Greetings

by Peihua Qiu, Professor and Founding Chair

Thanks to the hard work of our faculty and students, and the support from our alumni and university, we have had a very successful year. We continue to grow our programs and improve our department. Our faculty publishes widely in academic journals and are well-funded by numerous sponsors, including NIH, NSF, AHRQ, the Children’s Oncology Group Foundation, St. Baldrick’s Foundation, Leukemia & Lymphoma Society and the U.S. Department of Veteran’s Affairs. The department was awarded more than $9.5 million in grant funding last year. In the past year, 3 new faculty members joined us, and another 3 will join us in the coming summer. Our faculty members are well accomplished and well respected in our academic community, with 1 elected fellow of AAAS, 3 elected fellows of ASA, and 2 elected fellows of IMS. We are also active in local and
national organizations. For instance, Professor Babette Brumback serves as the Chair of the ASA Section on Statistics in Epidemiology, and she also serves as president of the Florida Chapter of the ASA. In the past year, we re-organized our graduate curriculum, and created 4 new graduate courses. Prior year graduates included: 2 PhD, 9 MS and 1 MPH. I am looking forward to your continuing help and support in the future. Happy New Year!

**Faculty News**

[Image of Professor Babette Brumback]

**Dr. Meenakshi Devidas Named Group Statistician for COG**

Professor and PI of the NCI U10 grant supporting the Children’s Oncology Group Statistics and Data Center (COG SDC) at the University of Florida. The COG, a member of the NCI's National Clinical Trials Network (NCTN), is the world’s largest organization devoted exclusively to cancer research in children and adolescents. The COG unites more than 8,000 experts in the battle against childhood cancer at more than 200 leading pediatric facilities across North America, Australia, New Zealand, and Europe. The COG SDC provides statistical expertise and data coordination in support of cancer research. The goal is to collaborate with an objective of increasing cure rates, reducing complications, improving the quality of life, and ultimately, prevention.

**Dr. Ira Longini Publishes in Science and PLOS Currents**

Ira Longini was coauthor on a paper in *Science* titled “Emerging, evolving and established infectious diseases and interventions.” In this article, Dr. Longini and colleagues outline the statistical and mathematical methods for planning, implementing, and evaluating interventions against infectious diseases. They describe work on many of the current emerging infectious diseases—such as Ebola and pandemic influenza—and established infectious diseases. They outline how we can understand the transmission and control of these and other infectious diseases going forward. In addition, Dr. Longini coauthored a paper in *PLOS Currents* on the transmission of Ebola in West Africa, “Assessing the international spreading risk associated with the 2014 West African Ebola outbreak.” In this paper, the authors analyze the transmissibility of the virus. They use a global mathematical model to project the future course of the epidemic including probability estimates introduction rates countries that are connected with the affected countries via air travel.
travel. Beginning in December, Dr. Longini has been working with the World Health Organization (WHO) in Geneva, Switzerland collaborating on the Ebola crisis.

Welcome to New Faculty

Dr. Faming Liang

The department enthusiastically welcomes Faming Liang, PhD, as Preeminent Professor. Dr. Liang joins us after serving as Professor at Texas A&M University for the past five years. Dr. Liang is a world renowned leading researcher in statistical computation. His scholarship has been recognized through being elected fellow of the American Statistical Association and the Institute of Mathematical Statistics. He is a highly regarded educator with a record of excellence in research, teaching, and distinction of being an illustrious speaker. Dr. Liang’s personal areas of research are Big Data, Markov Chain Monte Carlo Methods, Bioinformatics, Statistical Genetics, Stochastic Optimization, Spatial Statistics and Machine Learning. We are thrilled to have Dr. Liang and his family in our Gainesville community. The addition of such a prominent scholar only strengthens the university’s presence as one of the leading institutions in biostatistics.

