From the Chair
This year was framed by two bookend events—our Latent Variables 2016 Conference in October and the festivities surrounding “Donaroo”—Don Edwards’ retirement celebration in April.

The Latent Variables 2016 Conference attracted just over 100 registrants and received financial support through a National Science Foundation (NSF) Conference Grant and USC’s Vice President for Research, as well as endorsements from the National Institute of Statistical Sciences (NISS)/Statistical and Mathematical Sciences Institute (SAMSI) and the American Statistical Association (ASA). Everything went off without a hitch, and I really appreciated the work of our faculty who prepared all our invited sessions. The conference was held in honor of Jayaram Sethuraman, and Edsel Peña gave a heartfelt speech at the banquet in Sethu’s honor.

Plans for Don’s retirement event snowballed into an unofficial department reunion. In addition to a “final colloquium” (such an ominous term) and reception, Don and Sharon hosted a reception at their home and a large group attended a Columbia Fireflies baseball game. A two-day multi-event send-off was a fitting tribute to Don’s 36-year career with USC and the relationships he built and maintained with colleagues and former students.

The College of Arts and Sciences faced a budget crisis this year after years of overspending. As a result, our department did not get the green light to recruit faculty this year, though we are optimistic about hiring at least one tenure-track faculty and an additional instructor next year. We had to limit spending within the department this year after the college cut department budgets, but having been through the experience once, we can plan ahead to restore our most painful cuts.

Despite not hiring this year, the department is still large by historical measure. We have 19 full-time faculty after Don’s retirement, with 13 tenured/tenure-track faculty and six instructors. We made room for some of our new instructors with renovation of offices in LeConte 215 and LeConte 217. We had a couple faculty receive well-deserved honors: Dr. Leslie Hendrix earning the Garnet Apple Award from the Provost and Dr. Maureen Petkewich earning the college’s Undergraduate Teaching Award for Non-tenure Track Faculty. It was great to see them recognized after years of outstanding contributions to the department, college and university.

By the end of the academic year, we will have seen 11 students earn their doctoral degrees! And our undergraduate program has seen an unprecedented surge in interest, with over 75 students currently enrolled in the program. I will let our Undergraduate and Graduate Directors share the details about this unprecedented growth in size and productivity.

The upcoming year lacks the marquee events of this past year, but we do look forward to welcoming new students and seeing the ongoing success of our current students.
Leslie Hendrix

We are certainly sorry to see Dr. Leslie Hendrix depart, as she begins an appointment as Clinical Assistant Professor in the Department of Management Sciences in the Darla Moore School of Business here at USC. Leslie started as a graduate student in our department in 2005, was hired as an Instructor in 2009 and earned her PhD as a full-time working mother in 2011 under Brian Habing’s supervision. She immediately made her mark as a teacher, and she went on to win department and university awards for her instruction, including the John Gardner Inspirational Faculty Award in 2012 and the Garnet Apple Award this year. She is best known for her superb instruction in STAT 110: Introduction to Statistical Reasoning, and touched more students directly through her teaching during her tenure than any other faculty member in our department. She received recognition multiple times each year from campus organizations for her teaching support, and was constantly called upon by students for recommendation letters, lunches, and interviews through University 101: The Student and the University.

Leslie’s expertise covered multiple instructional areas including learning management systems, REEF/iClicker and other wireless technology, Scantron, online instruction and testing, and academic integrity. She was often a “first adopter” of classroom technology and worked tenaciously to ensure it was effective. Because of her wide-ranging expertise, she was approached by numerous university offices for service and instruction roles, including the Student Success Center, Office of the Provost, University Technical Services (UTS), USC’s system-wide campuses and Center for Teaching Excellence. Leslie became more and more active in the statistical pedagogy community and we were really looking forward to seeing what she would do next.

Lastly, and we know this is being selfish, but we sure will miss our Welcome Back picnics hosted by Leslie and her husband Mark and their beautiful Lake Murray home. They set a standard for hospitality that will never be matched.
Don Edwards Retires after 36 Years of Service

When the longest-serving member in the history of your department retires, they deserve a big send-off. And so, after 36 years with the department, we feted Don Edwards over two days with a farewell colloquium, a reception, a drop-in arranged by his wife, Sharon, and a group visit to a Columbia Fireflies baseball game. Thanks to social media, it became apparent that this would also serve as an impromptu department reunion, and it was great to see so many alumni come to bid Don farewell.

At the farewell colloquium, department founder Joe Padgett presented remarks on the early part of Don’s career, then three of Don’s former students from the 80’s (Andy Bowden), 90’s (Beth Walters), and 00’s (Melanie Autin) shared more personal insights. Department Chair John Grego reviewed Don’s mentoring and the strong relationships he maintains with department alumni—he advised more students than any other faculty member—against a backdrop of student tributes.

Don served in every important department service role. He developed strong research collaborations while serving as Statistics Lab Director, and created and oversaw the distributed learning program in our department. He worked with John Spurrier, Lori Thombs and Maureen Petkewich to develop our STAT 201: Elementary Statistics lecture and lab format, which has provided assistantship opportunities to dozens of graduate students over the years and helped our graduate program grow. As Department Chair, Don rebuilt a department faced with attrition and retirement. He started our Palmetto Lecturer series and hosted the Current Trends in Nonparametric Statistics Conference in 2007, organized our 25th Anniversary Conference in 2010, and co-hosted the Southern Region Conference on Statistics (SRCOS) Summer Research Conference in 2011.

