I am delighted to join the department as the Head of the Department of Economics at UNI College of Business Administration. I began working here as of July 2017. I am replacing Fred Abraham who retired summer of 2017. Fred was a very effective and much-loved department head so I realize I have very large shoes to fill. Prior to joining the team at UNI, I was a professor and Faculty Senate Chair at Missouri State University in Springfield, Missouri. It was the valuable experience I gained as the Faculty Senate Chair with oversight over one thousand faculty members that helped shape and enhance my leadership skills and got me interested in pursuing a full-time administrative career. I am committed to the people and to the success of the Economics department. I look forward to making a life for myself and my husband in Cedar Falls.

There are a lot of changes already under way in the Economics department. We started the new academic year with two new faces in the department including mine. We hired Kyle Tobiason as an instructor in the department to fill the void left by Hans Isakson’s retirement. We are currently in the process of hiring a tenure-track faculty member to serve as an Assistant Professor starting in fall of 2018. It is never easy losing people who have worked here a long time and become part of the family. But it is also exciting to welcome new people aboard.

As you all already know, the Economics Department at UNI is a great place to work. I have thoroughly enjoyed ‘learning the ropes’ and getting to know the faculty, staff, and student workers in the Economics department as well as the energetic, motivated, and friendly Economics students. The faculty and staff in the Economics department are committed to student success and engagement. We have some of the greatest teachers in the College of Business. These are teachers who are passionate about teaching and who go above and beyond to help our students succeed professionally.

The Economics department is embarking on some exciting changes in the curriculum in an effort to respond to changes taking place in the industry/economy. To this effect the Economics Department is getting ready to introduce a Certificate in the Business of Health Care Administration. We are also at the beginning stages of a plan to introduce a certificate in Business Sustainability. As always, the Economics department continues to provide valuable support to the College of Business Administration by teaching courses in the Business Core.

Our majors continue to grow, keep in touch with us after they leave, and give back to us in various different ways. We appreciate the support we have received from our alums. I am very happy to see the close relationship our alums continue to maintain with the Economics faculty. I would like to be part of that tradition. I look forward to hearing from alums and to building strong relationships with them and with the community at large. I see the faculty, students, and alums as partners working together to make the Economics Department and the Economics program at UNI College of Business one of the most successful and sought-after programs in the country. Thank you for all you do! Cheers!

– Shar Self

One of the things about college teaching that is a little sad is we many times see so little of our students after they graduate. Most students leave the university and their professors behind them as they begin a new chapter in their lives. In our department especially, we get to know a lot of our students pretty well during their years here. We have small upper-division classes, a variety of programs such as undergraduate research, the European trip, and econ club events that enable us to spend considerable time with our students while they are here.

We do know many students maintain close contact with some of their high school teachers but all too often, the linkages are lost with professors. It may be because post-college life is substantially different than post-high school life. Or perhaps we are seen as less open to contact. We can assure you the latter is definitely not the case.

If you have a chance, take a few minutes and drop a line to professors you remember particularly well or you connected with. It would be nice to list your career path thus far, things you learned here that helped you and even some things we could be doing to help current students better prepare for life after UNI. And, don’t forget personal information: spouse, kids, hobbies, trips, etc. E-mail addresses are listed above and we can guarantee we will enjoy hearing from you.

Contact Us
imam.alam@uni.edu
shahina.amin@uni.edu
beverly.barber@uni.edu
david.hakes@uni.edu
lisa.jepsen@uni.edu
bryce.kanago@uni.edu
chris.lukasiewicz@uni.edu
kenneth.mccormick@uni.edu
alicia.rosburg@uni.edu
shar.self@uni.edu
david.surdam@uni.edu
kyle.tobiason@uni.edu
bulent.uyar@uni.edu

Connect With Us

Vol. 23, Spring 2018
When we make scholarship awards, we consider a variety of factors and some of our scholarships have different objectives. Some are given to our best students, some to those with the greatest need, and some to those with an excellent work ethic. In 2017-18 we were able to help 11 students!

The Mahmood Yousefi Scholarship was awarded to **Aaron Dzaboff** from Shueyville, Iowa. He is in the Business Economics emphasis and has a 3.76 GPA. He is a member of the Pre-Law Club as well as an economics tutor for student athletes.

**James MacDougall**, Shueyville, Iowa, has a 3.84 GPA and was awarded the Alumni Scholarship. James is in the Business Economics emphasis. James is a tutor for the department and is currently searching for employment after graduation.

**Davis Murphy** from Cresco, Iowa, was awarded the Charles Leavitt Scholarship. He is in the General Economics emphasis and has a 3.25 GPA. Davis is a member of the Economics Club. His future plans are undecided.

