There is a lot that I have learned and love about this great department, now in its 50th year. Since I joined the University of Michigan, I have always been inspired by our outstanding faculty, students, and staff. They love what they are doing, and excel in what they do. I am extremely honored and very humbled to serve the department as Chair since 2015, and with this newsletter I am excited to share with you some of the latest news from Michigan Statistics.

The field of Statistics has gone through major changes over the past 50 years, and those changes are accelerating at the moment due to advances in computing technology and the emergence of data science. In 2015, the University of Michigan launched the Data Science Initiative, and in 2017 the University's Biosciences Initiative was called into action. Our department has embraced both initiatives wholeheartedly and has been very agile in adapting to new developments in science.

Since 2015, five assistant professors have joined the department, bringing substantial research expertise in data science and bioscience to our faculty. In partnership with the EECS Department in the College of Engineering, we started the Data Science Major, a rigorous program that will provide students with a foundation in those aspects of computer science, statistics, and mathematics that are relevant for analyzing and manipulating large complex datasets. Last year, we launched the Data Science Master's program, which is a cross-disciplinary program with participation from three other departments on campus. Together with our traditionally strong programs in statistics and applied statistics, the Department is now home to approximately 600 undergraduate students and around 220 graduate students. We hear great stories from our graduates and alumni every day, and are proud to be a growing family built on the strength of tradition and filled with optimism for the future.

Education remains a core mission of our department, and Stats 250 continues to be our most popular introductory course, serving thousands of students each year. The department received a multi-million dollar NSF training grant in 2017 to train domestic undergraduate and graduate students and postdocs in modern research and teaching methods in statistics, preparing them for the new and unique challenges presented by the emerging era of big data.

This year we are excited to be celebrating our 50th anniversary and would like to thank all of the faculty, staff, and students – past and present – who have helped to shape our department and make it what it is today. Our alumni are our best ambassadors to the world, and I encourage you to keep in contact as our department continues to grow as a leader in statistics. I look forward to meeting many of you at our 50th anniversary symposium in September.

Xuming He, Department Chair and H.C. Carver Professor of Statistics
50 Years of Statistics

DEPARTMENT HISTORY

Statistics has a long history and tradition at the University of Michigan that dates back to the early 1900’s. During the first half of that century, the idea of statistics as a field apart from mathematics was just coming to light. In 1912, James W. Glover began teaching the first course devoted exclusively to statistical theory at the University. A little while later, in 1930, Harry C. Carver founded the *Annals of Mathematical Statistics*. The journal was edited at the University of Michigan until 1938 and has since become the most influential and prestigious publication in mathematical statistics.

As the century advanced through the 1950’s and 1960’s, more and more universities began establishing official departments dedicated to the field. After much discussion and deliberation, the statistics faculty in the University’s Department of Mathematics founded the Department of Statistics within the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts in September of 1969. The founding faculty members included Bill Ericson (the first chair), Chuck Bell, Paul Dwyer, Bruce Hill, Norm Star, and Michael Woodroofe. Ed Rothman joined the Department that same year.

At the time of its foundation, the Department of Statistics was located in Mason Hall where it remained for the next 30 years. However, that time was a period of substantial growth: the department introduced a number of new programs, including an undergraduate concentration program in Statistics and a Master’s degree program in Applied Statistics. By 1999, the Department had outgrown its space in Mason Hall and moved temporarily to the Frieze Building that once stood in the place of North Quad. In 2002, the Department moved to its current home in West Hall where it has continued to grow.

Today, the Department of Statistics is much changed since its foundation, now offering three undergraduate majors, two undergraduate minors, Master’s programs in Data Science and Applied Statistics, and a Ph.D. Program in Statistics. The Department hosts more than 800 students across all graduate and undergraduate programs, and is home to the largest class on campus – Stats 250, in which approximately 1,700 students are enrolled each term.

Throughout its 50 years at the University of Michigan, the Department of Statistics has been proud to play an integral role in educating and guiding young minds to careers across industry and academia. After half a century of existence, the Department has established itself as an international leader in statistical education and research. Led by faculty members who are both renowned researchers and devoted educators, the Department is committed to producing leaders of the field of tomorrow.

