The CPR Connection

Director's Corner

Christine Himes, Director and Senior Research Associate of the Center for Policy Research, Interim Associate Dean of the Maxwell School, and Maxwell Professor of Sociology.

As I finish my second year as director of CPR I find that I am still learning from the many talented researchers in our center. This year we hosted, or co-hosted, several speakers, seminars, and workshops that covered a wide range of topics—aging, health, education, budgeting, and public finance. These activities bring many exciting scholars to campus and are a valuable opportunity for students and faculty to interact.

Over the past two years we have worked on defining the focus of research efforts in the center, including aging and health studies; educational finance and policy; public finance; social welfare, poverty and income security; urban and regional studies; and econometrics methodology. Building on these areas will be our priority in coming years. CPR continues to be a place where faculty are involved in research touching on many of the most pressing issues of the day; tax reform, education finance, health care reform, and Social Security, to name a few.

This year we welcomed one new research associate to CPR, Gretchen Purser, a new faculty member in the Sociology department and said goodbye to our long-time friend, Debbie Freund, who left in the fall to head the Claremont Graduate University. Along with the rest of Maxwell, CPR is eager to welcome our new Dean, Jim Steinberg, in July. CPR was well-represented in the dean search with Andrew London co-chairing the committee and Johnny Yinger and Len Burman serving as faculty representatives. For the past year Interim Dean Michael Wasylenko, a CPR associate, has ably lead the school and we are appreciative of his efforts. We look forward to working with Jim and continuing to move the Center forward.

Quote for the Day:

“What sculpture is to a block of marble, education is to the soul.”

-Joseph Addison (1672-1719)

23rd Annual Herbert Lourie Memorial Lecture on Health Policy
Barbara Starfield, MD, MPH
Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health, Baltimore, MD
Friday, October 21, 2011, 2:00 - 3:30 pm
Sheraton University Hotel, 801 University Avenue

Barbara Starfield is a renowned researcher, scholar and author, known throughout the world for her work in demonstrating the value of primary care. In addition to her academic appointments, she is also the director of the Johns Hopkins University Primary Care Policy Center.

This event is co-sponsored by the Center for Policy Research of the Maxwell School and the Central New York Community Foundation.

Contact Kelly Bogart at (315) 443-9040 or kbogart@maxwell.syr.edu for more information.
**Faculty Focus**

Amy Lutz (SOC), with Pamela Bennett (Johns Hopkins) and Lakshmi Jayaram (Virginia Tech), have an article from the Parenting and Schooling in Diverse Families Project entitled “Beyond the School Yard: Social Class Differences in Parenting and Youth Participation in Structured Activities” that was accepted for publication in *Sociology of Education*. The project was funded by the American Sociological Association Fund for the Advancement of the Discipline, Poverty and Race Research Action Council (PRRAC), and the Spencer Postdoctoral Fellowship program at the Johns Hopkins University. The research examines differences in level and type of extracurricular activity participation across social class among eighth grade students in diverse middle schools, how parents think about their children’s involvement in these activities, and school, neighborhood, and financial factors that relate to children’s participation in organized activities. Amy also has another article with Pamela Bennett that was published in 2009 in *Sociology of Education* which was recently featured prominently in the book Disintegration: The Splintering of Black America, by Eugene Robinson, Pulitzer Prize–winning journalist for the Washington Post.

On July 1st, Ross Rubenstein (PAIA) will become the Associate Dean and Chair of the newly merged Public Administration and International Affairs (PAIA). So, sadly, he’ll be leaving CPR for a time, but he hopes to return before long. Ross and Bob Bifulco also received a grant from the Say Yes to Education Foundation to fund “Say Yes to Education, Family Choices and Economic Development in Syracuse: An Initial Monitoring Report.”