Don was active in the SRCOS over the last decade, serving as an officer and writing National Science Foundation (NSF) grants for student travel; he was awarded the Paul Minton Service Award in 2015 in recognition of his efforts on behalf of SRCOS.

Professionally, Don is best known for his many contributions to research on multiple comparisons. His research was supported by National Institutes of Health (NIH) grants and acknowledged by an invitation to serve as a Journal of the American Statistical Association (JASA) Associate Editor and by his selection as a Fellow of the American Statistical Association (ASA) in 1997. In recent years, his work on medicare fraud investigations has led to keynote invitations at conferences, demand as an expert witness in federal trials, and USC’s Vice President of Research Breakthrough Leadership in Research Award.

Afterward Don’s colloquium, we met in the department lounge for a reception, organized by Maureen Petkewich, Kathryn Backus, and Geeia Habing. Don was presented with the traditional rocking chair and a wind chime for his and Sharon’s Tybee Island home in Georgia.

Don had prepared cue card-style “emergency signs” in case he could not get through his comments, and pretty quickly handed them over to Marisa Garcia-Quintana to read instead. We will let Don have the last word, excerpted from his remarks: “I am officially overwhelmed. I could not have had better colleagues; I could not have had better coworkers; I could not have had better students. I have been SO lucky to have spent my life helping young people grow. I owe a great deal to many people in this room and look how far we’ve come together. Thank you all so much for being here.”
Faculty and Staff News

Part of the USC Statistics cheering section at the Columbia Fireflies ballgame as part of Don Edwards’ retirement celebration. We managed to get Don’s name up in lights during the game! Top Row: Thomas Backus, Kathryn Dobereiner, Scott Dobereiner, Don Edwards, Yen-Yi Ho, and Karl Gregory. Bottom: Madeline Petkewich, Elizabeth Petkewich, Beth Walters, Tom Labone, and Regina York.

Don Edwards and Maureen Petkewich at the drop-in hosted by Don and his wife Sharon as part of his retirement celebration.
The department sponsored a research conference, Latent Variables 2016, which was held in honor of Professor Jayaram Sethuraman in order to encourage exchange of research ideas in areas that are USC Statistics Department strengths. As such, our department members organized invited sessions in factor models (Yanyuan Ma); diagnostic screening (Tim Hanson); objective Bayes analysis (Iris Lin); model-based clustering (David Hitchcock); interval censoring (Lianming Wang); frailty models (Edsel Peña); large sample testing (John Grego); medical testing (Don Edwards); model misspecification (Shan Huang); group testing (Dewei Wang); measurement error (Josh Tebbs); and item response theory (Brian Habing). We also invited plenary speakers David Blei (Columbia), Yanyuan Ma (Penn State), Sonia Petrone (Universita' Bocconi), and Xuming He (Michigan).

Our department has connections to Professor Sethuraman through Jim Lynch, one of "Sethu's" doctoral students, and Sethu served here for a year as visiting faculty. Professor Sethuraman's ground-breaking work is often "rediscovered" and used as the basis for emerging research in several areas related to latent variables, including Dirichlet processes, convergence of Markov chains, and partition-based prior distributions.

We had just over 100 registrants for the meeting, which was our benchmark for success. About the only area in which we fell short was the poster session; in spite of a National Science Foundation (NSF) travel grant, participation was weak. This was our first time hosting a major event in the new Alumni Center—its easy access to the Vista in downtown Columbia was a real selling point for attendees.

Our featured event was the banquet held in honor of Sethu. Former department member Bob Taylor shared a personal and professional biography of Sethu, and Edsel Peña delivered a heartfelt tribute, focusing on what it was like to be a student in Sethu’s class (Hint: it was hard). Sethu himself had given a talk earlier in the day discussing the early history of the “stick-breaking” representation (a term he doesn’t favor) of the Dirichlet process.

David Hitchcock and Yanyuan Ma helped organize the conference. The NSF and USC’s Vice President for Research provided financial support; publicity and sponsorship for the conference were provided through the National Institute of Statistical Sciences (NISS), American Statistical Association (ASA), and Don Edwards’ Southern Regional Council on Statistics (SRCOS) network.

Sixty of over 100 participants in Latent Variables 2016 gather on the steps of USC’s Alumni Center, the conference site. Conference honoree Jayaram Sethuraman stands at the center of the front row.
Faculty and Staff News

Paramita Chakraborty, Associate Professor, continued her research collaborations with Jim Lynch, John Grego and Chong Ma, as well as USC’s Interdisciplinary Mathematics Institute (IMI) faculty.

Kathryn Dobereiner, our Business Manager, has now been with the Department of Statistics for a little over two years and has now been with the University for 10 years. The time has flown! Much has happened in Kathryn's life since the last newsletter. Last November, she completed a full marathon in Savannah, Georgia. This was a personal goal that she was thrilled to have accomplished. Most importantly, Kathryn and Scott Dobereiner were married in March 2017!

