Greetings
Peihua Qiu, Professor and Founding Chair

I would like to thank our faculty, staff and students for your hard work in the past year, and our alumni and friends for your continued help and support. We have had a very successful year. First, our faculty and students have made a tremendous progress in our methodological and collaborative research in the past year. Many important research results from our faculty and students have been published in top journals, such as *Science*, *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, and *Biometrics*. For instance, in cooperation with other scientists in a WHO team, Professor Ira Longini and his team were the driving force behind the design and analysis of an Ebola vaccine trial that leads to a breakthrough in fighting Ebola. Our faculty’s research is
well-funded by numerous sponsors, including NIH, NSF, AHRQ, WHO, DOD, 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 about $9.5 million in grant funding last year. In the past summer, three well-established senior faculty members joined the department, and another faculty member is expected to join us in the coming spring. Our faculty members are well accomplished and well respected in our academic community, with 2 elected fellows of AAAS, 5 elected fellows of ASA, and 3 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, with Assistant Professor Dr. Yueh-Yun Chi as vice-president. Second, we successfully re-organized our Ph.D. and MS curriculum. As a result, four new courses have been created, and starting from the next summer we will have our own Ph.D. written preliminary exam with a data analysis portion being added to the exam. I believe that our graduate training is much more rigorous and effective now. Last year, we have 5 PhD, 5 MS and 3 MPH students successfully graduated. I am looking forward to your continuing help and support in the future. Happy New Year!

Faculty Features

Dr. Ira Longini and Dr. Natalie Dean worked with WHO Team Leads Breakthrough In Ongoing Ebola Vaccine Trial

As a member of the World Health Organization team, Dr. Ira Longini (right) was integral to the design of the Ebola vaccine trial in Guinea. Dr. Natalie Dean (left) analyzed the research findings as part of her postdoctoral fellowship. The world’s largest outbreak of the Ebola virus has infected more than 28,000 people and killed more than 11,000 since March 2014. In July 2015, WHO announced a major development in the Ebola fight. Findings were released in the July edition of the prestigious medical journal *The Lancet*, capturing the world’s attention with their indication that the vaccine is 100% effective at protecting at-risk groups of people from Ebola. “The research by Dr. Longini and colleagues signals an extraordinary breakthrough in the search for an effective Ebola vaccination,” said Michael G. Perri, PhD, dean of the College of Public Health and Health Professions.

Dr. Ira Longini and Colleagues Publish In *Lancet Infectious Diseases*

in parts of west Africa defines an unprecedented health threat. We developed a model of Ebola virus transmission that integrates detailed geographical and demographic data from Liberia to overcome the limitations of non-spatial approaches in projecting the disease dynamics and assessing non-pharmaceutical control interventions.”


Dr. Meenakshi Devidas One of Florida’s Best-Funded Scientists

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.

Other Faculty News

- **Dr. Babette Brumbach Honored by Delta Omega** selected for induction into Beta Upsilon Chapter for her dedication and support for the values and practice of public health.
- **Dr. Yuex-Yun Chi Elected Secretary/Treasurer to ASA Section** for a three-year term commencing on January 1, 2016.
- **Dr. Yuex-Yun Chi Receives "High Impact" Research Award** for outstanding research and publication, “Vitamin B-6 restriction reduces the production of hydrogen sulfide and its biomarkers by the transsulfuration pathway in cultured human hepatoma cells 1-3.”
- **Dr. Eben Kenah Vaccination Risks**: In an article published on February 14, 2015, entitled “Experts: Vaccine Benefits Outweigh Rare Risks,” Dr. Kenah weighed in, noting that it is extremely hard to prove a connection between immunizations and serious side effects. [http://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/community/miami-dade/article10305605.html](http://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/community/miami-dade/article10305605.html)
- **Dr. Faming Liang awarded an R01 NIH grant by NIGMS**, jointly with Dr. Peihua Qiu and Dr. Guanghua Xia at University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, with an amount of $1.05 million for three years entitled: Equivalent Partial Correlation Methods for Integrative Genetic Network Analysis. The grant is to support the development of new statistical methodologies for construction of large scale gene regulatory networks by integrating clinical and gene expression data.
- **Dr. Yang Yang received an R21 NIH grant**, titled “Spatio-Temporal Modeling for Surveillance
Data of Multiple Pathogens” in collaboration with Ira Longini, Nikolay Bliznyuk (IFAS), Jon Wakefield (Univ. of Washington) and Cici Bauer (Brown Univ.). This NIAID-funded two-year project is also a collaboration with China CDC on modeling the surveillance data of hand, foot and mouth disease in Chinese children.