David Popp (PAIA) received an NSF grant for the project "Using Scientific Publications to Evaluate Government R&D Spending: The Case of Energy." The grant comes from the Science & Innovation Policy Program of NSF. This research project will use data on scientific publications, patents, and government R&D spending from the United States, Japan, and Europe to assess the effect of government-sponsored energy R&D." In October, David will also begin a term as Associate Editor of the Journal of Environmental and Resource Economics.

John Yinger (PAIA/ECN) published the following article: “Municipal Bond Ratings and Citizens’ Rights,” in 2010 in *American Law and Economics Review*; as well as two articles with Bill Duncombe (PA) in the *Peabody Journal of Education*, both in 2011: “Are Education Cost Functions Ready for Prime Time? An Examination of their Validity and Reliability,” and “Introduction to the Special Issue on Costing Out.”


Madonna, along with Douglas Wolf (PAIA) and Nancy Folbre, received a grant from the Russell Sage Foundation for their project “Universal Coverage of Long-Term Care in the U.S.: Can We Get There From Here?,” which is currently being made into a conference volume for Russell Sage. Madonna also acted as a Panel Expert at the AARP Solutions Forum: Social Security and the Future of Retirement held in Washington DC in September.

Deborah Freund has departed CPR and SU to become the new president of Claremont Graduate University in Claremont, CA, a 2,200-student campus which awards Master’s and doctoral degrees. In her years at Syracuse, Debbie was a Distinguished Professor of Public Administration, as well as the former Vice Chancellor and Provost of Academic Affairs for the university. She was also instrumental in helping to bring about the Upstate Health Research Network (UHRN), acting as the research director for the project. We wish her the very best in her new position and envy her new climate.

On the heels of Debbie Freund's departure from CPR, William Horrace (ECN) has been named the Research Co-Director (with Sean Nicholson, Cornell University) of the Upstate Health Research Network (UHRN). Horrace is responsible for the overall research direction of the UHRN, the research consulting
wing of FAIR Health Inc. http://www.fairhealth.us.org/, which is under the direction of Art Thomas (SU School of Information Studies-iSchool), Director of UHRN.

FAIR Health was established in 2009 as an independent not-for-profit organization in response to then-New York State Attorney General Andrew Cuomo’s investigation into one of the insurance industry’s methods for determining reimbursement rates for patients who seek care from out-of-network providers. The investigation determined that such reimbursement policies were conflict-laden, potentially flawed, and opaque to patients seeking cost information. FAIR Health was created to serve as an independent, objective, and transparent source of healthcare reimbursement data for consumers, insurers, healthcare providers, researchers, analysts, and policymakers.

The Center for Policy Research is UHRN’s central research hub, and the Maxwell School is its central computing and data warehousing facility. CPR researchers analyze private health insurers’ claims data to determine usual and customary rates for medical and dental procedures across the nation, which are used to determine out-of-network reimbursement rates for privately insured patients. Horrace’s primary job as Co-Director is to ensure that the data are analyzed using best econometric and statistical practices. The CPR research team currently consists of Solomon Tesfu (post-doctoral researcher, ECN), Andrew Friedson (graduate student, ECN), Allison Marier (graduate student, ECN), and Nuno Mota (graduate student, ECN), along with Brian Dempsey (Maxwell School graduate student, ECN) and Eldar Beiseitov (Maxwell School, ECN). CPR’s Associate Director Peg Austin oversees the research budget. Other UHRN research affiliates are located in the SU iSchool, at Cornell University, University of Colorado-Denver, University of Rochester, SUNY – Albany and Upstate Medical Center.

Robert Bifulco (PAIA), along with Jason M. Fletcher, and Stephen L. Ross, published “The Effect of Classmate Characteristics on Post-secondary Outcomes: Evidence from the Add Health,” American Economic Journal: Economic Policy. This paper uses a within-school/across-cohort design to present new evidence of the effects of high school classmate characteristics on a wide range of post-secondary outcomes. We find that increases in the percent of classmates with college-educated mothers decreases the likelihood of dropping out and increases the likelihood of attending college, despite showing no impact on a range of in-school achievement, attitudes, and behaviors. The percent of students from disadvantaged minority groups does not show any effects on post-secondary outcomes, but is associated with students reporting less caring student-teacher relationships and increased prevalence of some undesirable student behaviors during high school.

