



# Department of Statistics

Newsletter

Fall 2017



## Greetings from the Department Head

Hello My Friends and Fellow Alumni,

Thank you for reading our newsletter.

The State of Oklahoma has been struggling with budgetary issues for the past several years. Luckily, the Department and the College of Arts and Sciences have prepared well for this crisis, so we have weathered it well. We are fully staffed and our curriculum is thriving. We are offering online courses that complement our face-to-face sections.

My predecessor, Dr. Abe Ahmad, retired in December, 2016. He and his wife Magda are living in the Orlando, Florida area. We were sad to lose him, but are happy that he and Magda are finding retirement life relaxing. We have advertised for Abe's replacement on the faculty, and we hope to interview possible colleagues in the spring. Please alert any possible candidates and encourage them to apply.

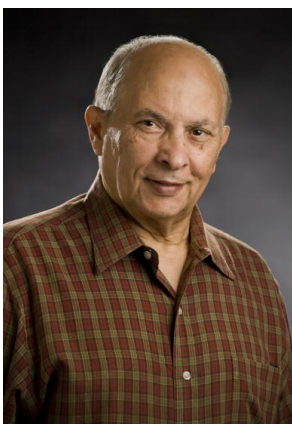
This fall we will be honoring Dr. Gaute Vik (Ph.D. 1984) as our Distinguished Alumni at the A&S Hall of Fame ceremony. Gaute has had a remarkable career and we are honored that he and his family will be joining us at the event. Gaute joins Drs. Leroy Folks and Robert Easterling on our list of Distinguished Alumni.

Some of the following information on the faculty may be duplicated in this newsletter, but I wanted to draw your attention to a couple of important items. First, we are very happy to have been able to support sabbatical leave for two of our faculty members for the 2016-2017 academic year. Dr. Lan Zhu was on leave for the Fall semester, and Dr. Carla Goad took sabbatical during the Spring. Dr. Josh Habiger was also on leave of absence for the academic year while visiting the Biostatistics Department at the University of Kansas Medical Center. All of these very valuable faculty members are back with us this academic year. Dr. Mindy McCann is currently serving as the Chair of University Faculty Council. This is keeping her very busy and she is representing the faculty, and our Department, very well.

If you are in the Stillwater area and would like to visit the Department, please let me know. We would love to see you. Just drop me a line at [mark.payton@okstate.edu](mailto:mark.payton@okstate.edu).

Best wishes,

Mark



## Dr. Ibrahim (Abe) Ahmad Retires

In December 2016 Dr. Ibrahim (Abe) Ahmad retired. Abe joined the department in 2008 and served as department head for five years. Prior to coming to OSU, Abe served on the faculty and as department head at University of Central Florida, Northern Illinois University, and Colgate University. Abe met Dr. Carl Marshall, the founder of our department in the 1960's, and Carl tried recruiting him at that time. He remembered OSU from that meeting. When he took the job at OSU he said that he may not have started his statistics career at OSU, but he had decided would finish it here. Abe has published a number of theoretical articles, worked in an editorial capacity for leading journals, and has advised many graduate students during his most successful career.

Abe and Magda are now in the Orlando, Florida area living near family. In last year's newsletter we stated that the details for a retirement reception were pending. Due to illness, we were not able to honor Abe as we had hoped. If you would like to send well wishes to Abe and Magda, you can email them at [iaa2326@icloud.com](mailto:iaa2326@icloud.com) or send them via US Mail to OSU Statistics Department, 301 MSCS, Stillwater, OK 74078-1056. We will make certain your messages are forwarded to Florida.

# Faculty & Staff Notes



**Josh Habiger** was promoted to Associate Professor and awarded tenure in 2016. He wishes to congratulate his first PhD student Dr. David Watts on a well-received dissertation. Some of his work on explor-

atory data analysis with heterogeneous data has been published and presented locally and internationally, including colloquiums at Iowa State University and Kansas State University and at the International Chinese Statistical Association's Conference on Big Data in Vancouver.