**Klayton Booth** is from Morning Sun, Iowa and has a 3.56 GPA. He is majoring in the Business Economics emphasis. Dirk’s future plans are to be an Actuarial Associate at Athene in West Des Moines starting in May.

The Thomas Amlie Scholarship was awarded to **Dalton Lillie** from Toddville, Iowa. Dalton is in the Applied Economics Analysis emphasis and has a 3.77 GPA. After graduation he will be working at Transamerica as an actuary.

**Toni Moeller** was the recipient of the Glasener Scholarship. Toni is from Tripoli, Iowa, majoring in the Business Economics Analysis emphasis with a 3.79 GPA. She will be returning to UNI next year for the MaCC program and to take the CPA exam. After graduation, she would like to work for a public accounting firm.

The annual Maurice Van Nostrand Scholarship was awarded to **Anthony Beyerink** from Carroll, Iowa. He is in the Business Economics emphasis and has a 3.85 GPA. Anthony has accepted a job as a Bank Examiner for the State of Iowa.

**Morgan Paca** was awarded the Jeff Scudder Economics Scholarship. Morgan is from Dubuque, Iowa. He has a 3.4 GPA and is in the Business Economics emphasis. Morgan has been a Recruiting Officer for the Economics Club for the past two years. Morgan will return to UNI after graduation to take the CPA review course.

Occasionally, we have someone who would like to give an award in memory of a loved one. This is an excellent way for a donor to recognize an important person or persons in their life. **Klayton Booth** was the recipient this year of just such an award. Klayton is from Morning Sun, Iowa and has a 3.56 GPA. He is majoring in the Business Economics emphasis and has served as a tutor for the Economics Department and is a member of the Economics Club. He plans to secure employment in the Des Moines area after graduation.

**Dirk Johnson** received the Emeritus Faculty Scholarship established to honor our retired faculty. From Harlan, Iowa, he is majoring in the Business Economics emphasis. Dirk’s future plans are to be a financial planner.

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Contributions

Contributions to our department scholarships are critical for supporting students as they struggle with increasing costs of higher education. Our alumni and friends have been extremely generous to us over the years and have helped us as we work to improve the quality of the economics program. Below is a list of donations received from January 1, 2017 through December 31, 2017 (apologies for any inadvertent mistakes or omissions).

$1,000 +
Joel Abrahamson
Janet M. Rives
David Surdam
Rachelle Yousefi

$500 - $999.99
Andrew & Jennifer Behrens
Matthew Cole

$250 - $499.99
Marshall & Theresa Blaine
Liz Dunshee Goke & Andy Goke
Lisa Jepsen & Mark Parmenter
Eric & Alicia Rosburg
Bulent Uyar

$100 to $249.99
Carrie & Derek Brown
Zac Doyle
Kelly & Scott Fricker
Robert Murphy & Steffanie Guess-Murphy

Other
Lyle Walter Fette
Ron & Betty Giddings
Dan & Phyllis Morrison
John & Helen Pantazis

Give Now?

Please consider sending a contribution to our scholarships by using the enclosed envelope. With the rising tuition costs, our students can use the help! Thanks!

Executive in Residence

The Economics Department was fortunate to host Kris Spazafomo, ’88, as an Executive in Residence. Kris is a Vice President and senior manager in the Investment Services Wealth Management group at American Funds, part of Capital Group. Kris met with several UNI Business clubs including the Economics Club, Finance Club, and Women in Business Club as well as two student leadership groups – Presidents’ Council and Business Student Ambassadors. Kris provided valuable advice on the hiring and promotion process, leadership skills and opportunities, and the value of grit and perseverance. Kris also provided an informative presentation to the economics faculty. Thank you, Kris, for spending your day investing in our students and for your continued support of our program!
Reflections from Jerry Ripperger, ‘87

Since graduating in 1987, I returned to campus for typical alumni activities including football and basketball games. I have also made several trips for work as the university was a Principal client.

Fortunately, in 2017, I was selected as the 2017 Alumni-in-Residence for the Department of Economics. I was thrilled to meet with students and instructors to share my professional experiences and to indicate how my major in economics helped my career.

Looking back, a lot has changed since I graduated in 1987. When I was studying economics, classes were held in Sabin Hall, very different from the Curris Business Building. Instructors used overhead projectors rather than laptops and smart boards. The campus is much more diverse and student experiences are much richer with more internships and study-abroad opportunities.

What hasn’t changed? Caring, supportive instructors are at the core of the economics department. The instructors genuinely wanted to know more about the business environment and what curriculum was used in my career. They were interested in learning what businesses look for in graduates today; and more importantly, what would be needed in the future.

Students were still focused on the same issues. What are employers looking for? How do I stand out to a prospective employer? Do you use what you learned in college?

As the Alumni-in-Residence, I had in-depth conversations with economics instructors about current trends and business needs. I also spoke to students during class time, answered their questions and shared professional insights.

