Welcome to our first e-newsletter

It gives me great pleasure to introduce our first e-newsletter for 2011/12. We are planning to produce two issues per year and will use them as a means to highlight the achievements of students, staff and the School.

It’s hard to believe that we are already coming to the end of the first term and that the festive season is almost upon us. I hope that all of our new students have settled in well to university life and that the other years are enjoying a successful Autumn term!

This year we have the largest number of undergraduate and postgraduate students in the School’s history. It is, therefore, extremely pleasing to note that the School is continuing to improve on the quality of its teaching and the support given to students. Let me draw your attention to a few highlights from the last 12 months that you might find of interest:

The School has been voted one of the top economics departments in the UK for job prospects. 95% of our students who graduated in 2010 are either in a job or further study.

We were ranked 5th in the National Student Survey 2011 for overall student satisfaction, 1st for academic support, 2nd for organisation and management and 5th for teaching.

The School was also rated highly in The Guardian, The Times and The Sunday Times rankings for student satisfaction and teaching quality.

For postgraduate study, we received overall student satisfaction rates of 86% for taught and 95% for research programmes.

These results continue to build on the School’s popularity in consistently being ranked in the top 10 in the National Student Survey. The student comments highlight not only the high quality of the programmes but also the enthusiasm, expertise and approachability of the staff. We are very pleased with the results and would encourage our current third year students to complete the survey early next year.

It only remains for me to wish you all the very best for Christmas and the New Year.

University teaching prize

Dr Bill Collier, Lecturer in Economics, has been awarded one of four University Teaching Prizes for 2010-2011. Bill lectures in policy analysis and applied microeconometrics on the postgraduate programme, and is also Director of Stage 1 Undergraduate Studies.

The teaching prizes are awarded each year, one to each faculty in the University, to recognise individual staff or teams for outstanding work in teaching and/or learning support.

Bill was awarded the Social Sciences Faculty Prize jointly with Dr Ben Lowe (Lecturer in Marketing) and Des Laffey (Lecturer in E-Commerce) for their project on using Twitter to enhance student learning. This was an innovative collaboration between Kent Business School and the School of Economics, which was particularly well received by students.

The Vice-Chancellor presented the awards at a ceremony on 3 October 2011.

Inside this issue:

- New EC314 Module 2
- Passport to Success 2
- Congratulations 2
- New Staff 3
- Research Focus 4
- Research Focus 5
- What’s On 6
EC314 New data analysis module for 2011/12

This year the School has introduced a new 15-credit Stage 1 compulsory module, Data Analysis for Economists. The module is convened by Dr Bill Collier, who said that its introduction meets demands from both students and future employers. Employers have been requesting students who can analyse and graph data using office-based software such as Microsoft Excel and Ecowin. Students have been asking for the opportunity to study more economics modules at Stage 1.

The module teaches descriptive statistical analysis applied to historical and contemporary real world data. This requires students to source, retrieve and analyse data. The skills used are very transferable, especially in the area of what is becoming known as ‘digital literacy’, that is, the ability to identify, organize, and analyse information using digital technology.

The teaching methods on Data Analysis combine traditional lectures and seminars with computing sessions which provide hands-on guidance and support in retrieving and evaluating data. Individual and group-based assessments evaluate and analyse data-related techniques relevant to undertaking economic research. In the group project students examine a contemporary economic issue in depth.

Support when you need it

It has been another successful year for our Student Mentoring Scheme. 40 of our top final year students volunteered to become mentors for our new first year students, and we would like to thank them all for their support and the role that they have played in helping to integrate the first years into the university and their degrees.

We would like to take this opportunity to remind all students about the wide range of support services offered by the University. Our website has a quick link to a list of all the support services on campus, and Faculty procedures guidance on absences and other student issues. There is also a link for who to contact for help with personal development.

www.kent.ac.uk/economics/student-support.

Calling all final year students!

The School has recently launched a new Economics Job Market ‘module’ on Moodle, aimed at all final year students.

It’s very early stages, but the module has been created to help students through the ups and downs of the job and masters market, and act as a forum for students to network and share their job and masters market experiences.

The module also provides a centralised depository for CVs for all students who are active in the job/masters market. This is extremely helpful for staff when they are asked to write references.

Dr Maria Garcia-Alonso, who initiated the scheme, would like to encourage all final year students to start using the page, and particularly to upload their CVs.

Log on to Moodle, module code EC-JM.
Over the last year the following new members of staff have joined the School.

Dr Sylvain Barde
Sylvain is originally from France, where he studied for a first degree in political science before crossing the channel to complete his masters and PhD at the University of Kent in 2007. After going back to France for three years to work as a researcher at the Observatoire Français des Conjonctures Economiques (OFCE) in Nice, he returned to Kent, having been appointed as a Lecturer in Economics. Sylvain’s research interests reflect this path to some extent: starting with economic geography, which was the field his thesis investigated, he has moved on to studying industrial dynamics and information theoretic methods of predicting agent based models with his colleagues at OFCE.