Kathryn has also been busy working on the many necessary certifications needed in her role as Business Manager. She has completed all necessary supervisory training and will begin Gamecock Research Administrators Network Training (GRANT) certification this fall. This should help with faculty that need assistance with their grant budget proposals and maintenance of their grant funds.

Kathryn’s oldest son, Dustin, is now 21 years old and her youngest son, Thomas, is 16 and this fall he will be starting his junior year of high school.

Don Edwards, Distinguished Professor Emeritus. After 36 happy years as a Statistics Department faculty member at USC, I retired on June 30. I have been so lucky to have spent my career teaching the subject I love to bright and enthusiastic young people! I was absolutely overwhelmed by the department’s celebration last April and cannot thank everyone enough for that memory. Shown in the photo is the gorgeous wind chime that the department gave Sharon and me, gracing the front entrance of our new home in Tybee Island, Georgia. Come visit if you’re in the Savannah area—we have a guest room, and we’re an easy walk to the beach. My personal email address is agreewebs@yahoo.com, but I will also continue to read my edwards@stat.sc.edu address for years to come.

Life goes on, though. I will continue to work as a Statistician on a part-time basis for the foreseeable future—teaching an occasional course via distance delivery (e.g. STAT 750: Response Surface Methodology this summer); working on models for subjective-judgment diagnoses with colleagues Iris Lin (USC) and Kerrie Nelson (Boston University); and expanding my work using sampling to fight healthcare fraud with colleagues and friends at Palmetto GBA and the United States Department of Justice.

John Grego, Professor and Department Chair, started out this year with recovery from open heart surgery—a special thanks to all who sent their thoughts during his recovery. He found himself confronting a busier-than-usual fall once he got back to the office. In addition to organizing the Latent Variables 2016 Conference, he taught an overload course—his biannual Honors College service course on Congaree National Park. He also co-chaired the search for USC’s new Chief Information Officer, which ended on a very successful note.

In the spring, John served as acting Graduate Director. Believe it or not, he had not served in that position before and it was a good learning experience. As chair of USC’s Information Technology committee, John also co-organized our second Annual Symposium on Research Computing Infrastructure the week after Don’s exciting retirement festivities.
Brian Habing, Associate Professor, continues his research in item response theory. He enjoyed his first year off from being Undergraduate Director, including a sabbatical in the spring. Next year he will try to fill Don Edward’s shoes as Director of our Distance Education programs in applied statistics and will continue as the Chair of the Curriculum Committee for the College of Arts and Sciences. Highlights of the year included Maureen Petkewich and Han Kil Lee graduating in the fall of 2016 as his thirteenth and fourteenth PhD advisees; current student Xinchu Zhao presenting excellent work at both the Psychometric Society and National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME) Annual Meetings; and co-leading a training session with former PhD student Jessalyn Smith. Kevin (now 7½) is getting ready for third grade and is growing far too quickly!

John also greatly enjoyed weekly research meetings with Jim Lynch, Paramita Chakraborty, and Chong Ma; working on simultaneous inference; and continues to work with Yanlei Peng on her thesis proposal. David Hitchcock enlisted Songqiao Huang to provide some help with our flood stage modeling project as part of our SC-FLOODS grant. John and Iris Lin again collaborated with John Rose and Gabriel Terejanu from the Department of Computer Science and Engineering (CSCE) on a National Science Foundation (NSF) Research Training grant, though they have not yet received word on funding. They also worked with USC’s CSCE Department on a joint minor in data science, which was approved for this upcoming fall.

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The 2016-2017 academic year was the first here at USC for Karl Gregory, Assistant Professor, and he has enjoyed getting to know his new colleagues and the students in the Statistics Department. He taught honors sections of STAT 515: Statistical Methods I during both semesters, which he enjoyed, and he is now teaching STAT 511: Probability and loving it. This past summer was eventful for his family, which grew to a size of four when his second daughter, Lois Carola Gregory, was born on July 5. In June, before Lois was born, Karl brought his family to Jekyll Island, Georgia so that he could attend the 2017 Southern Regional Council on Statistics (SRCOS) Summer Research Conference. It was a fun time seeing old colleagues as well as meeting new people from our community of statisticians in the South. Karl was pleased to see many of our own graduate students there. In May he received the very encouraging news that a paper by himself and two colleagues had been accepted for publication in the Annals of Statistics: “A smooth block bootstrap for quantile regression in time series.” In April his bike was stolen on campus (never forget to lock up!). In March Karl and his wife bought a house in Rosewood, from which his bicycle commute is much more pleasant than before (by now he has replaced the stolen bike). In December of 2016, at the end of Karl’s first semester at USC, he traveled to Sevilla, Spain to attend the Computational and Methodological Statistics (CM) Statistics 2017 Conference, where he made a presentation about bootstrapping in high-dimensional linear models. Many thanks to the department for a good first year!