William Duncombe (PAIA) and Phil Joyce, of The University of Maryland, have been named the new co-editors of Public Budgeting & Finance, officially taking over the reins of the prestigious PA journal beginning July 1st.

Thomas Dennison (PAIA) will be working on a new project beginning June 1st. Tom will be the faculty director of The Lerner Center for Public Health Promotion, a new University center to be located in CPR. The Lerner Center will build on the programs in place on campus and expand them to the broader CNY community with additional resources being made available by SU Alumnus Sid Lerner and his wife Helene. Tom will be supported by a program director and graduate students in the CNYMPh program. This summer will be a time for planning, and once staff is in place this new effort will, we hope, offer new interdisciplinary opportunities across SU’s schools and colleges to engage students and faculty with community partners in the fight against preventable diseases and other public health problems.

We would like to welcome Peter Wilcoxen (PAIA/ECN) to CPR as our newest senior research associate. Pete is an Associate Professor of Public Administration and Economics, whose specialization lies in natural resource and environmental economics. He is also the Director of the Center for Environmental Policy and Administration (CEPA). CEPA is an interdisciplinary center within the Maxwell School which explores environmental issues from an integrated perspective that considers technical, social, and humanistic aspects of environmental matters and prepares leaders who can blend those dimensions as they confront the world’s complex environmental challenges. It brings together faculty and graduate students from nearly all of Maxwell departments including Anthropology, Economics, Geography, Political Science, Public Administration, Public Affairs, and Sociology.

Community Calendar

CPR announces the following calendar of events:

January - SU Basketball game
February - Syracuse Stage
March - Syracuse Stage
April - CPR Game Day
May - Bowling
June - CPR Picnic
July - Kickball game
August - Syracuse Chiefs game
September - MLK School Supplies: Art, Music & Literature
October - Apple Picking
November - Warm Clothing Drive
December - Holiday Families and Holiday Party
Grad Bag

Our MPA and Ph.D. graduate students here in CPR have been diligently working on writing, presenting, publishing, and focusing on many varied projects. Congratulations are in order for all their recent accomplishments.

Kerri McGaughey Raissian (PAIA) presented a co-authored paper at the GGP User Conference in Budapest, Hungary on May 23, 2011. Kerri is also the recipient of a Doris Duke Fellowship for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect. This fellowship is for two years and it starts in August 2011. Congrats Kerri!

Amanda Ross (ECN) successfully defended her dissertation this April. Dr. Ross has accepted a position as Assistant Professor at West Virginia University and starts her new duties in August. Amanda’s job market paper has also received a revise and resubmit status at Regional Science and Urban Economics.

Andrew Friedson (ECN) has been invited to present a part of his dissertation “Medical Malpractice Damage Caps and the Price of Obstetrics and Gynecology Procedures” at the 2011 International Health Economics Association Congress in Toronto, Canada this summer.

Ryan Yeung (PAIA) presented “The Effect of East Asian Immigrant Composition on Student Achievement: Evidence from New York” at the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management and the Association for Education Finance and Policy annual meetings this past March.

Biff Jones (PAIA) has co-authored a new article in Health Affairs, “The Social Cost of Adverse Medical Events, and What We Can Do about It,” with John C. Goodman, and Pamela Villareal, of the National Center for Policy Analysis.

CPR post graduate students have fared very well since graduation. Here we have a few updates on where they are and what they are doing. Do you remember…?

Ryan Sullivan (ECN, 2010) is in a tenured-track position at the Defense Resources Management Institute (DRMI), teaching both at the main Monterey, CA campus and at various overseas locations such as Kazakhstan, Albania, Congo, and Malaysia. Happy travels to Ryan in his new job!