- **Dr. Baiming Zou: Work on Postsurgical Pain Study**  
  UF has been awarded a $2.5 million grant from the National Institute of General Medical Sciences to fund a five-year study tracking information on postsurgical pain in hundreds of patients. Along with researchers from the College of Dentistry and the COM departments of biomedical engineering and molecular genetics and microbiology, Dr. Zou will be an integral part of the study as reported in the July 13 issue of the *Gainesville Sun*.

- **Dr. Baiming Zou Recipient of Junior Faculty Presentation Award**  
  at the 2015 ACTStat Annual Meeting held in Seattle, Washington. Dr. Zou was recognized by the board for his merits of statistical approach as well as generalizability to clinical and translational science.

**Welcome to New Faculty**

![Pictured left to right, Dr. Somnath Datta, Dr. Susmita Datta and Dr. Fei Zou.](image-url)
Somnath Datta, PhD, Professor

Dr. Somnath Datta joined the department of biostatistics at the University of Florida in September. He comes to the department from the University of Louisville under UF’s preeminent initiative in genomics. At Louisville, he was a professor, vice chair, university scholar and recipient of the Distinguished Faculty Award in Research for Career Achievement.

Dr. Datta received his PhD in statistics and probability from the statistics department at Michigan State University in 1988. Dr. Datta has varied research interests in the theory and methods of statistics, biostatistics, and bioinformatics, as well as collaborative research in spinal cord injury rehabilitation, dentistry, cancer informatics, plant science and materials science. He is an elected member of the International Statistical Institute, an elected fellow of the American Statistical Association and an elected fellow of the Institute of Mathematical Statistics.

Susmita Datta, PhD, Professor

Dr. Susmita Datta joined the department of biostatistics at the University of Florida in September. She comes to the department as part of the university’s preeminence initiative in metabolomics from the University of Louisville’s department of bioinformatics and biostatistics, where she was a University Distinguished Scholar and director of the masters and PhD programs.

Dr. Datta brings her expertise in big data science to UF with the goal of developing a diverse interdisciplinary research environment. She is a prominent leader in the promotion of women in STEM fields and currently is appointed to the Committee of Women in Statistics of ASA. Some of her research interests include: bioinformatics, genomics, proteomics, clustering and classification techniques. She is an elected fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Statistical Association and the International Statistical Institute.

Fei Zou, PhD, Professor

Dr. Fei Zou joined the department of biostatistics at the University of Florida in August. Dr. Zou was most recently with the University of North Carolina, where she was a professor in the department of biostatistics and genetics, the director of the biostatistics/bioinformatics core of the UNC neuroscience center research core, and a faculty member of the Carolina Center for Genome Sciences.

Dr. Zou’s research expertise is in statistical genetics and genomics, in particular investigating the role of genetic variations in complex human traits and diseases. She has been developing robust and efficient statistical methodologies for high-dimensional genetics and genomics data. She is proficient in linkage analysis, genomewide association studies (GWAS), microarray and next generation sequencing data.
**Faculty Promotions**

**Dr. Amy Cantrell Promoted to Clinical Associate Professor**

Dean Michael Perri recently announced the promotion of Amy Cantrell, PhD, to the rank of clinical associate professor. Dr. Cantrell received her PhD in statistics from the University of Florida in 2001 and has been teaching at UF since 2008. Dr. Cantrell’s enthusiasm and dedication to her work is exhibited in the personal and professional achievements of her students, her comradery with fellow faculty and her loyalty to the University of Florida.

**Greetings from Administrative Staff**

**Staff and Postdoc News**

**Research Staff**

Belinda Scurlock joined the department on January 16, 2015, as a Research Program Services. Crd. 2 and Project Manager for the Children’s Oncology Group, supervised by Dr. Meenakshi Devidas. Belinda is a BS/BA graduate from UF Department of Mathematics and Psychology. Her prior experience includes working as the NIH Team Lead Research Administrator at UF Contracts and Grants, Office Manager with the UF Department of Aging, Grants Manager with Banyan Biomarker, Inc. and a Senior Grants Specialist with the UF Cancer Center.