Habiger's son Max turned 2 in April. Max really enjoys feeding the fish at Theta pond. Josh and his wife Kate are excited to celebrate their 10 year anniversary this year!

Josh took a one year leave of absence last year and worked at the University of Kansas Medical School in Kansas City. We're glad he's back in Stillwater!!



**Mindy McCann** is currently serving as Faculty Council Chair for the university in addition to serving as graduate coordinator. She also attended the biennial conference on Multiple Comparison Procedures in California and

JSM in Baltimore this summer. She continues to publish and work with students on a variety of research projects.

Her oldest daughter, Megan, is currently in her second year of the actuarial degree program at the University of Nebraska. Mindy has not yet learned to say "Go Huskers!", but she does have a "University of Nebraska Mom" t-shirt. Megan is in the College of Business Honors Academy program and has been quite successful in her first year. Her youngest daughter, Cassidy, is a junior at Stillwater High School, and keeps her mother on her toes! She is a straight A student with plenty to say! Since she is a junior, Mindy will soon be an empty nester, and is anticipating this, sometimes with dread and sometimes with anticipation!



**Ye Liang** teaches a variety of topics in statistics for graduate students, including Bayesian analysis, time series and multivariate statistics. He actively collaborates with researchers from ecological and environmental sciences,

social sciences and engineering, both inside and outside of the university. His recent focuses include Bayesian spatial models for Oklahoma's Mesonet environmental data and Bayesian graphical and functional models for big electronic health records from Center for Health Systems Innovation. He publishes both statistical and collaborative articles on those problems. Two M.S. students graduated under his supervision last year, and he is advising four graduate students at this point. In December, daughter Chloe became a big sister when Charles was born. Ye enjoys raising his family in Stillwater.

Visiting Assistant Professors on staff this year include, **Nishantha (Sam) Samarakoon, Tamer Elbayoumi, Nick Kaukis, and Shengwu Shang.**

**Carla Goad** took a sabbatical in the Spring 2017 semester. She stayed in town for most of the semester — busy writing.

Big changes in the family for Carla and Dave. Andrew completed his Masters' in Architecture at Kansas State University in May and took a job in the Kansas City area. Oldest son Michael got married in July. She traveled with Elizabeth to Paris in late December. The Stillwater High School Marching Band marched in the New Year's Day Parade on the Champs Elysees. Elizabeth is now a sophomore in high school.



**Adam Molnar** is starting his third year as an assistant professor at OSU. He is looking forward to expanding the department's online course offerings with Regression Analysis and Stat 2013 Elementary Statistics this fall. He is also continuing to lead the capstone course for senior undergraduates and the Honors Statistics Add-On. The unusual format of the add-on has led to presentations for other educators. Over the summer, he presented a summary of the Fall 2016 seminar at the IASE conference in Rabat, Morocco (with shoreline shown in the background of the above picture) Additionally, he is serving as editor of the conference's proceedings.

**Leroy Folks (faculty 1961—1998)** will celebrate his 82nd birthday on the *real* Columbus Day. He adds, "Of course, you may not know that Columbus had to stay aboard his ship for a few days so that he could land on a Monday." Leroy is still active in the American Legion and with his family. His family keeps growing---23 in all: children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren.

**Jeanne Parks** and **Brenda Kindshi** have been our front office staff for nearly three years now. Thanks, ladies, for proofreading this newsletter.

Retired staffer **Fran Mihura** turned 80 in March of this year. Fran resides in Stillwater.

**Renee' Flasch**, staff from 2008—2014, is currently on staff at OSU Fish and Wildlife Research Unit. She stays very active with Zion Lutheran Church in Stillwater.

# Faculty & Staff Notes

## What is a Sabbatical?

During the 2016—2017 academic year two faculty members were each on a one-semester sabbatical leave, and a third member was on a leave of absence. Here's a little information about those two types of leave.

The purpose of a sabbatical leave is for the faculty member to pursue scholarly research, writing, and advanced study. This may involve travel domestically or internationally or limited travel.