I greatly benefited from my Economics degree professionally. It gave me a better perspective to clearly understand how decisions and issues impact not just for Principal but also clients. A clear benefit is that the instructors taught how to think critically and how to be a lifelong learner.

That evening, a panel discussion was held with all the Alums. I was honored to be introduced by Marissa Heinzerling. Marissa is a current UNI student and the daughter of Russ Heinzerling, my next-door neighbor from Dancer Hall and a close friend. The evening concluded with a reception and awards ceremony. The entire day was a very rewarding experience.

Not surprisingly, I left the day feeling invigorated and excited about the future of the Department of Economics and the University of Northern Iowa. Although 30 years have passed, the quality of the students and instructors is as impressive as ever.

I greatly appreciated the opportunity to spend time with Dr. Fred Abraham, recently retired head of the Department of Economics. Dr. Abraham was one of my favorite instructors at UNI. He has left an indelible mark on the university and will be missed. He modernized the department and was very attentive to the needs of both businesses and students.

I am equally excited to see what Dr. Shar Self, the new head of the Department of Economics, plans to do. She has identified areas where greater emphasis would be beneficial to current and future students.

One of those areas is data analytics. Executives and leaders are all talking about the importance of data analytics to bring greater insights. Integrating data analytics is important in today’s curriculum whether it be economics, finance, marketing or management. It impacts every part of an organization. Winning companies will leverage data to better understand their customers and anticipate their needs.

Go Panthers!
Five students participated in the Undergraduate Research Program for 2017. The students and the titles of their papers were:

- **Heather Bavido**: “Increased Siblings and the Hindrance of Adult Income”
- **Alyssa Dixon**: “Who is Against Immigration?”
- **Kaleb Luse**: “What Determines Graduation Rates?”
- **Chris McConahay**: “Determinants of Minutes Played Among Men’s College Basketball Players”
- **Nicholas Sailer**: “Demand for Life Insurance During the Great Recession”

Professor Amin advised Heather and Alyssa, Professor Imam advised Kaleb, and Professor Kanago advised Chris and Nick.

The students traveled with me to New York City in March to present their research projects at an undergraduate research conference affiliated with the Eastern Economic Association.

We also found some time to walk downtown to visit Grand Central Station and Times Square. I took them on a long walk through Hell’s Kitchen in search of a Thai restaurant and we did finally find one! We spent a lot of time walking through Central Park as it was a beautiful day and the students really enjoyed it.

Later, Chris McConahay and Kaleb Luse happened to be near a theatre that was about to let out and noticed a number of police officers. They were told that President Obama was attending a Broadway play and would be leaving shortly. They waited and were able to see him exiting the theater!

–Bryce Kanago

This year four papers were awarded prizes: Arijan Alagic’s paper, *An Analysis of the Sugar Industry with a Precursor to the Sugar Scandal of the 1960s*, Alyssa Dixon’s paper, *Who is For Integration?*, Toni Moeller’s paper, *Effects of the Cuban Embargo on American Agricultural Exports*, and Ethan Seidenkranz’s paper, *Income Inequality: Is It Really that Bad?*

Each of the winners received a monetary award from the Lawrence Jepson fund as well as a certificate for their achievement. Congratulations!
Internships and Co-ops

The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) produces a publication called *Job Outlook* 2018. According to their survey of employers, the top attributes of job candidates are: problem-solving skills, written skills, and analytical/quantitative skills. We are proud to say that Economics majors at UNI possess all three of these skills. For the last three years, we have had a 100 percent success rate in placement. Success rate is defined as graduates who have met their first destination goals, which include employment and continuing education. Internships definitely play a role in this success.

This year our students have interned in places such as John Deere Product Engineer Center in Waterloo, City of South Bend in Indiana, Transamerica in Florida, Workviva, Inc. in Ames, Wells Enterprise, Inc. in LeMars, Iowa, Farm Bureau Financial Services in Waterloo, Division of Banking at Rockwell Collins in Cedar Rapids, and Yantis & Associates Financial Advisors in Cedar Falls. Many of our students receive full-time position offers after the completion of their internship.

Every fall we organize a reception for returning interns. Students share their experiences with faculty and Economics Club members. This is a very rewarding experience for faculty as returning students often mention how the critical thinking and problem solving skills they learned in their Economics classes helped them excel in their internships. It also makes me very happy to see that our returning interns offer to assist other students who want to secure an internship. That said, our students still need help in securing internships and jobs. I humbly ask any alums who are in need of an intern or a graduate to reach out to me. You will not be disappointed.