Emily Hibbits, PhD joined the department on August 17, 2015, as a Statistical Research, Crd. 2, for the Children’s Oncology Group, supervised by Dr. Meenakshi Devidas. Emily is a graduate from University of Virginia with a Doctor of Philosophy in Education with major concentration in
Research, Statistics, and Evaluation. Her prior experience includes working as a Research Data Specialist for the California Community College system.

**Postdoc**

**Natalie Dean** joined the department on January 16, 2015 as a Post Doc Associate to Dr. Ira Longini. Dr. Dean was awarded a PhD degree from the Harvard University in May 2014. She received an AM degree in May 2011. Her dissertation title was, “Surveillance of HIV Incidence and Drive Resistance”.

**Long Feng** joined the department on January 10, 2015 as a Post Doc Associate to Dr. Peihua Qiu. Dr. Feng was awarded a PhD degree from the Nankai University in China. His research in this position focused on jump regression analysis and image processing.

**Departures**

- **Karen Bondurant**, former Computer Applications, Crd. 4 with COG
- **Ka Young Park**, former Postdoc Associate bid her farewell on July 25, 2015
- **Long Zhang**, Research Assistant, supervised by Dr. Sam Wu

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

**Visiting Scholars Research Program** - The department established a *Visiting Research Scholar Program*. The following visitors successfully concluded or commenced their visits:

**Concluded**

- **Dongie Bai**, invited by Dr. Samuel Wu, concluded his 12 month visit. He was from Tianjin, China, the University of Finance & Economics, Department of Statistics in October.
- **Shuguang Wei**, invited by Dr. Samuel Wu concluded her 12 month visit from Baotou, China School of Economics & Mgmt. Inner Mongolia Univ. of Science & Technology in May.

**Commenced**

- **Huajun Song**, invited by Dr. Peihua Qiu, is a 12 month visitor from China University of Petroleum.
- **Yanyang, Zang**, invited by Dr. Peihua Qiu, is a 12 month visitor from Huazhong University of Science and Technology in China.
- **Xuemin Zi**, invited for a visit by Dr. Peihua Qiu, is a 12 month visitor from China.

**New Development Leadership Board**

This new development leadership board is chaired by former department interim chair, UF Emeritus Professor, Dr. Leslie Gonzalez-Rothi, and other members include Hongtao Liu (Realtor), Dr. Anqi Sun (Data Scientist, Facebook), and Dr. Ying He (Assistant Professor, Clarkson University). Members serve a two-year term with the option to continue serving. Meetings are held twice a year and work closely with the chair of the department and with the college’s development officer, Lindsey Stevens, towards furthering the mission and goals of both the department and the college. If you are a leader in business, statistics or a related field and are
interested in learning more about this opportunity, please send an email via our website http://biostat.ufl.edu/

**New Department Video**

Another exciting accomplishment this year is our new department video! The below link can be found on our website and includes inspiring and informative interviews with both Dean Michael G. Perri (Public Health and Health Professions) and Dean Michael Good (College of Medicine), several department faculty and students. [http://biostat.ufl.edu/about/videos/](http://biostat.ufl.edu/about/videos/)

**Recent Graduates**

**Samson Ghebremariam, PhD**  
Mentor: Ira Longini, PhD & Yang Yang, PhD  
Thesis Dissertation Title: *Modeling Co-Circulating Pathogens for Cohort Studies in the Presence of High-Dimensional Missing Data and Left Censoring*

**Alexander Kirpich, PhD**  
Mentor: Ira Longini, PhD  
Thesis Dissertation Title: *Dynamic Infectious Disease Modeling Challenges Influenced by Real Life Problems*

**Ya Meng, PhD**  
Mentor: Yang Yang, PhD  
Thesis Dissertation Title: *Analysis of Infectious Disease in the Presence of Missing Data in Both Outcome and Covariates*

**Hui Zeng, PhD**  
Mentor: Samuel Wu, PhD & John Kairalla, PhD  
Thesis Dissertation Title: *Graphical Approaches to Multiple Testing within 2X2 Factorial Designs*

