Grad students to present research

Eliane Brede

CoBA graduate student Eliane Brede will present her paper on collaborative teaching and research at this year’s Marketing Educators’ Association Conference this April 8 – 11 in Seattle, Wash.

The paper, titled “Crossing All Borders in One Semester: Involving Students in a Collaborative Cross-Cultural Research, Combining Graduate and Undergraduate Education and Co-Teaching”, was accepted for presentation on Jan. 18. Brede’s presentation will focus on the obstacles faced in Dr. Mohammadali Zolfagharian and Fuat Firat’s dual course class.

Javeria Farooqi

CoBA graduate student Javeria Farooqi is set to present her paper on financial regulation this May in Istanbul.

The research will be presented at this year’s 33rd Annual Congress of the European Accounting Association happening from May 19 – 21. The paper, titled The Impact of Financial Regulation on Risk Premium and Return Volatility: a Kalman Filter Approach, takes a look at the Sarbanes-Oxley Act and its effect on U.S. stock markets.

The paper, co-authored by Dr. Jan Smolarski, Dr. Haiyan Zhou and Jay Vega, is part of a broader research intended to explore how the act has helped improve the information environment for investors.
Dr. Fuat Firat was recently awarded the Best Paper Award in Corporate Communications: An International Journal.

The paper, titled New Tensions and Challenges in Integrated Communications, explores the tensions created by the use of integrated marketing communications (IMC). IMC is an approach to marketing communication that aims to insure a consistent message and effective use of media.

Firat, a professor of marketing explains that “IMC is a fast growing practice and orientation in marketing, but it has principles that are contestable…These considerations, as a result of my interest in cultural trends were instrumental in my joining colleagues working in the IMC area to develop insights as to how more effective communications could be conceived.”
Speaker offers insight on behavioral pricing

“Price as a variable that we pay everyday when we do our shopping is far more complex and there are a lot of things going on that are influencing whether or not we are willing to pay this price…A lot of it is happening without our awareness…We are making decisions based upon things we don’t even know are happening to us.”

Several studies have shown that behavioral pricing is a much more complicated process than originally thought.

Dr. Kent B. Monroe, a professor of marketing at the University of Illinois, presented the information in a speech to CoBA faculty and graduate students Friday March 5.

Monroe argued that the thought process behind behavioral pricing is more than just looking for the best deal. Instead, studies done in the past few decades show that consumer’s are influenced by many external variables, such as numbers that have nothing to do with the cost of the product in question.

In a case study done by Joseph C. Nunes and Peter Boatwright, consumers were asked to name their price for a record CD. Adjacent to their stand was another stand with a sweater hanging in plain sight. The pricing on the sweater varied, however, when the price was exceptionally high consumers were more willing to pay higher price.

As Monroe put it,“there are a lot of things going on that are influencing whether or not we are willing to pay [a certain] price…We are making decisions based upon things we don’t even know are happening to us.”
Local entrepreneurs speak

CoBA graduates Aziz Trevino and Susan Val Verde returned to CoBA this month to share their experiences as entrepreneurs. The two grads were the first in this semester’s Entrepreneurship Speaker series established to motivate entrepreneurial hopefuls.

Treviño, supervisor and co-owner of Aziz convenience stores, spoke of his family’s humble beginnings and about the business becoming a top convenience store chain in the Valley.

It takes more than just money and the desire to create a successful business, Treviño told the audience of CoBA students and faculty. It takes knowledge.

Val Verde’s experience was different. As executive director and a franchisee for Sylvan Learning in the Valley, Val Verde has been to Baltimore and back in her quest to bring the Sylvan Learning franchise to the area. This experience led to a paradox.

“It takes more than just money and desire to create a successful business—it takes knowledge.”

“When you own your own business, it’s not a 7 to 5—it’s a 24 hours a day business. You’re always on call,” explained Treviño.

The entrepreneurs had different business stories but agreed that owning a business was more than a job—it’s a lifestyle.
Behind the Desk

Ansley Chua
>> Assistant Professor of Finance

A self-proclaimed jack-of-all-trades, Chua’s interests vary as much as the human spirit possibly can. So much so, it’s a wonder finance became the focus of his adult career.