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Geeia Habing, Student Services Program Coordinator, has enjoyed her first year at USC, and her tenth year on the University campus, which includes her time at the University Bookstore. She has been busy learning the ropes and offering a helping hand to our students, faculty, and staff. Geeia has been dedicating her time to assisting with course registration; planning for colloquia; creating flyers, posters, newsletters, etc. She also been helping Brian and Kevin Habing with Cub Scout meetings and campouts; learning how paint with colored pencils; and trying her hand at gardening.
Tim Hanson, Professor, used his sabbatical during the fall 2016 semester to work on, finish, and submit assorted long-lost and lingering papers. One of these coauthored with his former PhD student Haiming Zhou (Northern Illinois University) has been accepted to the *Journal of the American Statistical Association* (JASA), another with former PhD student Li Li (University of New Mexico) is being revised for JASA; both papers fit survival models to interval-censored data exhibiting complex dependence. Tim also had eight papers published or accepted with former PhD students Junshu Bao (Duquesne University), Will Cipolli (Colgate University), and Yuhui Chen (University of Alabama). On a related note, Tim was delighted to start working with adept and energetic PhD students Zichen Ma and Penny Wang this year. In non-statistical news, Tim’s band Gas Money played several bar gigs, a corporate event, and a benefit over the last year. My wife Aubree continues to fervently knit and work as a nurse at Providence Health here in Columbia; my son Ben and my daughter Charlotte practice violin, swim, and play with their tablets every spare moment they are allowed.

David Hitchcock, Associate Professor and Undergraduate Director, is finishing his 13th year on the Statistics Department faculty. This year, as Undergraduate Director, he has been overseeing our Bachelor’s program which has grown to have over 70 undergraduate students who are statistics majors. David has continued to work with several PhD students, including Songqiao Huang, who is defending her dissertation in summer 2017 on automated Bayesian fitting procedures for large sets of functional data. He is also advising Chong Ma, on classification of functional data in forensics; Yawei Liang, on clustering of mixed data; and Haigang Liu, on spatio-temporal modeling of flood and rainfall data. He has continued to collaborate with a USC research group on analyzing survey data for diet and nutrition of schoolchildren, and has also developed some collaborations with researchers in the Departments of Civil engineering and Geography. In the 2016-2017 academic year he taught the first-year graduate applied sequence, and is currently preparing to teach time series analysis for the first time. Outside of work, David served as his son’s Cub Scout den leader, and continued to enjoy his hobbies of playing tennis and reading. His tennis team won the State Singles Championship at the 4.0 level last fall.

This past year, Yen-Yi Ho, Assistant Professor, enjoyed a smooth transition from Minnesota to warm weather and sweet tea! In addition to teaching STAT 205: Elementary Statistics for Biological and Life Sciences and developing a new course, "Introduction to Analysis of Genomic Data Using R", Yen-Yi received the Advanced Support for Innovative Research Excellence (ASPIRE I: Innovation) Award to start her research on identifying driver pathways associated with survival in cancer patients using existing public datasets. Yen-Yi also enjoys learning to play bridge with colleagues in the Statistics Department.

Xianzheng (Shan) Huang, Associate Professor, continued her research on network inference and measurement error in academic year 2016-2017, during which several manuscripts on these topics were submitted for publication, and one National Institutes of Health (NIH) grant proposal was submitted. Although not funded, preparing for the grant proposal jointly with her long-time collaborator at the University of Memphis and researchers with expertise in different fields at University of Kentucky was an exciting experience. Huang also had interesting experiences while she visited Rice University in spring 2017. During the visit she learned about research activities of the faculty at the Department of Statistics at Rice University, especially recent activities in research on network inference that emphasize big data. Huang was appointed as the department’s Graduate Director in summer 2016. After taking a break from the director duty in spring 2017, she is ready to return to duty in summer 2017.

Angela Laub, Instructor, completed his first full year of teaching at USC as an Instructor, lecturing in STAT 201: Elementary Statistics and STAT 206: Elementary Statistics for Business.
Jim Lynch, Distinguished Professor Emeritus, is still thoroughly enjoying his retirement with Peggy spending a good bit of time visiting their daughters and their families. In addition, Jim continues an active research program doing research on complex systems and empirical Bayes and subjective probability methods. The former topic is with two of his past PhD’s while the latter is with faculty Paramita Chakraborty and John Grego and PhD student Chong Ma.

Amanda Murphy, Instructor, completed her first full year of teaching at USC as an Instructor, lecturing in STAT 206: Elementary Statistics for Business and STAT 201:, while replacing Maureen Petkewich as lab coordinator of STAT 201: Elementary Statistics.

Edsel Peña, Professor, and some graduate students, Beidi Qiang, Shiwen Shen, Taeho Kim, Jeff Thompson, Lu Wang, and Li Li, continued their Friday research seminars. Beidi completed her PhD degree in August 2017 and she has started on a tenure-track Assistant Professor position at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. Edsel continues to direct the National Institutes of Health (NIH)-supported Biometry Core of the Center for Colon Cancer Research, and he also served on several department, university, and professional committees. He also attended and/or gave invited talks or organized sessions at several meetings and conferences: Mathematical Methods in Reliability Conference in Grenoble, France; the World Congress of Statistics organized by the International Statistical Institute at Marrakech, Morocco; and the Joint Statistical Meetings (JSM) at Baltimore, Maryland. In between these events, he and his wife, Marge, were able to do some touring of places in France, Morocco, and Spain. Students Beidi Qiang, Shiwen Shen, and Taeho Kim also participated in several meetings, including the conferences for the International Biometric Society’s Eastern North American Region (ENAR), Southern Regional Council on Statistics (SRCOS), and the JSM meetings. Edsel will start his position as Institute of Mathematical Statistics (IMS) Executive Secretary this August 2017. This fall Edsel will also be on sabbatical leave, but has decided to stay mostly in town and work from his departmental office.