Dr Alex Klein
Alex studied economics at the University of Economics in Bratislava and continued in Prague at the Centre for Economic Research and Graduate Education – Economic Institute (CERGE-EI) where he received a PhD in economics in 2005. He spent the following two years at the University of Warwick (2005-2006) and the Jagiellonian University in Krakow (2006-2007) as a Marie-Curie research fellow in economic history. He then returned to the University of Warwick as a research fellow in economic history at the Department of Economics. Alex joined the School of Economics at the University of Kent in January 2011. His main research interests are economic history and development, applied econometrics, and urban economics.

Dr Keisuke Otsu
Keisuke was born in Hong Kong on 9 July 1976 and spent his early childhood in Saskatchewan, Canada. Since it was nearly impossible for his Canadian friends to pronounce his Japanese name ‘keisuke’, he was given an English name ‘Casey’. In 1985 his family moved to Nagoya, Japan. He moved to Tokyo in 1995 to study economics at Keio University from which he received his Bachelors and Masters degrees. He moved to the United States in 2001 to continue his study and received his PhD in Economics from the University of California, Los Angeles in 2006. Casey then moved back to Tokyo as a research economist at the Bank of Japan, Institute for Monetary and Economic Studies. In 2008 he moved to Sophia University, Tokyo in order to pursue his career as an academician. He moved to the UK in 2010 and has been teaching economics at the University of Kent since then. Casey’s main research fields are quantitative dynamic macroeconomics and open-economy macroeconomic theory.

Lisa Jones
Lisa joined the School in August as Office Co-ordinator. Previously she worked as Personal Assistant to the Head of the School of Psychology. Before joining the University of Kent, Lisa spent many years working in the Economics department of University College London.

Next term Dr Zaki Wahhaj will be joining the staff from the University of Oxford. Zaki’s main fields of interest are economic development and economic theory. May we extend a very warm welcome from all of us.

For further information on School of Economics staff and their research interests, check out our people pages at www.kent.ac.uk/economics/staff.
The School of Economics continues to excel in research at an international level. This builds on the success of our 2008 Research Assessment Exercise, where 75% of our research was classed ‘world leading’ or ‘internationally excellent’. IDEAS/RePEC, the most comprehensive database of authors, working papers and published articles in Economics ranks the School in the top 5% in the world out of 5,517 registered institutions. Kent ranks 15th among UK universities.

Our research is also widely recognised internationally as a result of our participation in policy discussions, invited talks, and other activities that help to disseminate ideas to the academic and policy world and beyond.

During 2012, a special issue of the PSL Review (formerly Banca Nazionale del Lavoro Quarterly Review) will be published in December to commemorate Tony Thirlwall’s 1979 article ‘The balance of payments constraint as an explanation of international growth rate differences’ which is widely cited in literature on economic growth. Tony also gave a talk at the National Autonomous University of Mexico on the financial crisis in the UK and Europe as part of the 70th birthday celebrations of the oldest economics journal in Latin America, Investigacion Economica.

In April 2011 Sophia Davidova took over as President of the UK Agricultural Economics Society (AES). Founded in 1926, the AES has around 350 members in 65 countries. During the Society’s 85th Annual Conference she gave her Presidential Address entitled ‘Semi-subistence farming: an elusive concept raising thorny policy questions’ which was subsequently published in the Journal of Agricultural Economics.

Rob Fraser will take over as President of AES in 2012. Rob is a former president of the Australian Agricultural and Resource Economics Society.

In September 2012, Iain Fraser will become editor of the European Review of Agricultural Economics, one of the leading journals in the field. Iain has had previous editorial experience with the Australian Journal of Agricultural and Resource Economics.

Chris Heady received funding to carry out research work for the International Centre for Taxation and Development (ICTD), which will be set up at IDS Sussex with funding from the Department for International Development and the Norwegian International Development agency.

Chris will also give an invited talk on ‘A more detailed look at taxes and growth’ at the International Tax Dialogue Conference in Delhi in December 2011.

Jagjit Chadha hosted the 2nd ‘Modern Monetary Policy Making’ conference at Clare College, Cambridge in September 2011.

Miguel León-Ledesma gave the closing keynote speech at the 4th National Meeting of Bolivian Economists, hosted by the Bolivian Central Bank and attended by the Minister of Finance. Miguel was also a keynote speaker at the 6th BMRC-QASS Conference on Macro and Financial Economics at Brunel University in March 2011. He has become a member of the editorial board of International Economics/ Economie Internationale, a journal published by CEPII, the main independent French institute for research into international economics.