“I consider myself a jack of many trades, master of none. My focus is finance, but I have interest in things like the sciences. Physics, math, chemistry…my undergrad degree is actually in biology. That’s an interest for me also. I have a masters in CIS…Finance is the one thing (pauses), I got my PhD in that because I can see myself spending a lot of time doing the research. Biology, physics, those kinds of things are very interesting but to actually do the research in it is tedious.”
Why audio standards have regressed

A recent study by CoBA professor Jerald Hughes shows that the general consumer’s preference for better quality sound in music may be at a cross roads.

The study, titled “Emergent Quality Standards for Digital Entertainment Experience Goods: the Case of Consumer Audio, found that while the sound industry took a monumental leap forward in its conversion to digital audio CD’s in the early 80s, consumers now show a preference for mp3 audio files—which have a lower quality of sound.

“In the history of music, you have this rising curve of quality…and then mp3. Because consumers took over. Because they have the resources of productions,” said Hughes pointing toward his computer.

Hughes, assistant professor in the department of computer information systems and quantitative methods, conducted the study. He explains that the reason for this is not because consumers prefer a lower quality sound. Instead, consumers can now copy music onto their computers, compress it to save space, and then create as many CDs as they want. By stripping the music industry’s monopoly on music production, consumers have now forced the industry to adapt to this newfound preference for audio maneuverability.

Hughes administered the study as part of a larger push to understand how standards are being developed in many industries.

**Vinyl**
- strength: analog recordings offer smoother nostalgic sound.
- weak: low durability, narrower frequency response and surface noise

**Compact Disk**
- strength: cleaner sound, higher durability
- weak: distortion occurs when used with cost op amps and filters used in D/A conversions.

**mp3**
- strength: compression allows for more music to fit into the same space, best with mainstream music such as hip-hop, pop, etc.
- weak: this same compression dramatically lowers the quality of finer music such as jazz, classical, etc.
Wal-Mart visits

Brainstorming new possibilities was the central focus of a recent luncheon meeting between Walmart executives and UTPA professors. Walmart has generously provided scholarships for a number of UTPA students and hopes to improve its relations with students and faculty on campus.

A number of ideas were exchanged at the meeting. One idea is for Walmart to bring a corporate outpost to the Valley for students unable to participate in internships at the company’s headquarters in Arkansas.

Another topic discussed is Walmart’s growing need for Spanish speaking students—a need that UTPA is uniquely qualified to fill.

Career Placement Services (CPS) coordinated the luncheon. Lourdes Servantes, CPS interim director, explained the role of CPS: “Our part was to communicate with the faculty—to make sure that they were aware of this even. The faculty has daily interaction with the students,” and, she added, that Walmart “ really wanted to interact with those students and faculty and to let them learn more about their organization as well.”

Cengage represents

A Cengage Learning representative hosted a book fair in the hopes of capturing CoBA professors away from competitors this past Wednesday.

Melissa Silva, a Cengage Learning representative, showcased Cengage Learning textbooks in the faculty lounge from 11 am to 2 pm. Armed with a likable personality and an attentiveness to help wondering professors, Silva was more than equipped to represent her company’s interest in UTPA.

Silva is well known among some CoBA faculty. And while she holds the interests of all the universities’ she visits at heart, she admits to having a soft spot for CoBA.

Like Silva said, “Since I’m a graduate here, this tends to be my favorite university to visit. Especially the business school since I’m a graduate of the marketing department.”
German foreign exchange hopefuls joined Dr. Teo Ozuna and Joe Garza for breakfast Wednesday March 10 to discuss the strengths, weaknesses and future possibilities of the exchange program.

“The program is very famous in my university…When I heard that it started again I was like ‘I have to go. I just have to go’…Many people who study here end up coming back for their PhD,” explained Chrestean Maly, one of the visiting German students.

Leuphana University officials use the TexasLowerSaxony program to urge their students to study abroad at least once during their college career.

So while LU students study here, CoBA students study abroad at LU in turn.

“There is a cultural emersion. The classes are taught by a variety of faculty…from different parts of the world. So that students get exposed to a variety of European points of view…that American students don’t get to see or hear,” said Joe Garza, a lecturer in the college of marketing, on the exchange experience at LU.

Garza also went on to say that Dr. Teo Ozuna wishes to continue the program in an effort to establish a model for future exchange programs in the college.

Marketing dept. launches website

The Department of Marketing is set to launch its website April 15.

Dr. Mohammad Ali Zolfagharian, chair for the Department of Marketing, explained that the marketing department lacked its own identity since the split of the MMLB Department became official.

