Department: Economics

Department Head Summary

The Economics Department prides itself in being a department that produces serious academic research and conducts rigorous degree programs at both the graduate and undergraduate levels. Both our research and education programs are relatively technical when compared to our peer institutions. Our research output as measured by publications in refereed journals is strong for a department our size. We have good demand for our graduate program and face growing demand for our undergraduate major from students transferring from other majors or adding economics as a second major.

In recent years the Economics Department has struggled severely in the effort to provide enough classes to satisfy all of the students who want to take economics courses. We made some progress on that front in the past year at the undergraduate level (despite not being authorized to hire tenure track faculty), through the hiring (as an instructor and a research scientist) of two spouses of persons who were being hired by departments in other colleges. Unfortunately this done nothing to provide the breadth of graduate courses that could reasonably be expected in a Ph.D. program in economics nor to provide qualified mentors in some fields where our students hope to conduct research.

Our greatest challenges are the following:

- We are not significantly involved University’s and the College’s strategic initiatives
- We have not yet hired a long-term Head
- We do not have a strategic plan

We believe the key to meeting these challenges is the new Department Head. He or she will involve the faculty in the development of a strategic plan. The strategic plan will include a plan for the Department to become more involved in University and College strategic initiatives. At the same time, the new Head will participate in shaping the initiatives so that the department can contribute. While this is taking place, we expect the Dean and University to contribute additional tenure track faculty resources to help us achieve our goals.

The avenues through which the Department is most likely to contribute to strategic initiatives are the following:

- Neuroeconomics/experimental economics. We have an experimental economics laboratory. We have one economist (Sheryl Ball) whose main focus is experimental economics and another (Adam Dominiak) who wants to do work in that field. Sheryl has been interacting with neuroscientists at VTCRI and will be there on research leave this fall. Her time there is persuading neuroscientists of the importance of collaborating with economists who have experience with economic experiments. We believe that we can use the collaboration with VTCRI to attract very strong researchers in this field.
• Public economics. Economists with a specialization in public economics are the ones with the training that is most relevant to the evaluation of public policies. Thus their expertise is relevant to research on energy, the environment, transportation, health care, and any other area of inquiry that seeks to devise innovations that are to be implemented through public policy. If people from other departments who are working on these initiatives are interested in the input of economists, then the Economics Department can hire people with expertise in public economics for the purpose of allocating their time to these initiatives.

• Econometrics. Econometricians have expertise in the analysis of data that arises from an examination of history rather than from controlled experiments. To the extent that scholars working on the university’s initiatives need to analyze such data, they are likely to find the assistance of econometricians helpful.

We advertised for a Head this year and obtained seven viable applications. We selected three finalists. One of these took another job before we could invite him for a campus visit. One visited and was by consensus unacceptable. We have not yet reached a decision regarding the one remaining candidate from our pool of three finalists. We plan to see him again in September. If he is not hired, we will continue the search.

We recognize that staff are an essential part of the successful running of a department. Last summer, due to a retirement and a staff member accepting another position, we were able to substantially reorganize the way our office is run. In our new department office model staff will take a more active role in helping to manage the department, freeing faculty to concentrate on research, teaching and leadership.
Learning: “The Life of the Mind”

- Faculty and departmental teaching awards (incl. college, university and national awards):
  - Ball: 2011 Economics Department award for Outstanding Graduate Teacher
  - Yang: 2011 Economics Department award for Outstanding Teacher in Undergraduate Courses

- Undergraduate student achievements and awards (e.g., Goldwater Scholars, Man/Woman of the Year):
  - Zachary Robertson (our Outstanding Junior) will be working at VTCRI this summer

- Graduate student achievements and awards (incl. college, university and national awards):

- Grants in undergraduate teaching and learning (e.g., PhysTec):
  - Ball: Senior faculty on the following Grant: NSF Economics Pedagogical Portal, Scott Simkins NCAT PI. This project proposes the creation of an economics pedagogic portal as part of the national Science Education Resource Center (SERC) http://serc.carleton.edu/serc/about.html. It will offer one-stop pedagogical content resources for economics instructors including ready-to-use examples organized by teaching technique and topic in the principles curriculum. The portal will use the existing set of SERC pedagogic resources, adapting them for use in economics courses, and will add new resources in areas not now included as part of the SERC site.