**Yifan Zhu, PhD**  
Mentor: Ira Longini, PhD  
Thesis Dissertation Title: *Statistical Considerations in Modeling Infectious Disease Surveillance Data*

**Changyi Li, MS**  
Mentor: Susan McGorray, PhD

**Qian Li, MS**  
Mentor: Susan McGorray, PhD

**Yuqi Liang, MS**  
Mentor: John Kairalla, PhD

**Zijun Shen, MS**  
Mentor: Yueh-Yun Chi, PhD

**Wenru Zhou, MS**  
Mentor: John Kairalla, PhD

**Hector Barrionuevo, MPH**

**Shiyao Gao, MPH**

**Yaqiong Zhu, MPH**
Featured Presentations from our Graduate Students


**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.

**Qi An** - Participated in an internship at Bayer Healthcare (North American Headquarters) in Whippany, New Jersey as a Clinic Statistical Intern May-August 2015

**Ya Meng** – Presented her research entitled “Estimating Dengue Vaccine Efficacy in the Presence of Missing Outcome and Covariates” on December 3 in the conference of Epidemic 5.

Honors and Awards

**Changyi Li**, Graduate Student was awarded the Master of Science award for having the highest GPA of the graduating MS students in Spring 2015. (Pictured with Drs. Peihua Qiu, Professor and Chair of Biostatistics on left and PHHP Dean, Michael G. Perri on right.)

**Jingnan Zhang**, Graduate Student, received the PhD Award for achieving the highest score on her preliminary examination in May. She also won the PHHP 2015 Outstanding International Student Award. *(Pictured right with Peihua Qiu, Professor and Chair of Biostatistics.)*

**Yifan Zhu**, PhD student, was awarded the University of Florida College of Public Health and Health Professions (PHHP) Dean’s scholar award in May 2015. *(Pictured left with PHHP Dean Michael G. Perri.)*
Other Academic News

We currently have 45 graduate students (16 MS, 17 PhD, and 12 MPH). Applications for fall 2015 include 60 MS and 144 PhD. Of these applicants, 10 MS and 4 PhD of high quality were admitted (3 with departmental funding and 1 with a dean’s office fellowship). In addition to admitting a number (to be determined) of MS students, the department plans to admit 5 or 6 PhD students.

2015 Seminar Series:

April 2015
Kai Yu, PhD, Senior Investigator, Biostatistics Branch, Division of Cancer Epidemiology & Genetics, National Cancer Institute
Li Ma, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Statistical Science, Duke University
Rongling Wu, PhD, Distinguished Professor and Director, Center for Statistical Genetics, Pennsylvania State University
George C. Tseng, PhD, Professor, Department of Biostatistics, Human Genetics Computational Biology, University of Pittsburg

May 2015
Wensheng Guo, PhD, Professor, Department of Biostatistics and Epidemiology, University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine

September 2015
Lance A. Waller, PhD, Professor and Chair, Department of Biostatistics and Bioinformatics, Rollins School of Public Health, Emory University
Susan Nittrouer, PhD, Professor and Chair, Department of Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences, University of Florida

October 2015
Rong Chen, Professor, Department of Statistics, Rutgers University

November 2015
Ruzong Fan, Ph.D., Investigator, Biostatistics & Bioinformatics Branch, Division of Intramural Population Health Research, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, National Institute of Health
George Michailidis, Ph.D., Preeminent Professor of Statistics, Department of Statistics, Director of the Informatics Institute, University of Florida

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 75 lbs. of food for the local community. We hope to expand service activities this year.

Special Events

Picnic: Faculty, staff, students and their families enjoyed wonderful food and fun at our 2nd annual summer picnic which was held on Saturday, July 25, 2015 at the home of Dr. Peihua Qiu (Professor and Chair). Children enjoyed swimming and piñata fun. Special thanks to his family for graciously opening their home for this event after an unexpected change of location.

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

Receipts for charitable contributions will be issued from University of Florida Foundation for tax purposes.
**THANK YOU to the following supporters who made GIFTS to the department in 2015!**

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

We invite you to visit our department website at: [http://biostat.ufl.edu/](http://biostat.ufl.edu/)