DEPARTMENT CHAIRS 1969 - PRESENT

Bill Ericson (1969–1977)
Vijay Nair (2004–2010)
Tailen Hsing (2010–2015)
Xuming He (2015–present)
Ed Ionides

In 2018, Professor Ed Ionides was named fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). Ed is recognized for his distinguished contributions to the theory and practice of statistical inference for partially observed stochastic dynamic systems, with applications including infectious disease transmission.

Yuekai Sun

Professor Yuekai Sun and his coauthor, Anil Damle, were awarded the 2018 Youden Prize for Best Expository Paper. This prize was given in recognition of their excellent paper, “A Geometric Approach to Archtypal Analysis and Nonnegative Matrix Factorization,” which was published in Technometrics.

Moulinath Banerjee

In 2019, Professor Moulinath Banerjee was selected as a Fellow of the American Statistical Association (ASA). This is an honor bestowed on ASA members who have an established reputation of excellence and who have made significant contributions to the field of statistical science.

Gongjun Xu

Professor Gongjun Xu was a recipient of the Bernoulli New Researcher Award 2019. This award recognizes the innovative work of new researchers of mathematical statistics who are members of the Bernoulli Society. Gongjun will deliver a 30-minute talk at the 62nd ISI World Statistics Congress that will be held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in August 2019.

NEW FACULTY MEMBER: SNIGDHA PANIGRAHI

In 2018, the Department of Statistics had the pleasure of welcoming a new faculty member: Snigdha Panigrahi, assistant professor of statistics. Snigdha received her Bachelor of Statistics (Honors) and Master of Statistics degrees from the Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata. She later completed her Ph.D. in Statistics in June 2018 under the supervision of Professor Jonathan Taylor at Stanford University.

Snigdha’s research interests lie at the intersection between developments in machine learning and statistical methods with some theoretical guarantees. Her work spans across selective inference, causal inference, random fields, and statistical genomics. Her focus in each of these areas is to develop statistical methodologies with solid theoretical understanding, and to provide effective algorithms for users of those methodologies.

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PROFESSOR LIZA LEVINA

Dr. Liza Levina joined the Department of Statistics at the University of Michigan in 2002 after receiving her Ph.D. in Statistics from UC Berkeley. Today, she is the Vijay Nair Collegiate Professor of Statistics and affiliated faculty at the Michigan Institute for Data Science (MIDAS) and the Center for the Study of Complex Systems. She also serves as the Ph.D. Program Director and Associate Chair of Statistics. Some of Liza’s recent honors include being selected as a 2016 American Statistical Association (ASA) Fellow and 2016 Institute of Mathematical Statistics (IMS) Fellow, as well as a 2019 IMS Medallion Lecturer and 2018 ICM Invited Speaker.

Liza studied mathematics as an undergraduate but switched to statistics for her Ph.D. because she wanted to have a closer connection to the real world. Her current research interests focus on statistical analysis of network data and its applications, from social media to neuroimaging. One challenge of networks is that we can no longer rely on an independent identically distributed sample: network data is about connections between nodes, which are not independent, and frequently there is only one observation to work with.

Working with multiple networks, as in neuroimaging (each person has their own brain connectivity network), presents its own opportunities and challenges. On one hand, we are back to having a sample, which is good. On the other hand, how exactly do we compute the sample mean of networks, or perform a two-sample test? Many of these very basic questions remain open for networks.

On neuroimaging applications, Liza collaborates with faculty from Psychiatry who study both abnormal brain patterns, e.g. those in schizophrenia or PTSD, and normal brain development in children and adolescents. These data are extremely noisy, but if you take resting state fMRI-based brain networks of schizophrenics and healthy controls, and throw them into your favorite off-the-shelf classifier, you’ll get 80% accuracy. With a bit more effort, you can get over 90% accuracy. But if you ask just how the schizophrenic brains differ from normal ones, it’s a much harder question to answer, and the usual variable selection tools don’t help much – features are edge weights, and there are far too many predictive edges which don’t tend to arrange themselves into a nice interpretable pattern. Developing “network-aware” prediction and variable selection methods, which can be interpreted in terms of larger network structures and not just the individual edges, is a current key research goal in Liza’s group.