The creation of this new website will provide this independent identity while simultaneously alleviating misconceptions on what marketing means.

As Zolfagharian put it,” It’s not just selling or advertising. It’s much more than that. Marketing is an embedded institution in society.”
The University of Texas-Pan American along with various other organizations hopes to invigorate entrepreneurial hopefuls with the possibility of scaling their business beyond the region.

The Technology Entrepreneurship Bootcamp set up camp Friday March 5 in the UTPA engineering Auditorium. The event offered attendees various presentations ranging from the designing and producing of technology ideas to the university’s role in economic development.

The seminar provided the how-to in not only starting a business but expanding it beyond the borders of the Rio Grande Valley as well.

“I think that there is a strong entrepreneurial spirit in this region, but people don’t see [themselves] really scaling their business beyond this region,” said Kial Gramley, market research analyst for the Office of Innovation and Intellectual Property, who helped organize and mc the event.

Gramley hopes that the event will help foster entrepreneurial spirits in the area by showing them that owning and starting a business is very possible in this region.

The UTPA Business Plan Competition (UTPA BPC) is designed to promote the creation and development of new ventures in the Rio Grande Valley and elsewhere. These ventures can be based on student ideas or the ideas of others (such as UTPA faculty members). In addition, the competition is designed to provide students a forum where they can develop skills in pitching their ventures to providers of capital and to receive constructive feedback designed to increase the probability of successfully launching their ventures.
Deloitte explores partnership with CoBA

Deloitte representatives, Jorge Caballero and Paul Estrada, visited CoBA recently to begin exploring partnership opportunities. Jorge Caballero is the Tax Managing Partner—New Jersey and Paul Estrada is Senior Manager for Deloitte Tax LLP.

“Deloitte, which is one of the big four CPA firms, is considering targeting UTPA students for exceptional opportunities with Deloitte, which is one of the best places to start a career,” said Darcy. Deloitte was ranked 1st in Business Week’s 2007 list of Top 50 Best Companies to Launch a Career.

So, why does Deloitte have an interest in CoBA? CoBA accounting students have been achieving national acclaim through their numerous victories in nationwide case competitions. Specifically, HACU, the Hispanic Association of College and Universities, has recognized UTPA students’ accomplishments and linked them to potential employers who are looking for strong employment candidates. One of these employers is Estrada at Deloitte. “UTPA was mentioned to me by HACU back when we started working together. They mentioned that it was a very strong school in accounting,” explained Estrada.

Estrada spoke to a tax class while at CoBA. He spoke of his early hardships in life. For example, he lost his father during his freshman year of high school and he didn’t know how to speak English so he joined the army after high school. In the army Estrada began receiving the mentoring he has attributed to his success. “I think it really comes down to mentorship. People now cared about how I developed.”

Estrada is the only Hispanic working in his area of the company. The University of Texas-Pan American’s status as the institution with the highest number of Hispanic accounting students represents a fortuitous opportunity for Deloitte.

“HACU mentioned it to me and opened my eyes to the opportunities to help a group that I understand because of the commonality of backgrounds. Maybe there is an opportunity for me to make a difference here while at the same time assisting the faculty from a tax perspective,” explained Estrada.

Deloitte’s presence on campus “represents extraordinary career opportunities for our students” said Darcy who has also been facilitating other opportunities for accounting students.

Estrada has worked closely with CoBA Dean Teo Ozuna and has been selected to serve on CoBA’s Business Advisory Council. His partnership with CoBA will provide tax expertise to CoBA faculty, a link to employment opportunities for students and will insure a continued presence of Deloitte at UTPA.

Deloitte
Dear Reader,

Spring, the time of rebirth and new beginnings. With winter’s harsh grasp relaxed, we strive to make this year as productive as possible, while swatting away procrastination’s temptation.

The marketing department prepares to cement its own identity in the eyes of everyone, while the ties with our German exchange students bind even tighter.

And while the interests of outside entities such as Wal-Mart and Deloitte offers us an insight as to how far CoBA’s reach will expand, Hughes research into audio development shows that all progression reaches a crossroads.

Just how far can we progress before we realize a diminishing return? Or are the benefits of our development infinite? Either way, all we can do is move forward and prepare to answer these questions as they come.

Peace,
Michael Rodriguez
Managing Editor