Xiaoyan (Iris) Lin, Assistant Professor, continues her research in Bayesian modeling and its application to different areas such as survival analysis, medical diagnosis processes, and panel count data. During the past year, she had two papers submitted in Lifetime Data Analysis and Statistics in Medicine, and one paper published in Communications in Statistics. She gave a seminar talk “Modeling Rater Diagnostic Skills in Binary Classification Processes” at Southern Methodist University. She gave an invited talk “Bayesian Semiparametric Regression Models for Interval-censored Data” at the International Chinese Statistical Association (ICSA) Conference in Atlanta. She also presented her research “Link Functions and a Rater-item Binary Model” at the Joint Statistical Meetings (JSM) in Chicago. She submitted an R03 National Institutes of Health (NIH) grant application as a Principal Investigator (PI), a collaborative National Science Foundation (NSF) grant with USC’s Electrical Engineering Department faculty as a Co-Principal Investigator, and a NSF Research Traineeship grant in data science with Professor Grego and USC’s Department of Computer Science and Engineering faculty.

**Edsel Peña** with an armful of students at the December 2016 commencement exercises. Piaomu Liu (PhD 2016, Bentley University), Edsel Peña, current student Taeho Kim, Bereket Kindo (PhD 2016, Humana in Louisville KY), and current student Shiwen Shen.
Maureen Petkewich, Senior Instructor and Assistant Department Chair, happily finished her PhD degree in Educational Psychology and Research in December 2016 under the direction of co-chairs Drs Brian Habing and Christine DiStefano. (Maureen met her goal of graduating before 16-year-old Madeline graduates from high school!) She is looking forward to continued research in educational measurement. She stays active in the statistics education community and presented at both the United States Conference on Teaching Statistics (USCOTS) and the International Conference on Technology in Collegiate Mathematics (ICTCM) this past year. At USC, Maureen served on the dean’s Non-tenure Track Working Group for the College of Arts and Sciences, led a Community of Practice at the Center for Teaching Excellence for Coordinators of Large Undergraduate Courses, and was appointed a Preston Residential College Associate. Her family is doing well; Her daughter Elizabeth is entering middle school and daughter Madeline is a rising high-school junior.

Mohammed Quasem, Instructor, completed his first full year of teaching at USC as an Instructor, lecturing in STAT 201: Elementary Statistics and STAT 515: Statistical Methods I, while replacing Maureen Petkewich as Lecturer Coordinator for STAT 201.

Wilma Sims, Manager of the Statistics Lab, continued Statistics Lab Manager for her ninth year. She was selected as keynote speaker at her alma mater Strom Thurmond High School at which she was the first African-American valedictorian.

Josh Tebbs, Professor, has advised two PhD students to completion (Shamim Sarker and Peijie Hou) and is currently advising Chuan-Fa Tang, Ryan Stutz, and Xichen Mou. He also taught STAT 110: Introduction to Statistical Reasoning during both semesters of the 2016-2017 academic year. He continues to work on his National Institutes of Health (NIH) funded research in group testing and has just agreed to serve a five-year term on the Biostatistical Methods and Research Design (BMRD) study section of the NIH.

Dewei Wang finished his third year as Assistant Professor. He started teaching undergraduate major courses STAT 511: Probability and STAT 512: Mathematical Statistics, and will finish this sequence by lecturing in STAT 513: Theory of Statistical Interference in the upcoming fall. He said that helping undergraduates learn more about statistical inference also taught him how to effectively communicate with young minds so they can better understand abstract theories. In research, Dewei has submitted an R03 National Institutes of Health (NIH) grant as the Principal Investigator. A paper providing new nonparametric goodness-of-fit tests for uniform stochastic ordering has been accepted by the Annals of Statistics. This is joint work with Joshua Tebbs and their student Chuan-Fa Tang. Working with his collaborators at Clemson University, a manuscript summarizing new methods for analyzing PM 2.5 has been accepted by Environmetrics. Dewei has also submitted a manuscript to Lifetime Data Analysis and one work of his student Juexin Lin to Journal of Nonparametric Statistics. Currently, he is working on six projects and striving to finish them in the near future.
Lianming Wang, Associate Professor, took over as Colloquium Director starting in summer 2016. It turned out that the weekly colloquium took too much faculty time and cost a bit too much for the department during last year’s college budget crisis. A biweekly schedule was found to suit the department better and will be used in the future. Lianming published two research papers in 2016, one in *Biometrics* and one in *Computational Statistics and Data Analysis*. Two of his PhD students, Haifeng Wu and Bin Yao, graduated in spring 2016. Haifeng took an industrial job, and Bin became a postdoc and continued his research at Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center. Lianming’s sabbatical application was approved, so he will take his sabbatical in spring 2018.