Most Ph.D. students in the department know Liza first and foremost as the Ph.D. program director, and she finds that role extremely rewarding. As interesting as research is, it rarely has the kind of immediate and tangible impact on people’s lives as advising and mentoring, and Liza very much enjoys interacting with students and helping them find the career paths that are best for them, whatever they may be.

According to Liza’s three children, she can only cook about three things, and one of them is salad. According to Liza, this is not true, but she admits that the kids probably don’t have enough empirical data to reject this hypothesis.
OUR GRADUATE PROGRAMS
This past year has been another eventful and successful one for our graduate programs. In 2018, the Department of Statistics Ph.D. program grew to 68 students and the Applied Statistics Master’s Program grew to 131 students, including those enrolled in the Accelerated Master’s Degree and Dual Degree Programs. In addition, the Department officially launched a new Data Science Master’s Program which accepted 23 students in its first ever cohort.

DATA SCIENCE M.S.
New in 2018, the Data Science Master’s Program is designed to help students attain the necessary skills and knowledge to:

1. **Identify relevant datasets**
2. **Apply the appropriate statistical and computational tools to the data set to answer questions**
3. **Design and evaluate analytical procedures appropriate to the data**
4. **Implement procedures efficiently over large, heterogeneous data sets in a multi-computer environment**

GRADUATE STUDENT AWARDS

**Timothy NeCamp**
Tim NeCamp was the recipient of the Outstanding Graduate Student Instructor Award. This award is to recognize GSIs for their extraordinary dedication, accomplishment, and excellence as teachers, displaying the highest levels of commitment, creativity, and skill in the classroom. Tim has taught several courses and many students over his time as a GSI in the Statistics Department, including Stats 250 and 251.

**Jing Shen Wang**
Jingshen Wang was awarded a best student paper award from the Section on Nonparametric Statistics of the ASA. Her paper was titled "Inference on average treatment effect with repeated data splitting in high dimensions." Jingshen was also awarded the best presentation award at the 2018 Joint Statistical Meetings. She will be joining the University of California at Berkeley as an Assistant Professor of Biostatistics in the Fall of 2019.

**Boang Liu**
In early 2018, Boang Liu was awarded the Statistical Learning and Data Science ASA Section Student Paper Award for her paper titled “Network augmented classification.”

**Rayleigh Lei**
In spring 2018, Rayleigh Lei was awarded an NSF Graduate Fellowship. This is a very competitive national fellowship for high-potential, early career scientists and engineers in STEM fields, and provides students with opportunities for international research collaboration and professional career development.

**Julian Lu**
Julian Lu was the recipient of a Rackham Predoctoral Fellowship for 2018-2019. This fellowship is in support of outstanding doctoral students who have achieved candidacy and are working on their dissertation. This is one of the most prestigious awards given to graduate students by Rackham Graduate School, taking into account professional papers, presentations, publications, honors, and academic standing.

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Undergraduate News

MUgSS
Michigan Undergraduate Students of Statistics, otherwise known as MUgSS, is an undergraduate organization on campus that was first formed in 2001. The group was established as a space for statistics undergraduate students to come together and provide a forum for answering questions and further investigating a common interest – statistics.

MUgSS meets periodically to discuss research and internship opportunities, discuss courses and trade books, and share information about graduate school and all the things you can do with a degree in statistics!

Stats 250: Introduction to Statistics and Data Analysis is the largest class on campus at the University of Michigan, hosting between 1,700 and 1,800 students each semester. As an introductory course, Stats 250 covers applied statistical methodology from an analysis-of-data viewpoint. Topics include graphical and numerical data summaries, probability, modeling variables, sampling distributions, statistical inference based on one, two, and many samples, categorical data analysis, and regression. This gateway course also incorporates many technologies (ECoach, Problem Roulette, MWrite, Clickers) to provide opportunities for practice and guidance for our students.