–Shahina Amin

2017 Economics Interns

Standing: Evan Andrews, Nick Croston, Whitney Horras, Dalton Lillie

Sitting: Andrew Walker, Danielle Massey, DJ Johnson, Alaina Schulte

Shahina Amin named Lawrence M. Jepson International Professor

Professor of economics Shahina Amin has been named the Lawrence M. Jepson Professor of International Economics. As the Lawrence Jepson Professor, Dr. Amin is committed to providing opportunities for students to expand their knowledge of international economics and the global economy.

Activities planned for the year are an essay competition, extending study abroad scholarships to students, and organizing panel discussions on current international economics topics. A panel discussion on the economic impact of refugees in Iowa will be held in March.

Congratulations Shahina on this well earned professorship!

Who is Lawrence M. Jepson?

Lawrence Jepson was born in Denmark and immigrated to Iowa with his parents in the early 1900’s. Early in life he served as a blacksmith’s apprentice. Later he enrolled as a student at Iowa State Teachers College (now UNI) and, while an undergraduate, was instrumental in the creation of the Cedar Falls Chamber of Commerce. Upon leaving Cedar Falls, he became a Wall Street businessman who was keenly interested in how Iowa and the United States would fit into the emerging global economic framework.

In the development of the Keystone Mutual Fund, which he founded and ran until the late 1970’s, Jepson learned that the U.S. was not an island in the world economy. In the 1970’s, the U.S. felt little need for the rest of the world, other than oil. Lawrence Jepson knew otherwise.

He was aware of the importance of global interrelationships well before it was fashionable to be so.

When Jepson died in 1982, he bequeathed funds to the UNI Foundation to establish the Lawrence M. Jepson endowment to create a professorship and support activities in the area of international economics. Over the years, thousands of students, faculty, business leaders and community representatives have benefitted from his generosity. The endowment has been used to finance symposiums, speakers, faculty development, and student scholarships.

Not only a visionary, he had a strong sense of inter-generational responsibility. We owe a considerable debt of gratitude to Mr. Lawrence M. Jepson.
The trip to Italy was an experience I will never forget. The expectations I had going into the trip were altered and exceeded beyond what I could have imagined. While it was only an eight-day trip, I felt I was there for a month considering all I experienced. From ancient cultures, to art, to the history of the Catholic Church, I was immersed in history and a different culture in the most direct fashion.

One of the most interesting aspects of the trip was the great exposure to art. We visited four art museums/galleries (Vatican, Borghese, Uffizi, and Accademia) and viewed paintings, sculptures, tombs, pottery, etc. dating back to the B.C. era. The way in which these pieces were preserved for our viewing was unbelievable. Not only was the viewing of the art a unique experience, but the stories behind the art contributed to my development of a greater appreciation of not only the art, but also the ancient cultures that created such masterpieces.

The most memorable aspects of the trip include the typical attractions in Italy, such as the Vatican and the Colosseum, but some of my fondest memories are the times I spent with the other students experiencing the Italian culture. In our free time we explored the different cities by wandering the streets, stepping into the local shops, and embracing the two hour plus Italian style dinner. It was in these experiences when I felt the most immersed in the Italian culture; a culture very different from our own in America.

I cannot sum up the experience I had in Italy in such short words, but I can say that it is an experience I will never forget. Exposure to ancient cultures, different peoples, and different ways of life are not the only aspects of the trip I will remember; it is the relationships I built with the other students and staff that are one of the greatest outcomes of the experience. THANK YOU to all who helped make this trip possible! It was an experience I will remember forever and something I would not have been able to experience without such an amazing opportunity granted to me by the Department of Economics.

—Melissa Ament
The Economics Club started the 2017-2018 school year with our kick-off event including Minute to Win It games. Students enjoyed eating pizza and learning about the events the club had planned for the year. For the Minute to Win It games, students competed in teams which allowed them to catch up with old friends as well as meet new members. Also in September, the Economics and Pre-Law Clubs once again worked together to hand out water and cheer on runners at the Park-to-Park half marathon.

The club held its annual internship panel in October. Eight students shared about their internship experiences. Club members received a good overview of the variety of jobs available for economics majors. In late November, about thirty students competed in our annual Poker Night. Both the professors and students had a great time competing and getting to know each other outside of the classroom.

With all the changes taking place with the new tax reform, the Economics Club took advantage of the opportunity to hold a discussion panel on the economics of the tax reform in late January. Professors McCormick, Surdam, and Kanago did a great job of explaining both the changes and the impacts that the changes will have on the economy.

Club members are looking forward to our annual club trip to Chicago in early April. The trip allows club members to visit the Federal Reserve, learn about career opportunities, and network with UNI Business alumni. This year there are some exciting additions to the trip. First, we are expanding our visit to the Federal Reserve to include a meeting with a group based out of the Federal Reserve of New York. Second, the club will be visiting Northwestern Memorial Hospital and learn about career opportunities in the health care sector. We will also have our alumni panel at Northwestern Memorial Hospital.

