

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY
Department of Economics

Chair's Annual Update

Date: November 2010

To: Graduate Alumni and Alumnae

From: Bill Rogerson, Chair

Nobel Prize to Dale Mortensen

The biggest and most exciting news from the Department of Economics this year is of course the award of the Nobel Prize in Economics to our own Dale Mortensen for his seminal work on search theory and its application to labor markets. Normal life around the department was replaced for a few weeks by a never-ending series of parties and celebrations. Perhaps the highlight of the entire period was the moment that occurred during a celebratory lunch the Dean hosted for the entire economics department where Dale demonstrated to all of us his mastery of the fine art of “sabrage” which involves rather forcefully and dramatically opening a bottle of champagne with a saber! This was a swashbuckling side of Dale most of us had never seen before. We are planning a conference this spring to further celebrate Dale and his research and will make sure to inform you about the date when it is chosen in case you wish to attend.

Department Administration

As I begin my first year as chair, taking over from Chuck Manski, I would like to begin by thanking Chuck on behalf of the entire Northwestern economics community for the wonderfully able job he has done over the past three years. The department has thrived under his thoughtful and steady leadership. Thanks, Chuck, for your three years of dedicated service! Fortunately, the two key administrators that have so ably supported Chuck over the last three years are remaining in place and this will help ensure a smooth transition. Namely, Ian Savage will continue to serve as associate chair and Margene Lehman will continue to serve as business administrator. For the last fifteen years or so the chair has always appointed an “executive planning committee” that functions both as the senior recruiting committee for the department and also provides the chair with ongoing advice on important matters as they arise. This year the members of the executive planning committee are Larry Christiano, Jeff Ely, Aviv Nevo, Elie Tamer, Mike Whinston, and Asher Wolinsky. Igal Hendel and Marciano Siniscalchi head up graduate admissions. Elie Tamer continues as Director of Graduate Studies, Aviv Nevo as Placement Director, and Jeff Ely as Chair of Junior Recruiting. Mark Witte continues to direct our undergraduate program, with Bob Gordon as chair of the undergraduate committee.

Faculty Transitions

This fall we welcome Cynthia Kinnan as an assistant professor. She completed her dissertation at MIT. Her research interests are in development economics. Alumnus Benjamin Chabot joins

us as an adjunct assistant professor. His full-time appointment is at the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago and he will be teaching economic history courses for us. I have already heard great reports back from the students who are taking Ben's course this fall and it is a pleasure to welcome him back to Northwestern.

Faculty Promotions and Honors

Marciano Siniscalchi was promoted to full professor and Elie Tamer was been appointed to the Breen Family Professorship. This is a rotating endowed chair earmarked for mid-career faculty.

Steffen Habermalz, Bill Rogerson, Morty Shapiro, Eric Shultz and Mark Witte were elected to the annual Associated Student Government Faculty Honor Roll. Students voted on-line for the honor roll. Votes were weighted according to the size of the classes taught by faculty members. Eric Schulz has been elected to the honor roll every year since 2002. At the same time, students also voted an honor roll of administrators, and Ron Braeutigam, Hilarie Lieb, Morty Shapiro, and Mark Witte were elected. I would particularly like to congratulate Mark Witte and Morty Shapiro for the formidable accomplishment of appearing on both honor rolls!

Erwin Plein Nemmers Prize in Economics

The University has announced that Elhanan Helpman of Harvard University is the 2010 winner of the Erwin Plein Nemmers Prize in Economics. The biennial honor is bestowed on an outstanding economist who has not yet won the Nobel Prize. Professor Helpman's work deals with international trade, economic growth, and the political economy of trade policy. He will be making two visits to Northwestern in the Spring quarters of 2011 and 2012.

The Susan Bies Lecture

Thanks to a generous endowment from one of our alumnae Susan Bies (PhD 1972), who was until recently a member of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, we hold a special departmental lecture each year on economic policy given by a distinguished external speaker. It alternates between macro and micro-oriented lectures. In April 2010, Jean Claude Trichet, President of the European Central Bank, gave a lecture on "What Central Banks Can Do in a Crisis."

Placement Report

Professor Aviv Nevo, Director of Graduate Placement, reports that the downturn in the economy has affected the market for new PhDs. Several academic departments and private employers were off the market and even those that were hiring limited the number of offers. Despite this, all of our students received one or more offers. We placed our students at: Acumen LLC, Carleton College, Federal Reserve Bank Board of Governors, Federal Trade Commission, Goldman Sachs, Pennsylvania State University, Royal Holloway College (UK), St Gallen University (Switzerland), Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Université de Toulouse, University of California at Berkeley, University of Michigan, University of Oxford (UK), University of Rochester, University of Toronto, and the University of Western Ontario.

Eisner Fellowship

Each year, we award a fellowship in honor of our late colleague Robert Eisner. This fellowship is partly supported by contributions made to the fund that many of our alumni contribute to. This fellowship is awarded annually to a graduate student who has distinguished him- or herself in *both* teaching and research. For 2010-11, the fellowship is split between Nicholas Lehmann-Ziebarth and Kota Saito.

College Federal Reserve Challenge

Our team of undergraduates, coached by Mark Witte, beat 17 teams locally to advance to the national finals in Washington in December 2009 of the annual College Federal Reserve Challenge. Teams have to prepare a presentation on the future course of monetary policy. This is the sixth year in a row that NU has advanced to the finals. We have won it three times.