee at Martin for 15 years. In Summer 2016 she was named the Director of Institutional Research after serving as Interim Director. She continues teaching some statistics courses for the school.

**Sarah (Doughty) Markes** (BS 2009) and her husband, Jared, recently had a baby girl. Hannah arrived in early September. Congratulations, Sarah and Jared!!

**Ningning Wang** (PhD 2013) is an assistant professor at Jackson State University in Mississippi.



Walk Around is Friday, October 28. The parade and football game are Saturday, October 29. Let us know if you're coming to Stillwater!

**Gary Hatfield** (MS 1978, PhD 2011) was appointed as the Precision Agriculture Statistician at South Dakota State University in Spring 2016. Gary and Melita are enjoying life in Brookings, SD. They now have two granddaughters.

We love hearing from our alumni! Send your personal or professional updates to us at [statistics@okstate.edu](mailto:statistics@okstate.edu).

If you can help us locate other OSU Statistics alumni, we would appreciate it.



## **David L. Weeks**

David Weeks was born on June 24, 1930 in Boone, Iowa to Leo and Gretchen Weeks. He was the third of five children in the Weeks family. After graduating from Classen High School in Oklahoma City in 1948, David attended Oklahoma A & M College in Stillwater, OK. David's first statistics course was taught by Dr. Carl Marshall, and Bob Morrison was Dr. Marshall's lab instructor. David graduated from Oklahoma A & M College in 1952 with a bachelor's degree in Mathematics.

After graduation David served in the Army during the Korean conflict. Lt. Weeks left the Army in 1954. He returned to Oklahoma A & M and began working on his Masters degree in Statistics under the guidance of Dr. Frank Graybill. He completed both his Masters degree (1956) and doctorate degree (1959) with Dr. Graybill.

David was hired as an instructor in 1957 by the newly renamed, Oklahoma State University. Upon completing his doctorate degree he accepted a tenure-track position at OSU. In addition to his teaching duties at OSU, he worked as a statistical consultant for the Oklahoma Agricultural Experiment Station assisting faculty and graduate students with the design and data analysis of their research projects. David retired from OSU in 1994 after a 37 year career.



While in graduate school David met Shirley Vaden who became his wife in 1957. Their 58 year marriage was blessed with four children: Robert, Steven, Jennifer, and Derek, and seven grandchildren. After his retirement in 1994, he and Shirley continued to live near campus in the family home in Stillwater.

David died on December 17, 2015 after a long illness.

He was a great friend, colleague, mentor and a masterful teacher. His statistical insights benefited hundreds of researchers at OSU

## A Tribute to David Weeks

*On December 17, 2015, we lost a dear friend when David Weeks died. As a tribute to David, I asked some of our alumni to try to express the impact he had on their careers. - Mark Payton.*

As my thesis advisor, teacher, and friend, Dave taught me to think about data and how statistics can help us understand and learn about life – and to have fun along the way. I took this lesson with me and tried to live it. One small thing that stuck with me: One day in class Dave told us how he knew that he had "made it," financially, when he could buy a pair of binoculars and not have to think about how much it cost. So, after starting work at Sandia, and having a few paychecks in the bank, I bought a pair of binoculars.

### ***Robert Easterling, BS ('64), MS ('65), PhD ('67)***

I had the privilege of taking five graduate level statistics courses from Dr. Weeks beginning in the fall of 1977 through May 1979. I have often used the topics he taught me both in practice and in teaching at the university level. I especially remember how he taught topics on Design of Experiments. Rarely, if ever, did he use a model statement. Rather, a contextual description of the design and corresponding experimental unit(s) were taught with the associated analysis. This instructional approach requires significant preparation and deep understanding. I benefited from his treasure chest of experience and methodology for which I am very grateful.

### ***J. Marcus Jobe, MS ('79)***

David Weeks was a man who masked his brilliance with humility. I met David in 1987 as a beginning graduate student trying to find my way after two years in the Peace Corps. His common sense approach in his teaching appealed to me in deciphering the mysteries of statistics, not coming from a mathematical background. After my advisor left for another university, David graciously agreed to be my advisor although I'm sure he would have preferred not to. I was honored to have him hood me at graduation and stayed in touch with David and Shirley through the years. He was always interested in how I was doing and what advice I could give to students that would help them working in the field. I owe a lot to David and consider myself lucky to have known him.

### ***Russell Andrew, MS ('90)***

Even now I am having great difficulty writing these words ... reliving these memories that I didn't want to remember. David Weeks was my teacher, my mentor, in a strange kind of way my spiritual guide, a part of my family, and my rudder in life. But most of all he was my lifelong friend, and I miss him very, very much. I'm not sure how you capture the essence of someone who was bigger than life, but this is what I know. For me, there will never quite be anyone like David Weeks again. He was an enormous human being ... heart, soul, and mind. He wasn't without warts, foibles, or demons, but he was salt of the earth. Above all, he was a consummate statistician ... absolutely one of the best ... and, without a doubt none of us will ever be quite the same again.

### ***Tim Coburn, MS ('75), PhD ('80)***

I was fortunate to know David on many different levels. As a graduate student, I was lucky to have Dr. Weeks as an instructor. He was a masterful teacher. It wasn't until I became a practicing statistician that I appreciated what he knew. His insight in Experimental Design was absolutely uncanny. When I later joined the faculty, I was able to interact with David on a new level. He was so kind to take me under his wing and mentor me in my first few years as an assistant professor. He would come to my office and discuss the latest consulting problem that came across his desk. I wasn't smart enough to actually help him, however. He really only used me as a sounding board. When he needed real help, he would go to Ron McNew. We'll miss David very much.

### ***Mark Payton, MS ('88), PhD ('91)***

## Donate to the Department

Friends and Alumni who wish to make a financial gift to the Department of Statistics at OSU should go online to <http://www.osugiving.com/statistics> . Donors can choose from the following fund accounts:

### **Statistics Department Fund # 22-43500**

The Statistics Department Fund supports guest speaker activities.

### **P. Larry Claypool Undergraduate Statistics Scholarship # 22-52900**

The P. Larry Claypool Undergraduate Statistics Scholarship is awarded to an outstanding undergraduate student.

### **Carl Marshall Award # 22-41100**

The Carl Marshall Award is presented to the outstanding Ph.D. graduate.

### **Robert D. Morrison Award # 22-80500**

The Robert D. Morrison Award is presented to the outstanding M.S. graduate.

### **David L. Weeks Award # 22-32100**

The David L. Weeks Award supports an outstanding statistics graduate student in Experimental Design.

### **Retirement Gift Fund # 22-44900**

The Retirement Gift Fund provides gifts for statistics faculty upon retirement.

### **J. Leroy Folks Award # 22-56800**

The J. Leroy Folks Award honors distinguished alumni of OSU Department of Statistics.

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