Students have had great opportunities this year to develop both personally and professionally. There are many opportunities to interact with fellow students, alumni, and professors in a relaxed setting while learning a lot about economics. Many people have come together to make this year a success and a big thank you goes out to all of them!

Nick Meirick and Toni Moeller
Co-Presidents, Economics Club

I enjoyed my fifth anniversary as the Economics Club advisor this year! While the club provides a variety of exciting opportunities for students, two of my favorite activities are the panel discussions and the annual trip to Chicago. The panel discussions allow students to hear faculty perspectives on contemporary issues such as raising the minimum wage and tax reform.

The annual trip to Chicago has evolved over time but still includes a visit to the Federal Reserve. We also try to visit one other business/entity in or near Chicago. Two years ago we visited John Deere in Moline, last year we visited Ernst & Young, and this year we are visiting Northwestern Memorial Hospital. We added an alumni panel a few years ago, and it is now one of students’ favorite activities. The trip is a great cultural and professional opportunity. We take around 35 students each year, and the trip has gotten so popular that we now have a waitlist! If you are looking for a way to help support our students, consider donating to the Chicago trip via the Economics Advancement Fund. We would appreciate any support you can provide – no support is too small!

I look forward to another eventful year with the club and the activities we have planned. If you are ever in the area and are interested in meeting with the Economics Club, please let me know!

Alicia Rosburg, Economics Club Advisor
Emeritus Faculty

Fred Abraham
and
Janet Rives
Hans Isakson retired May 2017, having taught at UNI for 27 years. He started in the Finance Department as Director of the Real Estate Center, and came to the Economics Department in 1999. Hans has been a generous contributor to the Economics Advancement Fund.

Hans has a national reputation as a real estate appraisal expert and continues this work in his retirement.

Fred Abraham retired the first of August, 2017. Fred served 44 years in the Department of Economics, the last 27 years as Head, as well as the last four years as head of the Finance Department.

While at UNI, Fred served under 8 presidents, 8 provosts, and 11 different deans!

In retirement, Fred plans to work on his golf game, striving for the elusive “hole-in-one.”

KYLE TOBIASON
Instructor of Economics

Kyle started teaching in the Economics Department last fall. He has been teaching our Intro to Economics classes as well as a Principles of Micro section.

Kyle reports, “I’ve enjoyed my first year and I’m very grateful that I was given the opportunity to join the UNI family. The faculty has done a great job of making me feel part of the team and always have time for me when I have a question. The students seem driven and eager to learn about economics even though it isn’t their favorite subject. In my free time I like to work out on the farm and spend time with my three kids (16, 9, and 6).”

Kyle has a bachelor’s degree from Iowa State in Agri-Business/Agri-Finance. He earned his M.S. from the University of Arkansas in Agricultural Economics. Prior to coming to UNI he taught for twelve years as an adjunct at Kirkwood Community College.

David Hakes received the College of Business Administration Exceptional Impact Award for his work on the ancillaries that accompany Greg Mankiw’s Principles of Economics text. The Mankiw principles text is used by more college students than any other college textbook. David wrote the study guide that accompanies the Mankiw text, and he supervises the authors and content of the test bank, instructor’s manual, and digital support materials on the publisher’s website. The award is sponsored by Price Waterhouse.

David Surdam received the College of Business Administration Distinguished Service Award as well as the Distinguished Scholar Award. The Service Award is given annually to a CBA faculty member who demonstrates a significant amount of service to the department, college, university, and discipline. David was recognized for serving on the UNI Presidential Search Committee and compiling a report for the CBA Faculty Senate.

David received the Distinguished Scholar Award award for his numerous books and articles published since arriving at UNI.
**Faculty/Staff Updates**

**Imam Alam.** I went to Shanghai, China in 2017 and taught a course there for the College of Business. This was my first visit to China and I enjoyed it very much. I am still playing soccer regularly.

**Shahina Amin.** It was an exciting past year. I travelled with students to the Amazon rainforest in Brazil. It was the most amazing travel experience I ever had. I also travelled to Philadelphia to attend the American Economic Association Meetings where I was officially given the charge to be a board member and the Midwest representative of their standing Committee on the Status of Women in the Economics Profession (CSWEP). Also, I now advise the international students in the College of Business. We get the most international students at UNI. I have formed a club for them. We help international students to settle in and help them with their academic, social, and emotional needs as they come to a new country. In some ways, they remind me of my first days in the United States.

**Beverly Barber.** This year marks my 25th year at UNI—22 of them right here in the Economics Department. During those 22 years, Fred Abraham has been my supervisor. His retirement on August 1 has been a major adjustment for me. My new supervisor is a great person, but with a new administration comes change and change can be hard, especially as we get older!! I accompanied the Economics students to Italy in May which is the one place I have always dreamed of going. It is an experience I will never forget. On a personal note, I enjoy doing things with my four children and ten grandchildren!