See our website for more news stories:
www.kent.ac.uk/economics
2011 has been a highly productive year for Economics research publications. The discussion paper series has seen 18 papers published so far, with six more due to be published before the end of the year. This series is for working papers where many theories and much research in its early stages is published. Frequently discussion papers form the basis for conference papers, book chapters and articles in journals. All discussion papers are on our website at www.kent.ac.uk/economics/research/papers/.

Yu Zhu’s work caught the headlines with a very timely publication of an article produced with his research partner, Ian Walker at the University of Lancaster, titled ‘Differences by degree: evidence of the net financial rates of return to undergraduate study for England and Wales’. It was published in the Economics of Education Review at the time when news of the rise in tuition fees for 2012 first hit the headlines. Yu also had articles published in Economic Enquiry and Economica, and collaborated with Matloob Piracha to produce an article ‘Precautionary savings by natives and immigrants in Germany’, in Applied Economics.

Miguel León-Ledesma’s research on international macroeconomics focused on the role of financial constraints for the determination of the real exchange rates and net foreign assets in constrained and unconstrained economies’ is to be published in the European Economic Review.

Chris Heady’s research has been making an impact on government thinking in the current economic crisis. He co-authored an article on ‘Tax policy for economic recovery and growth’, published in the Economic Journal in February.

Edward Cartwright and Anna Stepanova produced an article perhaps of interest to students, titled ‘What do students learn from a classroom experiment: not much, unless they write a report on it’, to be published in the Journal of Economic Education. Edward’s work on behavioural economics, with former Professor of Psychology Mark van Vugt produced two articles for Economic Inquiry and Personality and Individual Differences.

Current PhD students also contributed to the School’s publications. Six of the discussion papers this year were written or co-written by current students. Gunes Bebek had an article published in the Economics Bulletin, Lena Fredriksson collaborated with Sophia Davidova on an article ‘Subsistence farming, incomes and agricultural livelihoods in the New Member States of the European Union’, in Environment and Planning C Government and Policy, and Rob Fraser, Iain Fraser and

Sophia Davidova’s research on agricultural and environmental economics has been published in the Journal of Agricultural Economics, including Sophia Davidova’s AES presidential address.

Jagjit Chadha, Bill Collier, Iain Fraser, Maria Garcia-Alonso, Alex Klein, John Peirson, Katsuyuki Shibayama and Ambachew Sisay also contributed articles to various publications during the year.

Books

School members have recently published the following high-profile textbooks:


For further details on staff research and publications see our staff web pages at www.kent.ac.uk/economics/staff.
Mihai Paraschiv, an MSc and former Kent undergraduate, received a commendation for his essay in the Economics Network Student Challenge 2011.

Jonathan Hughes and Steven King were joint winners of the MSc Dissertation Prize. Both Jonathan and Steven have gone on to PhDs at Kent.

The School would like to congratulate the following students and staff on their achievements:

Four undergraduate students have recently become Student Ambassadors for Economics — our thanks and congratulations go to Denise Lovett, Hanna Lawrence, Alexander Brownbridge and Marina Ivanova.

Iain Fraser and Yu Zhu both received promotion at the start of this term. Iain has been promoted to Professor and Yu Zhu to Reader.

Finally, we would like to extend our very best wishes to Anna Stepanova and Edward Cartwright on the birth of baby Sofie on 10 November 2011.

The School of Economics has signed up for the national Green Impact scheme. Look out for information on the noticeboard in Ag.2 plus we will be producing a newsletter, which will be available to view on our website. If you have any questions and would like to help us make a difference, please contact your School reps, Lisa Jones (ltj@kent.ac.uk) and Tracey Girling (tig@kent.ac.uk).

All Economics MSc and PhD students are invited to join the staff for drinks on Wednesday 14 December from 4.30pm in Keynes Senior Common Room. We hope to see you all there!

We are pleased to announce that we have completed the first phase of our School website redesign — check it out at www.kent.ac.uk/economics.

We would welcome your feedback on the new site. Please send your comments to tig@kent.ac.uk.

Keep checking the site for the latest developments.

The Economics Society meets every Tuesday at 6pm in KS17 for general discussion/debate on current topics and issues. All students welcome. For further information, please contact Pinja Pustjarvi at pnhp2@kent.ac.uk.

Kent Invest Society is a student-operated society, dedicated to bring students interested in the world of investment and capital markets together.

Meetings are held on Thursdays 6-7pm in KLT1.

A fortnightly discussion group to read (or re-read) The General Theory of Employment, Interest & Money by John Maynard Keynes. Starting again in January – Monday afternoons from 2pm in Cg.5. If you are interested, please contact Rob Jump at rgj4@kent.ac.uk.

If you have anything you would like to contribute to future newsletters, please send your ideas and news stories to Tracey Girling at tig@kent.ac.uk.

Congratulations

School goes Green

Website launch

Contributions

Student societies

PhD/MSc reading group