Dr. Brenda Gunderson is the coordinator of Stats 250, as well as one of four instructors who lead six lecture sections. Each lecture session can accommodate anywhere from 100 to over 400 students. In addition, there are more than 60 labs taught by 15-20 Master’s and Ph.D. Graduate Student Instructors. On top of that, Stats 250 works with many undergraduate graders and over 20 undergraduate M-Write Fellows from the Sweetland Center for Writing. “A course this big requires a lot of management and organization,” said Brenda. “We have a great system that is always innovating and improving, and an exceptional team that makes Stats 250 work.”

OUR UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS
The Department of Statistics undergraduate programs have been experiencing significant growth in recent years. Since introducing the Data Science major in Fall 2015, the total number of declared students across all majors has increased from 227 to 386 in Winter 2019. As the department continues to expand, we are excited to be advancing our mission of educating young minds and producing leaders in the field of statistics.

Currently for Winter 2019, the Department is host to 182 Statistics majors, 179 Data Science majors, and 25 Informatics majors, as well as 82 Statistics minors and 172 Applied Statistics minors.
PREVIEW WEEKEND & VISIT DAY
In November 2018, the Department of Statistics hosted its first ever Fall Preview Weekend for 19 prospective students who had expressed interest in the Statistics graduate programs. Over the course of two days, the students were able to get a feel for the Ann Arbor campus and community, as well as ask questions of current students and faculty to learn about the opportunities and resources offered by the Department. Overall, the event was a great success and the Department is hoping to host it again in 2019.

Additionally, the Department recently hosted prospective students who have been admitted to the Ph.D. program. While on campus for visit day, students had the opportunity to meet with faculty and current Ph.D. students, as well as participate in the Statistics Seminar Series.

WOODROOFE LECTURE SERIES
The Department of Statistics is excited to be hosting the 8th annual Woodroofe Lecture in the Fall of 2019. Cun-Hui Zhang, distinguished professor in the Department of Statistics and Biostatistics at Rutgers University, will be presenting his abstract titled “Multiple Isotonic Regression and Power-One Test for Higher Criticism.”

CAREER FAIR
In September 2018 the department hosted the annual career fair for all undergraduate and graduate students of statistics, applied statistics, informatics, and data science. Representatives from 16 companies were in attendance, and 248 students showed up to network with potential employers. The department is looking forward to hosting the career fair again this coming fall and encourages alumni employers who may be interested in participating to reach out!

MSSISS
The Michigan Student Symposium for Interdisciplinary Statistical Sciences (MSSISS) took place this year on Thursday, March 28 - Friday, March 29. This annual event is organized by UM-graduate students in Statistics, Biostatistics, Electrical Engineering & Computer Science, Industrial & Operations Engineering, and Statistics and Survey Methodology. This is an opportunity for students to share interdisciplinary research and engage in discussion across the fields of statistical sciences.

- Keynote Speaker: Professor Alan E. Gelfand, Duke University
- Junior Keynote Speaker: Ceren Budak, University of Michigan

We are very thankful for all of our organizers and participants, and look forward to many more great events in the future!

#GIVINGBLUEDAY
In 2018, the Statistics Department participated in #GivingBlueday, raising a total of $1,828! A huge thank you to everyone who donated to support statistics! We hope you’ll consider extending your support again this year on December 3.
As we look forward to celebrating the 50 year anniversary of the Department of Statistics, it might be fun to also look back. When the Department of Statistics was founded in 1969 with a budget of $151,225, 7 faculty, and a single “principal secretary,” only a statistician could have predicted that in 2019, after having propelled itself to the forefront of statistical education and research, the department would have 22 tenure-track faculty, 10 lecturers, 9 staff members, and a budget to match.

I came to the Statistics department on March 25, 2013. As the department administrator, I manage the non-instructional operations of the Statistics department. Little did I know, I was walking into the department at the beginning of a period of unprecedented growth.

When I arrived in Stats we were considered a small to medium size department. Now we are considered a large department. In 2013 we had 4 staff total, a number that has grown to 9. Our student services staff has expanded from 2 to 5 people with the addition of a student services manager, two master’s program coordinators, and a student services assistant. We have also hired a much needed communications coordinator.