- Grants in graduate education (e.g., IGERTS):

- One to two notable events or programs related to undergraduate education (e.g., first year of a signature course or FYE):
  - Dominiak: In his first year here, Dr. Dominiak has begun to design a new General Equilibrium Theory course

- One to two notable events or programs related to graduate recruitment and/or education:
  - Ellen Green won a 2011 Lee B. Lusted Student Prize at the Society for Medical Decision Making Annual conference in Chicago.
  - In 2011, the department formalized the admissions process for a 5-year BA/MA program and created a brochure to inform students about the program. The goal of this program is to offer students interested in Ph.D.’s in economics the preparation they need to be competitive for top programs.
Examples of research experiences and experiential learning opportunities for undergraduates:

- **Ball:**
  - Revised the Undergraduate Experimental Economics Course (ECON 4434). The class was last taught over 5 years ago. This year, there was an undergraduate textbook that did not exist before. The number of experiments that were conducted in class was substantially increased since all students now have laptop computers, which they did not have 5 years ago.
  - Spring 2011: supervised a pair of students (Landis Atkinson and Aida Cruz-Folgar) who worked on a team student research project, meeting once or twice a week for at least an hour, not including the time spent conducting an experiment in Spring 2011. Data from the experiment did result the paper co-authored with these two students and Ellen Green on “intentionality”.
  - Works to assist students who are competitive for top graduate schools get experience to help them get the research experience they need. For example, Zachary Robertson (our Outstanding Junior) will be working at VTCRI this summer.
- **Salehi:** Engaged in undergraduate research projects with 2 students who were doing empirical research with Middle Eastern survey data. Was able to arrange for one of the students to be invited to an instructional workshop held in Cairo.

Examples of international experiences for undergraduate students:

- **Salehi:** Was able to arrange for an undergraduate research student to be invited to an instructional workshop held in Cairo, Egypt.

Examples of international experiences for graduate students:

Any additional examples that address goals in Virginia Tech’s “Plan for a New Horizon”:

- Ways in which computational science and skills for managing and analyzing complex data sets are integrated across a wide range of disciplines
  - **Ashley & Ge:** Working with a 2nd year Ph.D. student on a paper which develops a new method to estimate panel model with lagged dependent variable
Use of technology in classrooms and examples of distance-learning opportunities

- **Ball**
  - Continuing to develop the Classroom Experiments module for the Science Education Resource Center hosted at Carleton College. [http://serc.carleton.edu/index.html](http://serc.carleton.edu/index.html) The site contains information for science teachers interested in conducting classroom experiments and has examples as well as information on teaching effectiveness and assessment. The site is now live and content is being added.
  - Made weekly use of laptop computers for running classroom experiments in ECON 4434.

- **Trost**
  - Started a tumblr page and a twitter account to post articles and communicate with students more directly outside of class
  - Has been using in-class response systems (iClickers), for several years and now discussed the use of iClickers with several other professors who are considering adopting the technology.
  - Also working with CIDER (Center for Instructional Development and Education Research) in their effort to develop a “Center for Large Class Pedagogy” here at Virginia Tech
  - Received private training on the new iClicker2 as well as on new online resources for teaching principles of economics

- Incentives for teaching and learning through distance education
- Creation of flexible classroom spaces that fully support e-learning components
- Quality and availability of academic advising from orientation through graduation
  - In June 2011, Erika Perdue was hired as our new, full-time, Undergraduate Advisor. She has taken a strong role in ensuring that students are meeting all prerequisites in a timely manner so that they stay on track for graduation.
- Examples of STEM-related activities fostering entrepreneurship, science and technology policy, and ethics
Research and Innovation