**David Hakes.** I continue to teach large sections of principles, and money and banking. Much of my time is spent updating the study guide and supervising the ancillaries that accompany the best-selling principles of economics text, now in its 8th edition. I still enjoy racquetball and cycling, but I’m long past the time when I was getting better at either one of them.

**Lisa Jepsen.** I am in my third year as associate dean. I continue to learn many new things, especially about recruiting and marketing. I got back in the classroom this past fall, teaching Law and Economics, and I am teaching Principles of Micro this spring. I really missed teaching and am thrilled to be back! My husband and I continue to enjoy kayaking and snowshoeing. Two UNIBusiness colleagues talked me into hot yoga; I am giving it the old college try, even though I am sometimes the oldest person in the room.

**Bryce Kanago.** After many years of teaching Money and Banking and Intermediate Macro, I taught a section of Principles of Macro course this fall. I continue to run for fun and health as I find time. My mom celebrated her 95th birthday. My wife and I traveled to Cincinnati this summer which is her hometown.

**Chris Lukasiewicz.** I continue to teach Business Statistics and Decision Analytics (formerly known as Dec. Tech.) I’ve been busy trying to incorporate business-related topics and real world scenarios into all of my classes. In addition to teaching four sections each semester and a summer class, I’m constantly updating new scholarship awards for the College of Business as the Scholarship Program Coordinator. I have the unique opportunity to ensure that each and every CBA scholarship receives the most qualified candidate based on the eligibility criteria for each award. This is a time consuming yet very rewarding task. Outside the classroom, I completed my first year as the President of the Northeast Iowa chapter of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA). This association supports government policies that benefit and support military members and their families throughout northeast Iowa. On the personal side, my wife and I added two more grandchildren to our resume this past year bringing the total number of grandchildren to nine. My son Mark and his wife had a baby girl named Ella and my oldest daughter Erin and her husband had their second boy named Thaddeus. When we’re not caring for grandchildren, my spouse and I can be found traveling to trout fishing destinations in the Rocky Mountains or in northeast Iowa. Additionally, I spend my summers cycling around Iowa and in the fall hunting for the elusive rooster pheasant with my Labrador retrievers.

**Ken McCormick.** My new favorite phrase is “epistemic arrogance.” That is the human tendency to assume we know much more than we actually do and to assume that the vast amount we do not know doesn’t exist. This allows us to pretend to understand the infinite complexity of reality. Professors and politicians excel at epistemic arrogance. My biggest accomplishment since last year is to live another year.

**Alicia Rosburg.** While the 2017 Cubs season was not as exciting as last year, the Rosburg household still had a lot to be excited about with the arrival of our son, Luke, in May. He is already giving his older sister (Olivia) a good fight for the toy bin – even my children understand scarce resources! I continue to teach Environmental Economics, Decision Analytics (formerly Decision Techniques), and Principles of Microeconomics. I am serving on the newly created UNI Sustainability and Environmental Faculty Advisory Board and look forward to bringing an economics perspective to campus sustainability efforts. I will also be teaching a new course on the Economics of Sustainability next year.
Shar Self. The most exciting part of 2017 for me was the move to Cedar Falls, Iowa from Springfield, Missouri. I forgot how much work it is to move and from one state to another. We were lucky during our house-hunting in spring and found a house that would work for us and was close to UNI. Summer of 2017 was also my first experience of becoming an empty-nester with my youngest, Andy, leaving to start college at the University of Missouri. I really enjoyed my first summer in Cedar Falls, familiarizing myself with the town. My husband and I love the downtown and the different shops and restaurants it has to offer. We have made a few trips back to Springfield to visit with family and friends. We have also made quite a few trips to Iowa City to enjoy the eclectic collection of movies at Film Scene in Iowa City and to enjoy the delicacies available at the different restaurants there as well. Looking forward to spending more time and many more years in Iowa and at UNI. Go Panthers!

David Surdam. I have been working on a book project, *Business Ethics through the Ages*, in addition to revising various articles. I also continue to be a lackey for Professor Hakes’ racquetball matches.

Bulent Uyar. I continue to teach, to work on projects, and to serve as a member of a task force working on assorted state tax credits with the Iowa Department of Revenue. Starting in the fall semester, I will be teaching half-time.