There are qualifications that a faculty member must meet in order to be eligible for sabbatical leave, such as tenure and time since last sabbatical leave. A tenured faculty member is eligible for sabbatical leave once every six years. For the Statistics Department, eligible faculty members submit the application to the College of Arts and Sciences, and the application is reviewed by a panel of other faculty, Dean, and the Provost. The application can be either approved or denied.

Sabbatical leave can be for one or two semesters or for one year (three semesters). While on sabbatical leave, a faculty member draws a salary from OSU. For a one semester leave, the rate is at least 85% of salary, and lower percentages for the longer periods of leave. Faculty members may supplement their income during this time, but there are University guidelines for qualifying income sources.

A faculty member who has been granted a sabbatical leave has an obligation to return to OSU for at least one year after the completion of the sabbatical leave. Additionally, the faculty member must submit a report of the accomplishments and/or benefits of the sabbatical leave.

Another leave option is a leave of absence. Qualifying faculty members may take up to one year of leave of absence without salary. The reason for the leave can be either personal or professional. At the end of the leave of absence, the faculty member is not obligated to return to OSU.

Qualifications and policy for sabbatical leave and leave of absence can differ from institution to institution. For example, Yimin Zhang is currently on a junior faculty sabbatical leave granted to qualifying, untenured faculty at Villanova. Sayed Mostafa is working in the US as a visiting assistant professor while on leave from the University of Cairo. See the Alumni Update for both Yimin and Sayed.

Regarding her own sabbatical leave, Carla Goad says, "It was valuable time to pursue some academic writing interests that have been difficult to work on while engaging in my teaching and consulting duties. It was time well spent. How soon before I can do it again?!"

Lan Zhu's sabbatical leave coincided with her husband's. Her husband, Hongbo Yu, is an Associate Professor of Geography. She says, "We finally found some time to travel and visit other institutions, build new professional relationships, sit with collaborators and work side by side. It was an uplifting experience that one should have for the academic career growth and enhancement."



**Lan Zhu** (center in above photo) was on sabbatical leave in the fall of 2016. She took this opportunity to expand her research interests and conducted international collaborative research with experts in the school of public health, Fudan University, a top ranked university in China.

The project on which Dr. Zhu worked with her collaborators aims to model the relationship between water level and the density of Schistosoma transmitting Oncomelania snails, to identify factors that affect the distribution of snails in the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze river (the largest endemic areas of schistosomiasis in China), and to study the impact of flooding time on the occurrence of Oncomelania snails. The findings of this project will provide evidence for a more effective snail control strategy. As *Oncomelania snail* is the sole intermediate host of *Schistosoma japonicum* (*S. japonicum*), its change in distribution and density influences the endemic of *S. japonica*. Two manuscripts from this project are currently under review.



OSU Homecoming 2017 is October 9-14. Let us know if you are in town for Walk Around on the 13th, the parade and game on the 14th, or any of the other events. Stop by for a visit!!



# Alumni Update



**Jeremy Beach (BS 2009)** and his wife Becca had a baby girl, Hadley, in June 2017. Jeremy works as a contract analyst for Targa Resources in Tulsa (in the oil and gas industry). In the above photo, Jeremy and Hadley cheer for the Pokes.

**Joel Dowdy (MS 2000)** has been living in the Dallas/Fort Worth area since graduating. He and his wife, Jamie Dowdy, have been married since 2001. They have two boys, Grayson (11) and Morgan (8), and a beagle names Lucy (4). Joel worked for Blockbuster Video Corporate upon graduation. Currently he is working for Hotels.com and has been there 11 years. He worked on the Analytics team for several years, and last year moved to the Product team where they coordinate with marketing analysts and data engineers.

Below: Joel and his family on their Mt. Rushmore and Yellowstone vacation, 2017.



**Jennifer Burnes (MS 1998)** completed her PhD in Educational Psychology, Special Education in 2015 at OU. She currently works for OKCPS as a Program Evaluator in the office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation. In her spare time, Jennifer likes to travel and is quite an accomplished photographer.