Gail Ward-Besser, Instructor, had a busy year developing and coordinating our new STAT 206: Elementary Statistics course, taught to all entering first-year business students. She also taught STAT 110: Introduction to Statistical Reasoning and STAT 112: Statistics and the Media, and finds herself in more and more service roles as students get to know her through her large lecture classes.
Our eighth Palmetto Lecturer, Raymond Carroll, visited our campus the week of March 21–March 24, 2016. The Palmetto Lecturer series, initiated by Don Edwards, was organized this year by our Colloquium Coordinator, Lianming Wang.

Dr. Carroll earned his PhD in Statistics from Purdue University in 1974. He was a faculty member at University of North Carolina before joining the Department of Statistics at Texas A&M University in 1987. Dr. Carroll is Director of the Institute for Applied Mathematics and Computational Science, a Distinguished Professor in the Department of Statistics at Texas A&M, as well as a member of the university's faculties of the Nutrition and Toxicology Departments.

He is an expert on statistical inverse problems and is considered the leading figure in the area of measurement error modeling. His awards and honors include the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) Method to Extend Research in Time (MERIT) Award; National Cancer Institute Award, 2005; Jerome Sacks Award for Multidisciplinary Research; National Institute of Statistical Sciences, 2003; Mitchell Prize, International Society for Bayesian Analysis, also in 2003; Fisher Award and Lecture, Committee of Presidents of Statistical Societies, 2002; Alexander von Humboldt Senior Research Award, 1996; and Presidents’ Award, Committee of Presidents of Statistical Societies, 1988.

Ray Carroll’s colloquium talk discussed dietary index scores developed by nutritionists as independent variables in logistic and Cox regression models studying health outcomes such as mortality from cancers. Professor Carroll presented a score informed by its predictive power that can be used as a global index, and critiqued the use of indices constructed for individual diseases.

At the South Carolina American Statistical Association (SCASA) Annual Meeting on Friday, March 24, held in Discovery Building I at USC, Professor Carroll presented his talk entitled “Constrained maximum likelihood estimation for model calibration using summary-level information from external big data sources”. He discussed the need to use information from large data sources while analyzing individual (internal) studies with data collected at a finer level of resolution. He presented a framework for semiparametric inference that allows the distribution of study covariates to be estimated using either the internal sample or an external reference sample. The method can be extended to complex stratified sampling designs for the internal study.

Dr. Carroll’s talk was bracketed by two sets of talks by graduate students from Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC), USC, and Clemson University. Doctoral students Yisu Jia and Prabhashi Wickramasingha of Clemson University, and Xichen Mou from our department received awards for Best Student Presentation.
Student News

Graduate Awards 
2016-2017

Outstanding Graduate Assistant
Stephanie Jones
Taeho Kim
Pedro Nielsen Rotta

Outstanding First Year Graduate Student
Tahmidul Islam

Outstanding Graduate Student in Academics
Xiang Li

Citizenship Award
Seungchul Baek

James D. Lynch Graduate Student Research Award
Xinchu Zhao

Undergraduate Awards 
2016-2017

Department of Statistics Excellence in Academics
Lauren M. Chimileski

John D. Spurrier Scholarship
Rebecca E. Evans

Mu Sigma Rho Award
Carter Alexander Allen

Stephen D. Durham Award
Kimberly Marie Pilatovsky

Outstanding Masters of Applied Statistics Graduate 
2016-2017

Karthik Iyer

Graduate Program Graduates 
2016-2017

PhD in Statistics
Peijie Hou, PhD
Songqiao Huang, PhD
Bereket Kindo, PhD
Han Kil Lee, PhD
Jianxuan Liu, PhD
Beidi Qiang, PhD
Sheng-Yang (Sean) Wang, PhD

Master of Science
Zhixin (Suzie) Chen, MS

Master of Applied Statistics
Jennifer Monaldi, MAS, MEd
William Smith, MAS, MEd

Certificate of Applied Statistics
Johnathan Graab, CAS
Anita Husbands, CAS
Jessica Krecel, CAS
Rachel Passer, CAS
Nicole Spensley, CAS
Top: Tuan Quoc Do, Xinchu Zhao, Michael Hornsby, Stephanie Jones, Brandy Barnette, Bryonna Bowen, Bridget Manning, and Tahmidul Islam. Middle: Yawei Liang, Xiang Li, Pedro Nielsen Rotta, Jeff Thompson, Shiwen Shen, and Young Jo Son. Bottom: Xiaoyang Cao, Seungchul Baek, Chuan-Fa Tang, Dongho Shin, Juexin Lin, and Yifan Zhang.

Undergraduate Carter Allen received the department’s Mu Sigma Rho Award from David Hitchcock. Carter will be starting medical school at the Medical School of South Carolina (MUSC) this fall.
Graduate Program

Collaboration with our doctoral students has increased greatly in recent years. This past year saw current graduate students as co-authors on 40% of our papers in the mainstream statistics literature, including articles appearing in *Statistics and Probability Letters, Computational Statistics and Data Analysis, Stat, The American Statistician, Statistics in Medicine, and Annals of Statistics*. Many of our former students continue as research collaborators as well!