Economics Department Faculty and Staff

Front Row: Alicia Rosburg, Bev Barber (Secretary), Shar Self (Department Head), Lisa Jepsen, Shahina Amin

Back Row: David Surdam, Imam Alam, David Hakes, Bryce Kanago, Chris Lukasiewicz, Ken McCormick, Bulent Uyar

Who said Economics is the dismal science?
Tax Code Changes May Affect Free Agency

The recent Republican-supported set of changes in the federal income tax code may have repercussions for professional athletes, who are often in the top income tax brackets. I want to focus on two aspects of the changes: the caps on state income tax and mortgage interest deductions. Too much attention has been paid upon the marginal tax rates (the per cent taken from the last dollar earned), which actually did not change much in comparison with the Kennedy-Johnson tax cuts of the early 1960s and the Reagan era cuts of the 1980.

Some years ago, LeBron James left Cleveland to play for the Miami Heat. Some commentators suggested that a key impetus for his move was the fact that Florida did not have a state income tax and Ohio did (a top marginal rate of almost 5%). Given the millions of dollars at stake, five per cent is a chunk of change. I suspect many of my readers (a top marginal rate of almost 5%) would gladly take five per cent of LeBron’s current contract of more than $30 million per season (a measly $1.5 million).

In the past, players performing in states with high income tax rates, such as California and New York, faced a significant diminution in their take-home earnings. Of course, few people would feel sorry for a player making ten million dollars per season and facing a nine or ten per cent state income tax. Fortunately for these players, the former federal income tax laws allowed them to deduct their state income taxes. Given that these players were probably in the 39 per cent federal income tax bracket, the savings on their state income tax amounted to reducing a ten per cent tax to roughly a six per cent net tax.

The new federal tax rules cap the amount of state income tax that a household can deduct. The end result may be that free agents will be less likely to sign with teams in California and New York. (As a coincidence, the author’s home state of Oregon and current state of Iowa face pretty high top marginal income tax rates; these states, however, feature only one team in the NFL, NBA, and MLB.)

The new tax code will allow deductions for interest paid on mortgages up to $750,000. This precludes buyers of so-called McMansions from having the rest of us subsidize their purchases. Given the progressive nature of the federal income tax, higher-earning households received a proportionally larger subsidy for their mortgages than did lower-earning households. This perverse aspect of the progressive tax system often goes unremarked by even liberals, who I doubt would publicly state support for giving greater subsidies to higher-earning households.

New York City, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and other large cities typically have very high prices for houses. The cap on the amount of interest that can be deducted may make playing for teams in these cities less attractive.

Professional athletes, therefore, would face it less attractive to build lavish houses; they might actually devote more of their earnings to other investments.

Economists assert that changing incentives spur individuals to change their behavior. The changes in the federal income tax code should demonstrate this, especially with regard to high-paid professional athletes.

A similar situation occurs with the deduction of interest payments on mortgages. Most economists oppose having any deduction for interest paid on mortgages, as such a deduction distorts the housing market. The deduction serves as a subsidy for people buying houses (renters do not get such a subsidy); the deduction used to be unlimited. For low-wage workers, even if they were trying to buy a house, they received little benefit from the deduction. First, the deduction replaced the standard deduction, so the net deduction was often small. Households with high-wage earners rarely use the standard deduction; they usually have sufficient deductions to make itemizing deductions beneficial. Second, low-wage workers typically could afford only modest houses, so there wasn’t as much interest to deduct. The deduction probably raised the prices of houses, making ownership harder for low-wage workers.

Did You Know....

- The top 1% of households reporting taxes pay just under 40% of the total federal income tax (their adjusted gross income represents about 20% of total income).

- Part of the recent tax reform is called “Craft Beverage Modernization and Tax Reform.” It reduces excise taxes on alcohol which will likely increase the quantity and reduce the price. However, cheaper prices may lead to more drunk driving and an increase in other alcohol harms.

- The U.S. tax code in 2016 was 4,132 pages long. But the case law that interprets the tax code is over 70,000 pages long.
The Amazing Amazon!

Do you want to hike through the Amazon rainforest and see how the local people struggle to protect it? Or see the meeting of the waters? Or be kissed by a wild pink dolphin in the Rio Negro? Or fish for piranha? Or repel down a 200 foot canyon? Or visit the incredible creations of Oscar Niemeyer, the famous architect? You can do all these in just three weeks.

I had the most amazing travel experience of my life when I accompanied twenty UNI students and two faculty members (Robert Krueger and Nick Bailey) to Manaus and Brasilia in Brazil. Days were filled with excitement, thrills, fun, and extraordinary learning experiences. No words can do justice in describing the amazing time I had in the Amazon rainforest and Brasilia. Thanks to the CBA’s Dean’s Office for sponsoring my trip and having sixteen CBA students fly free to Brazil.