Dr. Huaihou Chen

The department is delighted to welcome Huaihou Chen, PhD, Assistant Professor. Dr. Chen’s research interests focus on longitudinal and functional data analysis, predictive modelling, and neuroimaging, and he has an extraordinary record of collaborative achievements with psychiatrists, neurologists, and neuroscientists. Dr. Chen earned his doctorate in biostatistics from Columbia University and prior to his arrival was a postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at the New York University School of Medicine. Dr. Chen exemplifies the mission of the department to advance knowledge in biostatistics and health and to build partnerships across the six colleges of the Health Science Center.

Dr. Baiming Zou

The department also welcomes Baiming Zou, PhD, to the department faculty as a Research Assistant Professor. Dr. Zou received his PhD of Biostatistics in 2013 from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. He is currently working in the Clinical Translational Science Institute (CTSI) research design and analysis program (RDAP). This program offers data analysis services for clinical and translational science study. Dr. Zou’s areas of research interest include non-parametric and semi-parametric regression, high-dimension data, and outcome dependent sampling.
Faculty Awards

Dr. Amy Cantrell Honored at MPH Annual Social

Dr. Amy Cantrell, Clinical Assistant Professor in the Department of Biostatistics, received the Public Health Award for Faculty Excellence at the annual MPH social held on Saturday, April 12, 2014. The Department of Biostatistics extends its hearty congratulations to Dr. Cantrell on this well-deserved honor.

Faculty Promotions

Dr. Meenakshi Devidas, Research Professor

Dr. Meenakshi Devidas was promoted to Research Professor effective July 2014. Dr. Devidas joined the Department of Statistics at UF in 1998. She serves as Group Statistician for the Children’s Oncology Group, an NCI sponsored international pediatric cancer clinical trials cooperative group. Dr. Devidas has over 140 publications in peer-reviewed journals. Her area of research in clinical trial designs. She coordinates and teaches the two-part course on Clinical Trial Design and Analysis.

Dr. Samuel S. Wu, Professor

Dr. Samuel S. Wu was promoted to Professor effective July 2014. Dr. Wu is originally from China. He joined the UF Department of Statistics in fall 1998 right after he obtained his Ph.D. from Cornell University. From 2010 to 2012, he served as interim chair of the new Department of Biostatistics at University of Florida. Currently, he serves as Associate Chair for Research, Director of Biostatistics Core for the VA RR&D/HSR&D Center of Innovation on Disability & Rehabilitation Research. Dr. Wu has published more than 130 peer reviewed papers. His research interests include adaptive design of clinical trials, simultaneous statistical inference, data confidentiality and privacy protection, and sports statistics.
Greetings from Administrative Staff

Above (left to right) are: Angela Newsome (Emerging Pathogens & CSQUID Grants Ast.) with five department staff: Deana Nance (Business Mgr.), Kristen Cason (Academic Ast.), Corinne Flowers (Fiscal Ast.), Linda Vostrejs (Chair Ast.) and Paula Maurer (Program Ast./Receptionist). Not pictured is: Lisa Kozak (COG Program Ast./Receptionist).

Staff and Postdoc News

Administrative Staff

Linda Vostrejs, Chair Office Assistant, and Kristen Cason, Academic Program Assistant, joined the department in January and May of 2014 respectively. Linda was formerly employed with UF Department of Urology and Kristen with UF Department of Mathematics. Both Linda and Kristen have made valuable contributions to the development and growth of the department.

Research Staff

Zhiguo Chen “Bruce” joined the department on August, 28, 2014 as a Statistical Research Coordinator 1, supervised by Dr. Samuel S. Wu. Bruce is a May 2013 MS graduate from UF Department of Statistics. His prior experience includes working as a Research Assistant formerly with the department and as a Teaching Assistant with UF Department of Statistics.

Postdoc

Ka Young Park joined the department on September 1, 2014 as a Post Doc Associate to Dr. Peihua Qiu. Dr. Park was awarded a PhD degree from the University of Minnesota in June 2013, where she also earned her MS in Statistics in January 2012. Her research interests include joint modeling of survival and longitudinal data, crossing hazard rate functions and statistical analysis of Big Data.
Departures

- **Yicheng Kang**, former Postdoc Associate bid his farewell on August 14th.
- **Alex Savenkov**, former Postdoc Associate bid his farewell on August 26th.