With support through USC’s Office of Research and National Science Foundation (NSF) travel grants, our graduate students gave talks and presented posters at the Southern Regional Council on Statistics (SRCOS) Summer Research Conference, the Institute of Mathematical Statistics (IMS) Eastern North American Region (ENAR) Spring Meeting, the National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME) Annual Meeting, the Joint Statistical Meetings (JSM) and our own Latent Variables Conference 2016. Unfortunately, we were only able to support graduate students with plans through August 2016 before the college’s budget crisis forced us to cut travel support. Nonetheless, students found a way to present their research, and we are making plans to set aside funds for graduate travel support this upcoming year.

The department supported almost 40 graduate students in the 2016-2017 academic year, with eight students earning their PhD degree (not including summer graduates) and three earning an MS degree. Our PhD productivity the past couple years has been the highest we have ever seen, thanks to both our hard-working students and faculty! We will be supporting six incoming graduate students this fall, and a couple unsupported students will be joining us this fall as well.

**Jianxuan Liu** (PhD 2017, Bowling Green State University) receives an award for Outstanding Student Poster presentation from Elizabeth Slate at the Southern Regional Council on Statistics Summer Research Conference at Jekyll Island, Georgia.
Statistics Consulting Lab

Statistics Lab Staff

The Statistics Lab is currently staffed by our Statistics Lab Manager, Wilma Sims. She leads consulting projects and serves as the primary contact for the duration of a client’s involvement with the lab. In addition, the Statistics Lab typically employs a graduate statistics student as a consulting assistant. The student is responsible for tasks ranging from data entry to programming to consulting.

Wilma J. Sims, the Manager of the Statistics Lab, received her Masters in Statistics in 2000 from the University of South Carolina. She joined the Statistics Lab in December 2008. Her previous experience includes working as a Statistician for the Office of Research and Statistics, Health and Demographics Section, of the former South Carolina Budget and Control Board and as a Research Associate in the Psychology Department at the University of South Carolina.

Undergraduate Program

The undergraduate statistics program continues to grow. We had over 70 statistics majors in spring 2017, many who are in our popular actuarial science concentration. David Hitchcock began his service as Undergraduate Director in the 2016-2017 school year, following the fine work done by Brian Habing during his tenure directing the undergraduate program.

Some important changes in the undergraduate program in the past year have centered around advising. We now have a First-Year Advisor, Rachel Blanset, who heads up the advisement of the first-year statistics majors, overseen by the Undergraduate Director. Once the students reach their sophomore year, they are assigned an advisor from one of our set of Undergraduate Advisors: David Hitchcock, Lianming Wang, Dewei Wang, Karl Gregory, and Yen-Yi Ho.

Several students won awards in spring 2017 for their outstanding academic work: Carter Allen won the department’s leading honor, the Mu Sigma Rho Award. Kimberly Pilatovsky won the Stephen Durham Award, signifying recognition as one of the top two experienced statistics majors. Lauren Chimileski won the department’s Excellence in Academics Award as top performer among sophomore/junior level majors. Finally, Rebecca Evans won the John Spurrier Scholarship as the top first-year statistics major. In addition to these students, the statistics program was privileged to have numerous other students that excelled in their academic achievements.

In curricular news, the Statistics Department is excited to offer, along with the Computer Science Department, a data science minor. A new cross-listed course in big data analytics is a centerpiece of this program, as is a revamped version of our Applied Multivariate Statistics course. The department continues to expand its online offerings for undergraduate courses, as Applied Nonparametric Statistics will be offered online through distributed learning in fall 2017.
The department’s online graduate programs continue to grow steadily. The Master of Applied Statistics (MAS) and Certificate of Graduate Study in Applied Statistics (CAS) programs now have 76 active candidates (students admitted who have taken at least one course in the past three years).

In calendar year 2016, three students received the MAS degree: James Keaveny, Karthik Iyer, and Jennifer Monaldi. Karthik, a Process Reviewer for the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Office of Pharmaceutical Quality, was voted the Outstanding MAS Graduate for the year. Congratulations, Karthik!

The CAS program continues to enjoy increased participation, with seven graduates in calendar year 2016: Alex Hall, Eren Bilen, Genine Blue, Scott Martinez, Joe Oliver, Brittany Walter, and Samantha Yaussy. Many of the CAS candidates are concurrently enrolled in other graduate programs, seeking a separate statistics “minor”. Two excellent examples can be found among the graduate testimonials on the website sc.edu/study/colleges_schools/artsandsciences/statistics/study/distance_grad/ Eren Bilen, pursuing a Doctorate in Economics, and Brittany Walter, who received her Doctorate in Forensic Anthropology and now works with the United States Department of Defense helping to identify the remains of fallen soldiers.

Don Edwards retired from the University effective June 30. His duties as Director of the MAS and CAS programs will be assumed by Dr. Brian Habing, a natural choice: a finalist for teaching awards at both the graduate and undergraduate levels, Brian has years of experience teaching in our distance programs.