The department has grown in just about every dimension. The total number of student credit hours taught has increased by 40%, as has the total number of Ph.D. students in the department. Overall, we are impacting far more students now than even 5 years ago. This is an excellent trajectory.

The very best part of the department is the sense of community that has developed over the years. We are all in this together, and I am so thankful for the tremendous staff, faculty and students that we have in the Department of Statistics. The goal of our staff is to make the educational mission succeed and I think we are hitting the mark. I’m excited to see what the next 50 years brings.

**MEET THE ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF**

Nicholle Cardinal, Communications Coordinator
Gina Cornacchia, Undergraduate Program Coordinator
Brian Cox, Student Services Assistant
Judy McDonald, Executive Secretary
Jean McKee, Student Services Manager
Andrea Nashar, Ph.D. Program Coordinator
James Schulert, Data Science Master’s Program Coordinator
Ty Smith, Applied Statistics Master’s Program Coordinator
Bebe Zuniga-Valentino, Department Administrator

As of January 2019, the Department Main Office has a new home in 323 West Hall. Feel free to stop by and say "hello!"
Celebrating 50 Years

The Department of Statistics will be celebrating its 50th Anniversary on September 20th and 21st in Ann Arbor, MI. There will be talks led by former professors and alumni, as well as panel discussions.

50TH ANNIVERSARY SYMPOSIUM KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Michael I. Jordan
Susan Murphy
Jeff Wu

Visit [sites.lsa.umich.edu/stats-50th-anniversary](sites.lsa.umich.edu/stats-50th-anniversary) for more information!

“Whenever introducing myself, I am always proud to tell people that I graduated from the Department of Statistics at the University of Michigan. I cherish the wonderful memories with the department, faculty, staff, officemates, and West Hall’s 4th floor. For me, the achievement of the five-year study was not only earning a Ph.D. degree, but also winning a lifetime treasure. I am grateful that the department offered me the opportunity and support to help build up my technical and soft skills. It has given me the capability to solve numerous real-world problems with confidence as a professional. Happy 50th Anniversary!”

-Yan Lan, Ph.D. Statistics (2007)

“I have so many fond memories of the statistics department. From friendships built with fellow students (in the close quarters of the graduate student offices), to the social events like pickup basketball and intramural softball, and long-standing relationships with professors. And the balance of theory and practice in the graduate degree curriculum has served me well as an industrial statistician. Happy Birthday UM Statistics, Go Blue!”

-William A. Brenneman, Ph.D. Statistics (2000)

“I’d like to congratulate the Department of Statistics on its 50th anniversary. As an incoming freshman in 1987, I did not know exactly where my interests should focus for my major at the University of Michigan. I did well in math in high school, and so I decided to take Stats 101 with Professor Rothman. That decision got me immediately interested in statistics and I went on to thoroughly enjoy my 4 years of studying statistics at the University of Michigan. I followed my B.S. at Michigan with an M.S. from another university and then an M.B.A. I fully believe the foundation of the success that I have had was from my years studying at Michigan. The Department was always welcoming, helpful, and full of smart, pleasant, and intellectually curious people. Well done on the first 50 years and I am certain the next 50 will produce the same outstanding results. Go Blue!”

-Andrew Karonis, B.S. Statistics (Honors 1991)

“I was a high school teacher wanting to combine my interest in statistics with teaching. However, the School of Education Ph.D. program was lacking statistically rigorous courses. After one semester, I transferred to the Department of Statistics. It changed my life! With my M.A., my career of 35+ years was wonderful, exciting, and fulfilling. Under various names (from quality circles to TQM and re-engineering to Lean Six Sigma), I used statistics and taught statistics to colleagues and clients to improve business processes, culminating in my two books on process improvement and statistics. Thank you UM Department of Statistics.”

-Kicab Castaneda-Mendez, M.A. Statistics (1981)
Alumni Update

Min Qian, Ph.D. Statistics (2010)
Min Qian received her Ph.D. from the Department of Statistics in 2010 under the direction of Susan A. Murphy. Today, she is an assistant professor of biostatistics in the Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University. Her statistical research is generally focused on the development of machine learning and statistical inference methods for decision making applications and post-model-selection inference in high dimensional settings.