Faculty awards/honors (e.g. Humboldt Fellowships; NSF CAREER awards, etc):
- **Haller**: February 25-26, 2011, Louisiana State University hosted *Bargaining, Evolution and Networks: A Conference in Honor of Hans Haller*
- **Salehi**: Appointed Associate Editor of *Middle East Development Journal*

Notable new research awards in 2011-12 (incl. PI's, Amount, Title and Funding Agency):
- **Ge**
  - ITSG (International Travel Supplemental Grant) award, Virginia Tech. 2011, $1600.
- **Salehi**
  - Economic Research Forum, Higher Education Incentives in the Arab World ($15,000)
  - Economic Research Forum, Inequality in the Arab World ($15,000)

Number of manuscripts, number of books and book chapters (CY 2011); list high impact papers:
- **Bahel**: 2 published papers
- **Dominiak**: 2 published papers
- **Ge**: 4 published papers
- **Gebremariam**: 4 published papers
- **Haller**: 3 published papers
- **Salehi**: published a book with Oxford University Press for Brookings Institution
  - 3 published papers
- **Spanos**: 5 published papers
- **Tideman**: 5 published papers

Number of presentations (CY 2011); notable invited lectures:
- **Bahel**: 1 invited seminar; 1 conference presentation
- **Ball**: 1 invited seminar; 2 conference presentations
- **Dominiak**: 1 conference presentation
- **Ge**: 2 conference presentations
- **Gebremariam**: 2 invited lectures; 1 conference presentation
- **Haller**: 1 invited lecture; 2 conference presentations
- **Macieira**: 4 conference presentations
- **Salehi**: 2 invited lectures; 3 invited seminars; 3 conference presentations
- **Spanos**: 1 invited seminar; 4 conference presentations
- Tideman: 2 invited seminars; 3 conference presentations
- Tsang: 4 invited seminars; 1 conference presentations
- Yang: 1 conference presentation

- **Links and support from university’s research investment institutes (ICTAS, VTCRI, VBI, Fralin, VTTI, ISCE, ICAT):**

- **Number of post-doctoral positions in STEM-H research areas:**

- **Examples of links with NCR for research into issues of security and resiliency:**

- **Examples of partnerships with external collaborators which have enabled VT to compete more effectively for external funding:**
  - Ashley: Collaborations with Chris Parmeter at the University of Miami, Haichun Ye at the Shanghai University of Finance and Economics, Randall Verbrugge at the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Scott Gilbert at Southern Illinois University, and David Rapach at St. Louis University
  - Ball: Collaborations with Catherine Eckel (University of Texas), Rachel Croson (University of Texas), Chetan Dave (New York University), Jason Aimone (Virginia Tech Carilion Research Institute)
  - Salehi: Continued Grants
    - Family Planning and Education of Rural Women in Iran, Gender and Economic Research for Policy Analysis (GERPA) Program, a Grant Facility of the World Bank, $30,000. Completed in September 2011.
    - Inequality of Opportunity in the Middle East and North Africa, with Ragui Assaad and Nadia Belhaj Hassine, Economic Research Forum ($210,000)
  - Tideman: Organized a conference in Blacksburg, December 17-19, 2011 where 12 scholars gathered to discuss the shape of a philosophical framework based on the postulate that all people have equal rights to natural opportunities
Engagement: “The Virginia Tech Experience”