All is well in sunny Tennessee for former CPR Graduate, Donald Bruce (ECN, 1999), Associate Professor, Center for Business & Economic Research; Graduate Director, Graduate of Economics at The University of Tennessee in Knoxville. His daughter Annie, turned four years old this April, and she keeps him and his wife SU Ph.D., graduate, Jennifer (Howes) Bruce (Mathematics, 2002) on their toes. Don was also elected to the National Tax Association (NTA) board and is now in year two of a three-year term.

Maria Brown (SS, 2010) will be joining the staff of the School of Social Work this fall as a Professor of Practice. Maria is currently working part time here at CPR and is the Research Coordinator with the Rodney and Marjorie Fink Institute at Menorah Park for Applied Research on Aging (IMPARA). Congrats Maria!

Dr. Long Liu (ECN, 2008), Assistant Professor of Economics, at the University of Texas at San Antonio, was the recipient of The University of Texas, College of Business Faculty Awards: Dean’s Research Excellence Award for Tenure-Track Faculty 2011. Since going to UTSA in 2008, Liu has accumulated nine publications in highly-ranked journals in the field of econometrics. His research is focused on panel data problems, spatial regression and applied econometrics issues.

Phuong Hoang Nguyen (PA, 2010) defended his dissertation in December and is currently an Assistant Professor, holding joint appointments at the School of Urban and Regional Planning and Public Policy Center, at the University of Iowa. Congratulations on the joint appointment!

CPR hosts an Econometrics brownbag, “What’s New in Econometrics.” It’s a lunchtime seminar where graduate students (or anyone that’s interested) come together to watch a video about a new econometrics method. They will be holding several lunches over the summer. Contact Kerri Raissian at keraissi@maxwell.syr.edu if you are in the neighborhood. You are welcome to join in the fun.

Alumni News

We look forward to including your alumni news in this newsletter. If there is something you would like to see appear in the next issue, please send it to Mary J. Santy at: mjsanty@maxwell.syr.edu
It has been, and continues to be, a very busy year for the staff of CPR. Peggy Austin is celebrating 28 years at SU, and during that time, her daughters, Cassandra and Michelle, have attended, and with Michelle’s graduation this May, have completed their undergraduate studies here. Michelle graduated summa cum laude with a degree in English with Distinction.

Martha Bonney has also kept extremely busy over the past year, continuing her work with refugees in the Syracuse area, helping to teach them English, citizenship and basic math through Literacy Volunteers. She also volunteered again this year helping prepare tax returns for low- and middle-income people.

The CPR staff extended family continues to grow. Mary Santy became a grandmother for a second time to grandson, Michael Thomas. She is also awaiting the birth of her third grandchild in late June, which they’re “hoping is a girl, but they’re planning for a boy.”

Kitty Nasto’s family has also expanded. Kitty is now the grandmother to another lovely granddaughter, Emma, who joined big sister, Claire, last year. Kitty’s youngest daughter, Lindsay was also married last year, so her family could be experiencing a population explosion of its own.

Candi Patterson organized a group of young girls to participate in the Expanding Your Horizons (EYH) conference at Cornell University in April. The goals of the conference is to stimulate the girls’ interest in math and science through hands-on activities, to provide them with female scientist role models, and to foster awareness of opportunities in math and science-related careers. The conference is for girls in grades 7 through 9. The event was attended by hundreds of young women from around the state, including Mackenzie Bogart, daughter of staff member Kelly Bogart. Mackenzie had a fantastic time learning about birds, grafting plants and mixing chemicals, and one day hopes to attend Cornell to become a veterinarian.

Kelly Bogart’s time has actually become less hectic in the last year due to finally completing her undergraduate degree, earning a BA in History with a minor in Fine Arts in May 2010. After a few semesters of relative peace and free time, she is looking into graduate programs.