Eric Laber, Ph.D. Statistics (2011)
Eric Laber received his Ph.D. from the Department of Statistics in 2011 under the direction of Susan A. Murphy. He is an Associate Professor and Faculty Scholar in the Department of Statistics and Director of Research Translation and Engage in the College of Sciences at North Carolina State University. His research focuses on data-driven decision making with application to precision medicine, public health, games, and security.

Sooin Lee joined Mathematica Policy Research after graduating with an M.S. in Applied Statistics from the University of Michigan in 2017. As a Senior Programmer Analyst at Mathematica, she is responsible for creating and running computer programs to address complex database development, data analysis, survey analysis, survey sampling, public use file creation, and quality assurance tasks.

Kelsey Pakkala received her B.S. in Statistics (honors) from the University of Michigan in 2015, completing her senior thesis under Dr. Ed Rothman. She became a double Wolverine by completing her M.S. in Applied Statistics in 2017. She is currently a Credit Strategy Data Analyst at GM Financial in Detroit, MI. Her work uses analytics and modeling to monitor and develop new data-driven strategies for credit portfolio performance.

Daniel Bendetson graduated from the University of Michigan Honors Program with a B.S. in Statistics in May 2015. Following graduation, Daniel joined the Investment Banking Division at Goldman Sachs. He is currently an associate in their Leveraged Finance Group.

Blake Arnold, B.S. Statistics (2016)
Blake Arnold received his B.S. in Statistics from the University of Michigan in 2016. His studies while at the University gave him the set of tools needed to break down, understand, and quantify real-world phenomena. Today, Blake is building on what he learned in the classroom to create a tech-enabled, personalized healthcare system as a Growth Analytics Manager at Forward. Specifically, he uses analytics to improve acquisition, engagement, and retention.

Alumni from the University of Michigan have become the Leaders and Best all around the world. In the Department of Statistics, we love to hear from our alumni and receive updates on how they’re doing. Shoot us an email at stat-um@umich.edu and let us know where you’re at!
PH.D. STATISTICS
Jesus Arroyo Relion
Shrijita Bhattacharya
Alexander Giessing
Teal Guidici
Jun Guo
Michael Hornstein
Gregory Hunt
Tianxi Li
Jiahe Lin
Joon Ha Park
Mikhail Yurochkin

M.S. APPLIED STATISTICS
Ran Bi
Marian Boulard
Cinvent Chen
Jiahua Chen
Tsai-Chin Cho
Jing Chu
Desmond Cole
Elliott Evans
Alexander Everett
Yingjia Fu
Noah Jordan Gale
Ruijian Gao
Yu Gao
Joshua Patrick Gardner
David Guo
Chia-Wei Hsu
Bingqing Hu
Can Huang
Zhihao Huang
Kaiwen Jiang
Shen Jin
Jungeun Kim
Dong Gil Lee
David Jing Li
Yiran Li
Zeyu Li
Shuting Liao
Lizi Lin
Jingqi Liu
Lei Liu
Yuhao Liu
Yuxing Lu
Esther Widya Impola Lumbantobing
Jeanhee Pak
Luke Puglisi
Zhen Qin
William Qing
Yijing Qu
Akash Rastogi
Ben Denis Shaffer
Yongxin Shuai
Andrew Soncrant
Xinghui Song
Taylor Spooner
Hanbo Sun
Aman Taxali
Wan-Lun Tsai
Huiqi Wang
Qingyi Wang
Shan Wang
Shikun Wang
Tuo Wang
You Wu
Yifan Xiang
Han Xu
Xinyue Yang
Zhichao Yang
Hsuan-Yu Yeh
Xiaoyun Yu
In Son Zeng
Bindan Zhang
Junyan Zhang
Fengyu Zhao
Qianhong Zhou
Tian Zhou
Yujing Zhou
DID YOU KNOW?
The Department of Statistics is on social media! Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to stay up to date on happenings in the department!

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Ron Weiser, Ann Arbor
Katherine E. White, Ann Arbor
Mark S. Schlissel (ex officio)