**Leila Zelnick (MS 2009)** received her PhD in Biostatistics from the University of Washington in 2015. She joined the research faculty in the Department of Medicine (Nephrology) at UW, working as an investigator at the Kidney Research Institute (she had worked as a research assistant during graduate school).

In 2014 Leila married Greg Crowther. She gave birth to their son Sam in January 2017.



**Zhenhua Sang (MS 2014)** lives in Indiana. He works from home for Qualex Consulting services, and his wife, Hong, is on the computer science faculty at Indiana University at Kokomo. They have two children, Grace (3) and Daniel (1).

**Julie Sawyer (MS 1994, PhD 1996)** is in her 17th year at Northeastern State University in Tahlequah,



OK. She has been the Executive Director of Institutional Effectiveness for the past two years following five years as the Registrar. Her son, Luke, is a funeral director in Seilling, OK, and is getting married in October. Stepson, Dax, is the Assistant Manager at the Clinton Residency office of ODOT. Dax's daughters, Dasha and Daci, are students at SWOSU. She reports that her husband, Keith, has been retired for several years and is loving every minute of it.

**Taejoo Chae (BS 2011, MS 2013)** passed Actuarial exam FM recently. Taejoo works as a financial analyst at LG Electronics USA in Illinois. Taejoo's brother YoungJun is one of our current graduate students. Their father was one of Bill Warde's doctoral students in the 1980's.

**Chris Cohea (MS 2007)** works for Health Services Advisory Group (HSAG) in Phoenix, Arizona as Director of Research and Analysis, supervising and conducting research with multiple analysts working on a national survey initiative for the federal government. Chris has worked at HSAG for 10 years and moved back to Edmond, Oklahoma a few years ago to be near family. He has a small office in Edmond, but travels to Phoenix regularly. He and his wife, Erin, have two kids: Kit (3) and Cora (1).

**Yimin Zhang (PhD 2014)** has completed her third year (and the third year review) at Villanova University as an assistant professor and is on junior sabbatical for the fall semester. After a six-year courtship Yimin got married this April to Rohit Singh. They met at OSU while both were second-year graduate students. She has many fond memories of OSU and Stillwater. She enjoys the opportunity to see other OSU faculty and alumni at JSM.

**Zhesi Chen (BS 2008, MS 2012)** works in Economics Research and Analysis Department for Oklahoma Employment Security Commission for almost 5 years now. She performs economic projections for Oklahoma. She and her family live in Edmond.

Her son, Harrison, was born in 2015, and unfortunately he has a really rare genetic disorder-Hurler Syndrome. He has been battling with the effects of a bone marrow transplant since last year. It has been a long, long journey for them. She has a Facebook page for him if you are interested in reading his story. <https://www.facebook.com/harrisonhurlersyndrome/>

Please keep Harrison, Zhesi and her husband in your prayers.

# Alumni Update

**Lucas Shannon (BS 2013)** has been working at American Fidelity in Oklahoma City as an actuary since he graduated in December 2013. Recently he achieved his Associate of the Society of Actuaries (ASA) is now a certified actuary. He has begun working on his next certification in hopes of one day becoming an FSA. Lucas been married to his wife Emilie for a little over two years now, and they just moved into a house in Edmond Oklahoma. Life has been fast paced and very busy but everything is going well overall.

**Sayed Mostafa (MS 2013, PhD 2016)** is in his second year Visiting Assistant Professor in the Statistics department at Indiana University-Bloomington.

Over the last summer, he was able to visit Egypt and was promoted to Assistant Professor in the Statistics Department of the School of Economics & Political Sciences at Cairo University. He is currently on a leave of absence from Cairo U.

Sayed and his wife, Hoda, have a daughter, Jannah, and a son due to arrive in November. Hoda and Jannah like the life in Bloomington as it's quite similar to the life in Stillwater.

**Desireé McCullough (PhD 2001)** and her husband, Jeff, have been at the University of Tennessee at Martin for 16 years. She has been promoted to Professor and currently is the Director of Institutional Research. She still gets to teach some statistics courses in her busy schedule. Desireé shared her personal victory — 10 years since the completion of cancer treatment; she is in remission. We are all delighted to hear that great news.