➢ Faculty service (Editorships, NSF/NIH program managers or panel members, leadership positions in professional societies):
  o **Ashley:** Refereed for *International Journal of Forecasting*
  o **Bahel:** Referee for scholarly journals:
    ▪ *Social Choice and Welfare*
    ▪ *Mathematical Social Sciences*
    ▪ *Canadian Journal of Economics*
  o **Ball**
    ▪ Served on the NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Panel, February 10-13
    ▪ Served as a National Science Foundation Reviewer
    ▪ Referee for several journals including:
      • AER
      • JEBO
      • Southern Economics Journal
      • Experimental Economics
  o **Dominiak:** Referee for the following journals:
    ▪ *Journal of Economic Theory*
    ▪ *Mathematical Social Sciences*
    ▪ *Theory and Decision and Judgment and Decision Making*
  o **Ge:**
    ▪ Discussed a paper at the Southern Economic Association 2011 Annual Conference
    ▪ Referee for the following journals:
      • Economic Bulletin
      • Economic Inquiry
      • Journal of Labor Economics
      • Labour Economics
      • Southern Economic Journal
  o **Haller:**
    ▪ Referee for the following journals:
      • Games and Economic Behavior
      • Journal of Mathematical Economics
      • Mathematical Finance
      • Quantitative Finance
    ▪ Associate Editor for:
      • Journal of Economics
      • International Game Theory Review
      • The Manchester School of Economics
Macieira:
  - Referee for:
    - NSF
    - International Game Theory Review
    - Journal of Industrial Economics

Salehi:
  - Associate Editor, Middle East Development Journal.
  - Chair, Advisory Committee of the Economic Research Forum (ERF)
  - Thematic Leader, Research Program on Inequality, ERF (define and implement a research program of about $250,000 annually).
  - Chair and member of the Founding Board of Directors, International Iranian Economics Association (IIEA), registered in the US and headquartered in The London Middle East Institute, SOAS, University of London.
  - Reviewed for Quarterly Review of Finance and Economics
  - Interviewed and quoted in media reports, including the NYT, NPR.
  - Appeared in Council on Council on Foreign Relations

Spanos:
  - Co-editor of the “Advanced Studies in Theoretical and Applied Econometrics (ASTA) series” for Springer-Verlag
  - Referee for the following Journals:
    - Communications in Statistics: Theory and Methods
    - Econometric Theory
    - Philosophy of Science
    - British Journal for the Philosophy of Science
    - Journal of Economic Methodology
    - Synthese
    - AStA Advances in Statistical Analysis

Tideman:
  - Editor of the on-line journal, Voting matters
  - Referee for the following journals:
    - Politics, Philosophy and Economics
    - American Journal of Economics and Sociology
    - European Journal of Political Economy, Environment and Planning
    - Public Choice
    - Party Politics
  - Reviewed a book proposal for Cambridge University Press
Trost:
- Reviewed manuscripts for the Southern Economics Journal and the Journal of Cultural Economics
- Regularly exchange ideas with colleagues both at Virginia Tech and elsewhere concerning large class teaching methods – especially the use of technology in the classroom

Tsang:
- Provided phone interviews with A1 Chinese Radio (Toronto, Canada) on macroeconomic issues

Examples of economic development (e.g., industrial partnerships, patents):

Study Abroad programs:

PK-12 STEM programs:

Examples of Community and Student Engagement:
- Ashley
  - Severed on 13 Ph.D. Committees and Co-Chaired 2
  - Worked with faculty from 6 other departments on campus to submit a Grant proposal to NSF.
  - Participated in many service activities for the University, including:
    - Director of Graduate Studies (and also chaired the Graduate Policies Committee)
    - College Honorifics Committee
    - Served on Economics Department Head Search Committee
    - Served on Agricultural and Applied Economics Department Head Search Committee
    - Served on Department Qualifying Exam Committee
    - Peer-reviewed teaching of Joao Macieira
    - Department Network Liaison
    - Co-mentored Byron Tsang (with Professor Cothren)
    - Mentored Grace Li