Professor Tim Hanson developed and taught STAT J770: Categorical Data Analysis this year—a welcome addition to our MAS program! We are beginning the development of STAT 112: Statistics and the Media and STAT 205: Elementary Statistics for the Biological and Life Sciences in a distributed learning format to satisfy new program requirements in the College of Nursing. The department continues to offer these high enrollment service courses in a distributive learning format as well: STAT 110: Introduction to Statistical Reasoning, STAT 201: Elementary Statistics, STAT 515: Statistical Methods I, and STAT 600: Statistics for Applied Management.

Alumni and USC Statistics Family News

Nairanjana Dasgupta (MS 1994, PhD 1996) and Dean Johnson (MS 1993) celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary. Nairanjana was awarded the Boeing Distinguished Professor in Science/Math and Dean and chaired the Section on Statistical Consulting for the Joint Statistical Meetings (JSM) last year.

Brad Llewelyn (MS 2012) contacted us with an offer to come speak and we will likely arrange a joint presentation to statistics and math students. Brad works as a Data Scientist at Valorem.

Wensong Wu (PhD 2011) and Tan Li (2012) celebrated the birth of their baby boy, Ryan, this past November.

Phil Yates (PhD 2006) accepted a dream job at his undergraduate alma mater, DePaul University. He will be moving on from St. Michael’s College.
Professors Yen-Yi Ho (left) and David Hitchcock (right) attended the Joint Statistical Meetings (JSM) reunion at Ming Hin restaurant in Chicago with former graduate students Haiming Zhou (PhD 2015, Northern Illinois University), Li Li (PhD 2014, University of New Mexico), Hongtao Zhang (MS 2009, Biostatistics PhD from University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, now at a pharmaceutical company in Illinois), and Jiejun Du (PhD 2012, now at Merck in Philadelphia). Shiwen Shen and Iris Lin stopped by to say hi and chat as well.
Alumni Phil Yates (PhD 2006, DePaul University), Carl Miller (PhD 2002, Northern Kentucky University), Laura Baysden (PhD 2008, Elon University), Megan Mocko (MS 2001, University of Florida), and Beth Johnson (MS 2002, PhD in Research and Measurement in Education 2009, George Mason University) at the US Conference on Teaching Statistics 2017 at Penn State with faculty members Mohammed Quasem and Dr. Maureen Petkewich.

Alumni Phil Yates (PhD 2006, then St. Michael's College, now at DePaul University) and Piaomu Liu (PhD 2016, Bentley University) at the New England Isolated Statisticians Meeting.
LeConte 215 and 217 Renovation

LeConte 215 and 217, that rabbits’ warren of faculty offices, storage spaces, graduate student mail room, and Statistics Tutoring Center, was gutted and transformed into a suite of four faculty offices in the summer of 2016. We were able to convert space for a couple reasons: tutoring is now largely centralized at the University's Student Success Center, so we no longer needed the lab space. Kathryn Dobereiner, Dr. Maureen Petkewich, and Geeia Habing archived, shredded, or recycled all our files, so our active files were reduced to a couple filing cabinets in the main office. The suite of offices is used primarily by our instructors, who greatly appreciate the larger offices and the added privacy of a hallway entrance. Gail Ward-Besser, in particular, is no longer plagued by students mistaking her office entrance at the head of the stairs as the main department office.
We Want To Hear From You!

We would like to share information about your accomplishments and activities. If you have changed jobs, received a promotion or award, earned a new degree, married, traveled, or anything new has happened to you, please let us know. Send information to John Grego, grego@stat.sc.edu along with any updates in your mailing and/or email addresses.

Thank You for Your Support!

Scholarships and fellowships are funded with interest from their respective funds. Contributions to these funds will continue to help in the development of young statisticians. Contribution forms for these funds are attached for your convenience at the end of this newsletter. Thank you so much!

**USC Educational Foundation**

Contributions to the department can be made to any of three funds within the USC Educational Foundation. Your tax-deductible gifts can be distributed among the three funds in any way you specify.

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**The John D. Spurrier Scholarship**

On the event of his retirement in 2008, the department established the John D. Spurrier Scholarship Fund to provide scholarships for first-year undergraduate statistics majors. The fund was vested in 2010 and we now offer an annual scholarship whenever we have an eligible candidate. Please do consider helping with contributions to the Spurrier Scholarship Fund (Account B11516).

**The W. J. Padgett Fellowship**

This fund (Account 1B1593) was established in 1993 and helps us attract outstanding graduate students to the department by offering supplemental fellowship stipends to the regular assistantship. The Padgett Fellowship has been offered to at least one new graduate student each year in recent years and can really make the difference when competing for students against other outstanding statistics programs.

**The Department General Fund**

The Department of Statistics General Fund is critical to our operations and recruiting efforts. By law, certain expenditures such as the new James D. Lynch Graduate Research Award, the Stephen D. Durham Undergraduate Award, and other student awards and reimbursements can only be paid with these contributed funds. Please consider a contribution to the Statistics Department General Fund (Account 1A3410).
GIFT FOR John D. Spurrier Scholarship Fund

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