The study tour was composed of the Amazonian rainforest and Cerrado, the Brazilian Savannah ecosystems. The students learned about different human communities, sustainable development, renewable fuels, and globalization’s impact on education, research, and trade. We spent seven days in Manaus, Brazil. Among the most exciting things we did was to go to the “Meeting of the Waters.” It is the confluence between the rivers Rio Negro, which is black, and the pale sandy colored Amazon River. These two rivers meet in Manaus and run side by side for about sixteen miles. What an amazing sight it was!

The same day we saw houses of boat people. These people were very welcoming! They also let our students carry a sloth, which was an emotional experience for some students. We also visited a rubber plantation and a museum, which taught the students the importance of latex to modern life and the human labor involved. Another once-in-a-lifetime experience was to visit an indigenous community. This community was protected by the government from modern lifestyle so that the tribal members could maintain their way of life. The wonderful tribal members welcomed us with open arms. They performed a traditional show for us. They also invited us to dance with them and offered their food. One student tried the fried ants which “weren’t that bad” she noted. On our way to this community, we took a detour to see a wild pink dolphins. They quickly jumped into the river to play and feed these wild dolphins.

Each day unfolded with even more surprises and excitement. We had a full day visit to the Amazon Eco Park, which included close-up
views of woolly monkeys and a long jungle trek. The trek was guided by experts who explained the rainforest ecosystem and its relation to the earth. It was a very challenging day, hot and humid with a heat index of over 90 degrees. Later in the day, students went off to fish for piranha using bamboo poles and to feed caiman, the crocodile.

After the students had some firsthand experience with the Amazon rainforest and the cultures surrounding it, the following days were filled with learning how Brazilians research and protect the rainforest. We visited the tropical food production plots and ponds of EMBRAPA and the animal rehabilitation center and botanical research center belonging to INPA.

We then left Manaus and went to the capital of Brazil, Brasilia. An intensive two weeks academic program started at our host the University of Brasilia (UnB). The students and faculty (Siegried Guillaumon and Jose Marcio Carvalho) warmly welcomed us. Every day our students spent the whole morning listening to lectures by experts on various topics such as: Overview of Business Organizations in Brazil, Brazilian Agriculture Overview, Labor in Brazil, Recycling in Brazil, Bioenergies, Food and Ecosystems in Brazil, and many more.

In the afternoons, we visited companies and agencies: Archer Daniels Midland Company (ADM), Brazilian Trade and Investment Promotion Agency (APEX), a government agency promoting small and micro enterprises (SEBRAE) and the Brazilian Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA). At the IBAMA the speaker explained how the institute employs indigenous officers to combat illegal logging, mining and trafficking.

Two weekends in Brasilia were filled with visiting Pirenopolis, Goias, to see and feel the Cerrado savannah landscape (trekking into the gallery forest, swimming in fresh water pools and dining on local foods) and rapelling 200 feet of Parrot Canyon. Students also took advantage of being in the capital of Brazil and visited the federal building and toured Oscar Niemeyer’s architectural creations.

In the concluding days, UNI students presented on a wide range of topics that introduced UNI and Iowa lifestyles to the UnB students. Overall, it was an incredible trip for me. I enjoyed the places we visited and hanging out with our students as well as UnB students and faculty. This was an incredible learning opportunity for our students as well as me.
As you probably know, I retired August 1, 2017 after 44 years at UNI. I wasn’t sure how I’d adjust to retirement after that much time teaching but I confess the transition has been far easier than I anticipated. While I miss my friends at UNI and the students, I do not miss working. I started working full time when I was 18 and continued non-stop all through college and graduate school. That’s a long time to work!

I’ve been asked what I will do in retirement and my answer is, “Anything I want to!” Like you, my work life has always been have to. I start out every day with a list of things I have to do and the list was usually left uncompleted. Now, it’s what I want to do and if I don’t get it done, there’s always tomorrow. As one of my retired friends says, “Everyday’s a Saturday!” A great way to live your life.

My departure was made much easier knowing the department is in good hands. Dr. Shar Self replaces me as head of both Economics and Finance and will do a superb job. Coming from Missouri State University, she understands the mission of a regional comprehensive university and its focus on teaching. I’m confident the department will continue on the path of growth and improvement we’ve charted over the last few years.

There still are significant hurdles to overcome. State appropriations have been frozen and even declining. To continue to provide a high quality education, UNI has been forced to increase tuition which makes it more difficult to open higher education to all qualified people. Further, UNI is being asked to do more with less and the university is already stretched to the limit.

Even given all of this, I am optimistic about the future. Iowans have traditionally supported higher education and I am hoping a more enlightened attitude will soon prevail in Des Moines. But, we’ll have to see.

Anyway, my best to all of you and when retirement comes for you, drop me a line and tell me how you like it. I’m betting you’ll think it’s the greatest job you NEVER had!

Fred, Robin and family at their Retirement Celebration
Can you see the family resemblance?

Fred and Robin Abraham
end a total of 71 years at UNI