**Russell Andrew (MS 1990)** is currently a Principal Statistician at Alcon Laboratories in Fort Worth, TX. He has been at Alcon for 20 years. He and his wife Penney are celebrating 18 years of marriage. **Krista Crenshaw (MS 1997)** and **Kimberly (Hale) Martens (MS 2002)** work with Russell.

**Abby Hebenstreit (BS 2016)** is working on her Masters in Market Research at Southern Illinois University of Edwardsville. She recently held an internship with Kynetec, an animal health research company.

**Jamie Tate (BS 2015)** is now a math teacher at Yukon High School. He began as a substitute teacher for several school districts in the Oklahoma City area and was eventually hired as a full-time teacher by Yukon Public Schools. Jamie was honored as the Rookie Teacher of the Year by the Yukon Public School district. Jamie is teaching AP Statistics and is even including some R programming. Congratulations on your success, Jamie! Read more about Jamie's story at <http://newsok.com/article/5564041>. Just days after the above news story was published, Jamie was seen shepherding about 50 Yukon High School students on an OSU campus visit.

**Krista Crenshaw (MS 1997)** is currently working for Novartis as a manager within Regulatory Writing and Submissions (RWS). She spent nearly 15 years working for Alcon Biostatistics (devices for a short period of time, but the bulk of that time working on topical anti-infective products for the eye and ear). As a statistician for Alcon, she designed and analyzed clinical trials and worked on submissions primarily for Alcon's anti-infective products. Most recently within Biostatistics, she was the Therapeutic Area Lead Statistician for the entire anti-infective portfolio. Two years ago, she joined the RWS group at Alcon, which was later moved to Alcon's parent company, Novartis (January, 2017). She is the RWS Head for Vision Care Devices and manages all of the regulatory writing for the contact lens and lens care products within Alcon.

Bruce and Krista have been married for just over 21 years. They have 2 living children. Karis is 14 and a freshman in high school; Kale is 11 and a 6<sup>th</sup> grader. They live in Burleson, TX.

**Tamara (Thompson) Elrod (BS 2011)** and **Sebastian Paden (BS 2011)** have both worked for Community Care in Tulsa since their graduation from OSU.

**Sarah Mattson (MS 2010)** and her husband Joel have two children, a son, Alexander (5) and daughter Rowan (21 months). Sarah works for Community Care in Tulsa (with Tamara and Sebastian) as a Senior Health Data Analyst.



**Amy Wagler (MS 2003, PhD 2007)** is Associate Chair of Department of Mathematical Sciences and Provost's Faculty Fellow-in-Residence for Civic Engagement at the

University of Texas at El Paso. She and Ron have two children, Olive (6th grade) and Elias (2nd grade).

**Kathryn "Kaity" White (MS 2017)** has taken a job with the Oklahoma State Department of Education in OKC.

**Ryan Lusk (BS 2011, MS 2014)** married **Ana Tehrani** (former MS student, and now Ana Lusk) in 2015. Ana started with ORS Nasco/Essendant, a wholesale company of industrial supplies, in 2014 as an intern and was then hired as a Reporting Analyst shortly after. She works to provide business insights to the company, and provide reliable information on a constant basis. Ryan currently works as a Manager of Business Analytics at QuikTrip in Tulsa, OK. He manages the Data Scientists at QT. Together, they work to build systems that inform and automate decision making. In November of 2016 Ana and Ryan welcomed son, David Lusk, to their family.



Ana, Ryan and David on a trip to Florence, Italy, 2017.

**Martha Gipson (BS 2015)** completed her Master's Degree in Statistics at Texas A & M in May 2017.

**Derek Wietelman (BS 2016)** interned with Resources of the Future, an environmental economics think tank in Washington, DC during summer 2017.



We continue to renovate our office space in the Math Sciences Building, but this process is expensive and thus, very, very slow. The 50 year old building is starting to show its age. But we are making progress, one project at a time.