- Bahel
  - Served on 1 Ph.D. Committee and Co-Chaired 1
  - Served on the Economics Department Head Search Committee
  - Represented the department of Economics at the College of Science Open House - Fall 2011
  - Had several discussions with Don Barber, a retired VT Vet School professor, who wanted to know more about the determinants of the oil price on the world market.
Ball
- She was also interviewed for an article that was published in the December 4, 2011 edition of The Virginian-Pilot regarding ethanol policy.
- Served on 5 Ph.D. committees, Chaired 1, and Chaired 1 Master’s committee
- University and Department Service:
  - ECON representative to College of Science Promotion and Tenure Committee
  - ECON representative to College of Science Cluster Committee
  - ECON representative to College of Science Diversity Committee
  - Presentation “Class Policies for an Easier Semester” at Graduate School GTA Phase 1 Workshop on 8/16/11.
  - Member of Undergraduate Honor System (Panelist)
  - Member of Graduate Honor System (Panelist)
  - Facilitator for Graduate Honor System
  - Member of Department Head Search Committee
  - Member of Personnel committee (spring 2011) chair (fall 2011)
  - Mentor for Joe Yang and Adam Dominiak
  - Director of the 5-year BA/MA program

Dominiak
- Served on 1 Ph.D. committee
- Served on Department Qualifying Exam Committee
- Hosted an invited speaker for a department seminar

Ge
- Served on 6 Ph.D. committees and Chaired 2
- Serve as Vice President of the College of Science Faculty Association
- Serve as a member of the College of Science Curriculum Committee
- Serve on Graduate Program Committee for the department
- Serve on Departmental Faculty Annual Review Committee
- Hosted an invited speaker
- Assisted with nominating candidates for outstanding senior

Haller
- Served on 5 Ph.D. committees and Co-Chaired 3
- Served as Department Head

Macieira
- Served on 4 Ph.D. committees and Co-Chaired 2
- Member of Virginia Tech’s Committee for Outreach and International Affairs (COIA). Participated in meetings discussing and voting outreach initiatives.
- Member of Recruiting Committee, Department of Economics. Examined applications from spousal candidates and prospective departmental heads.
- Member of Virginia Tech’s Committee for Curricula (COSCUR). Participated in meetings discussing course curricula.
- **Salehi**
  - Served on 3 Ph.D. committees and Chaired 3
  - Served on departmental Graduate Program Committee

- **Spanos**
  - Chair 3 Ph.D. Committees
  - Serve on College Promotion and Tenure Committee
  - Serve on departmental Graduate Program Committee

- **Tideman**
  - Served on 2 Ph.D. committees, Chaired 1
  - Mentor to Suqin Ge

- **Trost**
  - Served as a departmental career advisor
  - Frequently communicate with students who are interested in majoring in economics
  - Served on 1 Ph.D.
  - Served as Principles of Economics coordinator
    - oversee and observe the graduate student instructors and meeting with them to talk about their teaching and discuss what is going well and what may need improvement
    - ensure consistency (in terms of course content and grading) across all instructors
    - maintain a scholar site to make teaching resources more available to the instructors
  - Serve as coordinator for all first-year graduate teaching assistants – meet with them to have conversations about the first-year work load and the importance of balancing coursework and their duties as teaching assistants

- **Tsang**
  - Served on 6 Ph.D. committees and Chaired 2
  - Served on the departmental Qualifying Exam Committee

- **Yang**
  - Served on 8 Ph.D. committees
  - Served on Pamplin College of Business commencement committee
  - Served on department Qualifying Exam Committee
  - Served on department Junior Recruitment Committee
  - Served on department seminar-organizing committee

➤ **International collaborations and programs (include description along with region and country):**

- **Bahel**: In June 2011, worked with the European Association of Environmental and Resource Economists (EAERE)

- **Ball**: Starting a new project with Antoinette Baujard (University Jean Monnet, Saint Etienne, France) to look at value judgments economists make (and don’t think they are making) that impact the way that students learn social values from their economics courses. It builds on part of the experimental literature (for example, Frank, Gilovich and Regan’s paper on whether economics students, who tend to be less pro-social than other students are “born” or “made”) as well as on
Antoinette’s work on the extent to which economics is a normative or positive science.