When Roseann Presutti joined the staff in CPR back in 2007 she was quite a different person than who she is today. She had a different name, a different marital status, but we knew she had a bright future. Our Roseann DiMarzo was born and raised in Brooklyn, NY, the middle child of 3 sisters, which must be where she gets her incredible patience from. She graduated from SU in 2001 from the Newhouse School of Public Communications with a degree in television/radio/film production. “After graduating I returned to New York City and worked as a post-production producer for Crew Cuts, an editing company that works mostly on television commercials and short films.” In 2007, Roseann moved back to the Syracuse area to be closer to her now-husband, Adam, who is from Seneca Falls, NY. Roseann and Adam married in September 2009 and bought a home in Marcellus, where they live with Izzy, their silky terrier and “self-made boss of our house.”

Roseann’s return to the area also brought her back to SU for a career, and while it may not be as interesting as working in television, we have our moments and we’re thrilled to have her here as part of our team. She runs the front desk with effortless good grace and a smile for everyone who comes into the Center. “I started working at CPR in September of 2007 as the receptionist and staff support to some of the faculty in the center. I have really enjoyed my 3+ years here and all of the interesting people I’ve met, in CPR and in Maxwell as a whole. I have made some great friends, and while some of them have been grad students who have since moved on, it has been nice keeping in touch with them and now I have friends to visit in different parts of the country.” Many things have changed for Roseann since returning to SU and they’re continuing to change and her future is now even brighter. “I am also excited for the future here as my family and the CPR family continue to grow – Adam and I are expecting our first baby in July!” The entire CPR family is excited for Roseann and Adam and thrilled to be adding another little bundle that we can cuddle during impromptu visits to the Center, guaranteed to stop all productive work for at least 30 minutes. Congratulations Roseann and Adam! We look forward to many years of baby pictures and milestones.

This July there will be a change in CPR that has been rumored to take place for several years now, but unfortunately, for us at least, it is now a certainty. After 27 years, Martha Bonney has decided to retire and leave us all to our own devices and questionable writing skills. She will be missed by so many people and on so many levels there is no way to list them all. She has been our resident English teacher, free legal aid specialist, and Yoda of all things grammar for many years. She was our Google before such a thing existed, and to this day, is arguably more accurate. It’s to be expected that we will all flounder a bit without her guidance, some of us more than others, but after so many years of helping us all be better at what we do, it’s also quite understandable.

“I started working at SU in April 1984. I began as a temp in the registration office
in Steele Hall. Some of you may recall the long lines of students that snaked out the back door of Steele Hall, past the dumpster (which really stank in hot weather), and onto the quad. A few months later, in August, Roy Bahl hired me for a secretarial position. By 1988-1989, I'd made the jump from hourly to salaried staff and moved back to the registration office. A year later, when my old job opened up I called Peg Austin on the phone and begged to come back. From there, Vernon Greene hired me to be his assistant at the All-University Gerontology Center, but four years later the Gero Center merged administratively with the Metropolitan Studies Program to form the Center for Policy Research. I had returned, and this time I had the good sense to stay.

My son David was 3 years old when I started. In 2005, after five years of classes and a lot of grousing by me to the rest of the CPR staff about how long it was taking him to finish, he graduated from the SU College of Engineering and Computer Science. While an undergraduate he had been given the opportunity to work on a research project funded by the Department of Defense and, with IST Professor Lee McKnight, he helped create a local company called Wireless Grids, both unique experiences I don't think he would have gotten at most other universities. Now he is a software engineer living in the UK.

I officially became recognized as an “information junkie” with the completion of a Master of Science in Library and Information Science degree at the iSchool in 2010. The technology we rely upon in CPR—especially computer hardware and software—has changed dramatically over the past 27 years. During the Jamaica Tax Project in the mid-1980s we received an electronic file of a paper from Harvard University that had been transmitted over a phone line so we could format it for publication. Each line of text was exactly 88 characters long but the 88th character of each line had disappeared, and Esther Gray assigned me to replace the missing text. Nowadays electronic files move effortlessly at the speed of light—or they don’t move at all. Nothing is halfway anymore, which is both better and worse.