The Statistical Learning and Instructional Center (SLIC) has been given a small facelift. The room was rewired to remove the awkward electrical poles in the center of the room. We also purchased new tables and chairs and renovated "The Tunnel" (long, narrow storage room on the north side of the third floor) to provide workspace for the undergraduates who work in SLIC.

The Fall Welcome Lunch was held in SLIC, and the annual outdoor picnic was moved to SLIC due to rainy weather.

Below: Students, faculty and staff gather for Hideaway pizza at the Fall Welcome Lunch. It's always a good day for Hideaway pizza!!

SLIC Photo credits: Jeanne Parks



"I am happy to say that OSU greatly prepared me for my career as I have continued to utilize math, statistics, and programming in several of my day to day functions. "

Lucas Shannon  
BS 2013

**Thank you, alumni, for your terrific response to the appeal for updates. Send your updates to [carla.goad@okstate.edu](mailto:carla.goad@okstate.edu) or to one of the faculty members any time. We love hearing from you!**

**Other faculty addresses are found at: <http://statistics.okstate.edu/faculty>**

# Student News

The American Statistical Association sponsored Prediction 2016. Both high school and college undergraduate students were to use statistical methods to predict the outcome of the 2016 Presidential election. Lexi Poyner, a student in Adam Molnar's STAT 4910 course, won the college division! See <http://magazine.amstat.org/blog/2017/02/01/high-school-college-sophomores-provide-the-most-accurate-predictions-of-u-s-presidential-election-results/> for details. Congratulations, Lexi!!



**Nick Kaukis** received the Carl Marshall Award for Outstanding Doctoral Graduate in 2016. He finished his PhD in Fall 2016. He has stayed on board with us as a Visiting Assistant Professor.

**Nathan Pezant** received the Morrison Award for Outstanding Masters Graduate in 2016. Nathan accepted a data analyst position with Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation.



Dean Bret Danilowicz congratulates Outstanding Senior Ali Charlson at the CAS Awards banquet in Spring 2017.

**Ali Charlson** (Statistics Outstanding Senior 2017) spent the summer at the Iowa Summer Institute for Biostatistics (ISIB) at the University of Iowa. She is featured in a short video produced by ISIB. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ifU0QgJ4F4M>. Ali will graduate this December.



In November of 2016, the Oklahoma Chapter of the American Statistical Association (OCASA) held a student poster conference at the University of Central Oklahoma. This event was funded by the ASA and allowed the Chapter to provide small honoraria for the students participating. There were representatives from OSU, UCO and OU Biomedical Statistics.

In April of 2017, OCASA sponsored a traveling short course from the ASA Council of Chapters. Dr. Yonggang Yao presented "Quantile Regression in Practice." The course was held at OU Health Sciences Center, and was partially sponsored by OU Department of Biostatistics.

## Gaute Vik named Outstanding Alumnus for Statistics Department

Gaute Vik, PhD (1984) is the 2017 Outstanding Alumnus for the Statistics Department and has also been named to the College of Arts and Sciences Hall of Fame. This CAS honor recognizes alumni who demonstrate excellence and leadership in their careers. In 1986 Dr. Vik was employed in the international telecom industry. Over the years he has negotiated and closed record large contracts in the industry. The company reorganized in 2008, and he currently serves as the Executive Chairman.

Dr. Vik is avid outdoorsman and enjoys travelling .

Dr. Vik was inducted to the Hall of Fame on September 22, 2017 along with Tom Daxon and Dr. Anita Hill.



Read more about Dr. Gaute Vik and all of the honorees at <http://ashonors.okstate.edu/alumni-awards/>

Pictured left: Mark Payton and Gaute Vik at the 2017 Hall of Fame Ceremony.

## Donate to the Department

The Department is able to make student awards annually based on the generosity of our alumni and other donors. We appreciate your support.

Friends and Alumni who wish to make a financial gift to the Department of Statistics at OSU should go online to <http://statistics.okstate.edu/donate> . Donors can choose from several funds. Among them are 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.

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

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

## Contact Us

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