- **Dominiak:** Collaborations with J.P. Lefort (France) and P. Dursch
  - New project with Juergen Eichenberger (University of Heidelberg) to characterize epistemic conditions in the vein of Aumann and Brandenburger (1995) which are sufficient for players to play strategies generating an “Equilibrium in Beliefs”, a notion of an equilibrium in games which generalizes that of Nash (1950) within the class of Choquet expected utility preferences of Schmeidler (1989).
  - New project with Jean-Phillipe Lefort (University Paris Deauphine) to establish necessary and sufficient conditions under which the “No-Trade Theorem” of Milgrom and Stokey (1982) holds true within the class of non-expected and non-convex utility preferences such as the Choquet expected utility model or the smooth ambiguity models of Klibanoff, Marinacchi, and Mukerji (2005).

- **Ge**
  - Serves as an affiliated member of the Trade and Development Research Program of Economic Research Center (ERC) of HK Institute of Asian Pacific Studies at Chinese University of Hong Kong.
  - Assist researchers at Fudan University to conduct new extensive surveys on rural-to-urban migration in China. China now has more than 200 million migrants, and they are important forces underlying its trade expansion and economic development in recent years. These surveys intend to better understand the characteristics, trends, driving forces and impacts of migration in China. I have contributed to survey design and organization of the dataset. These surveys will not only be foundations for exciting new research projects for me and for researchers at Fudan University, but also become valuable asset for the research community as a whole in the future.

- **Macieira:** Was granted an Intra-Mural funding of $2,500 for a joint project with Diogo Souza-Monteiro, a faculty member from University of Kent (UK) as part of a VT initiative to enhance cooperation with overseas universities.

- **Salehi:** Organized and taught Training Workshop on Measurements of Inequality of Opportunity and Inequality of Outcomes, October 17-20, 2011, Cairo, Egypt.

- **Tsang:** Continuing work as a researcher on a Direct Grant from the Chinese University of Hong Kong; the principal investigator is co-author Tin Cheuk Leung from the Chinese University of Hong Kong. The lump-sum amount of $40000 HKD (a bit less than $5000 USD) is now being spent on hiring research assistants and purchasing new data for various projects on the Hong Kong housing market.
Any additional examples that address goals in Virginia Tech’s “Plan for a New Horizon”:

- Partnerships with businesses and government that “address critical and complex problems by co-locating researchers and practitioners in ‘living labs’ where users, in partnership with researchers, drive problem formulation and research design”
- Examples leveraging the strengths of our business programs to provide a competitive advantage
- Examples of strategic global investment, development of research programs on energy and critical technologies, informatics, infrastructure, policy and planning at VT’s international centers

Diversity

One to two notable activities by students, faculty and/or staff activities promoting diversity:

- **Ball:** In 2009, identified a Latina student doing strong work in economics who was participating in MAOP. She was interested in exploring whether graduate work in economics was right for her. She was encouraged her to take a graduate course and worked with Dr. Ball for her course planning for the 5 year BA/MA program. When an opportunity arose, Dr. Ball encouraged our Graduate Director to offer her funding and a GTA position, despite the fact that funding master’s students is not our practice. Dr. Ball did independent research with her Fall 2010 and Spring 2011 that is expected to result in a publication. Dr. Ball helped her to find a very good job where she would use her economics training. In the long run it’s expected that she will attend graduate school and add to the very small number of Latina women academics.

- **Ge:**
  - Works with labor market discrimination at both the undergraduate and graduate levels and is currently working on a project on statistical discrimination finding new evidence that statistical discrimination exists among black high-school workers.
  - Helped to identify potential female candidates for the department head position.


- **Trost:** Received training and certification as a Virginia Tech “Safe Space” from the LGBTU Office of Virginia Tech

Diversity awards and honors (e.g., MAOP scholarships; McNair Scholars):