Volunteers - Special thanks to all of our volunteers this past year.

Recent Graduates

Zhuangyu Cai, PhD  
Mentor: Babette Brumback, PhD  
Thesis Dissertation Title: Conditional Pseudo-Likelihood and Generalized Linear Mixed Model Methods to Adjust for Confounding Due to Cluster

Ying He, PhD  
Mentor: Samuel Wu, PhD  
Thesis Dissertation Title: On Statistical Inference of Two Adaptive Clinical Trial Designs

Yijing Ding, MS  
Mentor: Meenakshi Devidas, PhD

Bharath Reddy Gottam, MS  
Mentor: Babette Brumback, PhD

Scott Gulig, MS  
Mentor: Xiaomin Lu, PhD

Xinlei Mi, MS  
Mentor: Babette Brumback, PhD

Justine Molas Pierson, MS  
Mentor: Yueh-Yun Chi, PhD

Mansi Prasad, MS  
Mentor: Xiaomin Lu, PhD

Jing Tian, MS  
Mentor: Samuel S. Wu, PhD

Wan Xu, MS  
Mentor: Babette Brumback

Shuo Zhang, MS  
Mentor: Arlene Naranjo, PhD

Zhi Zhou, MPH

Isaac Sia, MPH
Featured Presentations from our Graduate Students

Zhuangyu Cai - Presented his research entitled “Model-Based Standardization to Adjust for Unmeasured Cluster-Level Confounders with Complex Survey Data,” co-authored with Dr. Babette Brumback at the 2014 FL Chapter of the ASA Annual Meeting, Gainesville, FL, February 7-8, 2014 and at ENAR, Baltimore, Maryland, March 17, 2014.


Ying He - Presented her research entitled “Strong Control of Family-Wise Type-I Error for Multi-Stage Drop-the-Losers Designs,” at the 2014 FL Chapter of the ASA Annual Meeting, Gainesville, FL, February 7-8, 2014.


Honors and Awards

MPH Student Inducted into Delta Omega

Isaac Sia was inducted into the Beta Upsilon chapter of Delta Omega this spring. Isaac, a Speech-Language Pathologist from Singapore, is a recent graduate of the MPH program with a concentration in Biostatistics and is a current PhD student in Rehabilitation Science. Isaac earned this distinction through his excellent academics, outstanding service, and dedication to the field of public health. A dinner ceremony in honor of new inductees was held on May 1, 2014 with guest speaker Mary Peoples-Sheps, MSN, DrPH, Senior Associate Dean for Public Health and founding member of the Delta Omega Chapter.
Zhuangyu Cai, Post-Graduate Student, was awarded the University of Florida College of Public Health and Health Professions (PHHP) travel award to present his research at ENAR in Baltimore, Maryland, March 17, 2014.

Xinrui Zhang “Shirley,” Graduate Student, was awarded the University of Florida, College of Public Health and Health Professions (PHHP) travel award to present her research at the ASA Conference in Tampa, FL, February 20-22, 2014.

Yifun Zhu, Samson Ghebremariam and Xinrui Zhang all received student awards for their presentations at the 2014 Annual Florida Chapter ASA Symposium, February 7-8, 2014, Gainesville, FL.

Other Academic News

We currently have 35 graduate students (12 MS, 19 PhD, and 5 MPH). Applications for fall 2014 include 56 MS and 74 PhD. Of these applicants, 5 MS and 5 PhD of high quality were admitted (4 with departmental funding and 1 with a dean’s office fellowship).

Applications for fall 2015 include 40 MS and 116 PhD (156 total). In addition to admitting a number (to be determined) of MS students, the department plans to admit 5 or 6 PhD students.

Research Activities

In the previous fiscal year, the department was awarded more than $9.5 million in extramural grant funding (ranked #1 among departments in UF College of Public Health and Health Professions and #5 in the College of Medicine), in which the department is jointly housed. Faculty submitted 140 articles. Of these, 92 have been published in peer reviewed journals.