A few faculty have been here the whole time, or longer. Jan Ondrich, for whom Mark Miller designed a special printer driver so all the subscripts and superscripts would line up perfectly. Duke Kao, always cheerful, gracious, and the economist I’d want by my side if attacked by a ninja. Last but not least, Jerry Miner, a consummate gentleman who remains bloodied but unbowed in his lifelong battle with technology.

Grad students have come and gone. A few are memorable and I follow their careers with interest. You know who you are because every few years I send you a snippet of news or a note congratulating you on your latest achievement. It’s very satisfying to think that I contributed in some small way to your success, if only by typing or editing your dissertations.

But it’s my outstanding colleagues among the staff who have kept me here for so long, and they’re the people I’ll miss the most. They are the best teammates and human beings ever. When I need help with work, an ear to complain to, or a shoulder to lean on, they’re always there. I only hope they feel the same about me. But it’s time to move on. I’m taking all the family photos off my office wall, the two pairs of winter boots (one ankle high, one taller for deep snow) and the many tokens of friendship from past grad students off the shelf, and packing them into boxes.”

So it is with heavy hearts and our very best wishes that we begrudgingly allow Martha to desert us for a well-deserved retirement, but anyone who knows Martha knows that she won’t be just hanging around the house, bored and missing us. She has definite plans for her free time.

“After a few weeks of doing little but drinking iced coffee, reading historical biographies, and watching the birds from my front porch I’ll go back to work as a volunteer. For nearly four years I’ve been tutoring some of the thousands of refugees in Syracuse in English as a Second Language (ESL), citizenship, and basic arithmetic, and retirement gives me the freedom to do much more of that. My brother and sister have grown increasingly precious to me, and they live close by. I’ll visit my son occasionally, maybe travel a bit. The winters will still be long, but I won’t have to climb out of bed on dark mornings if I don’t want to. As they say in the theatre, it’s been a great run. ‘G’night Jerry.’”

And if we’re lucky she may decide to pop in and visit us once in a while too... but only if we’re very lucky and she doesn’t see a Home Depot on the way.

CPR Connection Editors:
Kelly Bogart, Roseann Presutti, and Mary Santy
The government has promised that this will not affect Social Security’s fiscal solvency because the funds will be paid back through a transfer of general tax revenues. But of course opponents, who had been asking for a 1 percent increase in the payroll tax to shore up the program during the aging of the babyboomers, fear that the payroll tax holiday may become a permanent reduction.

In 2010, Madonna Harrington Meyer (SOC) was invited to speak about changes in the US Social Security System as part of a series of conferences in Edinburgh, Scotland funded by the European Union Economic and Social Research Council, entitled “Rethinking Retirement.” The organizers of the conferences, and the forthcoming edited volume are Professors David Lain, Sarah Vickerstaff, and Wendy Loretto. “I was asked specifically to speak about legislative changes and proposals during the past 2 decades, such as the decision to delay the age of full retirement from 65 to 67 and to increase the penalty for taking early benefits from 20 percent to 30 percent. I was also asked to evaluate attempted policy changes, such as the discussions around privatization of Social Security.

It was riveting to see the similarities and differences in policy concerns between the various countries. For example, very low fertility and high immigration rates throughout much of the EU have those countries even more concerned than the US about delaying retirement, funding larger cohorts with relatively small cohorts, and defining benefits for immigrants. Additionally, massive national debts and some instances of very high unemployment, such as in Spain, have countries struggling even more than the US to position old age benefits within the overall economic health of the nation.

When I accepted the invitation, the idea that Congress and the President would join forces to pass and sign a FICA tax “holiday” was almost unthinkable. But by the time I spoke in Edinburgh on February 25, it had already happened. For 2011, the individual payroll tax was reduced from 6.2 to 4.2 percent and the employer contribution was kept at 6.2 percent. The impetus was to jump start the economy and create more jobs by putting $120 billion back in consumers’ pockets.

“The world is a book and those who do not travel read only one page.”
-Saint Augustine
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