Hosted: The Florida Chapter of the American Statistical Association 2014 Annual Meeting

Led by Assistant Professor Yueh-Yun Chi, the Department of Biostatistics hosted the 2014 Florida Chapter of the American Statistical Association (ASA) Annual Meeting on February 7-8th at the Clinical and Translational Research Building. The event was launched with opening statements from Dean Michael Perri, College of Public Health and Health Professions, and Dean Michael Good, College of Medicine. Keynote speaker, Nathaniel Schenker, the 2014 ASA president, discussed participation in the ASA during the banquet on Friday evening. Registration was full with 24 faculty and 48 student participants from across the state. Oral and poster presentations covering a wide range of topics were presented with awards going to the top six student presenters at the conclusion of the symposium. Student awardees included: Mr. Jason David Cleveland and Mr. Zhengwu Zhang both from FSU; and Ms. Melissa Crow, Mr. Samson Ghebremariam, Ms. Xinrui Zhang and Mr. Yifan Zhu from UF.
2014 Seminar Series:

January 2014
Kassandra M. Fronczyk, PhD, Department of Statistics and Biostatistics
Rice University, University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center
Huaihou Chen, PhD, Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
New York University School of Medicine
Suprateek Kundu, PhD, Department of Statistics and Department of Biostatistics
Texas A&M University MD Anderson
Eric F. Lock, Postdoctoral Associate, Duke University

February 2014
Nathaniel Schenker, PhD, University of Maryland, 2014 President-elect of the ASA

April 2014
Betsy Shenkman, PhD, Professor and Department Chair, Health Outcomes and Policy, Director
Institute for Child Health Policy, University of Florida
Limin Peng, PhD
Department of Biostatistics and Bioinformatics, Emory University

May 2014
Jonathan S. Schildcrout, PhD, Associate Professor, Department of Biostatistics, Vanderbilt
University School of Medicine

September 2014
Joseph G. Ibrahim, PhD, Alumni Distinguished Professor, Director of Graduate Studies,
Department of Biostatistics, University of North Carolina Gillings School of Global Public Health

October 2014
Timothy Ebbels, PhD, Department of Surgery and Cancer, Reader in Computational
Bioinformatics, Imperial College London
Alan Hubbard, PhD, Associate Professor, School of Public Health, Division of Biostatistics,
University of California at Berkeley
Somnath Datta, PhD, Department of Bioinformatics and Biostatistics, University of Louisville

November 2014
Susmita Datta, PhD, Professor, Graduate Director and Distinguished University Scholar,
Department of Bioinformatics and Biostatistics, University of Louisville

December 2014
Debajyoti Sinha, PhD, Professor, Department of Statistics, Florida State University

Biostatistics Consulting Lab (BCL)

The Biostatistical Consulting Lab (BCL) is under new directorship of Dr. Huaihou Chen who recently joined the department and continues to offer research design and data analysis services for all non-clinical and non-translational science studies within UF and also for all biostatistical needs outside UF.

To schedule a consultation, please contact huaihouchen@ufl.edu. Our website page for further information is: http://biostat.ufl.edu/consulting/
Service

The department collected and donated over 100 lbs. of food for the local community. We hope to expand service activities this year.

Special Events

**Picnic**: Faculty, staff, students and their families participated in our 1st annual Summer Picnic which was held on Saturday, July 26, 2014 at Westside Park in Gainesville, FL. Special thanks to Linda for hosting this successful event and ensuring food and fun for all.

CONTRIBUTIONS AND GIFTS

Gifts to the **Department of Biostatistics** greatly enhance student support. If you are interested in being a part of our growing department and future successes please follow the below link:

https://www.uff.ufl.edu/OnlineGiving/FundDetail.asp?FundCode=004783

If you wish to specify a gift to the **Children’s Oncology Group Research Data Center**, please follow the below link:

https://www.uff.ufl.edu/OnlineGiving/FundDetail.asp?FundCode=011053

Your gifts are greatly appreciated. We look forward to thanking you in our next newsletter.