

**Statistics and Actuarial Science**

On Top of Burnaby Mountain

**Simon Fraser University**  
British Columbia, Canada

**2003-3  
Newsletter**



## Postal or Email?

This newsletter was sent to you by snail-mail using information from the Alumni Office. Did you know that one of the benefits of being an alumni from SFU is a permanent email address from SFU?

This is an easy way to keep in touch with SFU and to receive departmental communications. It can easily be forwarded to another email address so that you don't have to keep checking it.

The Department also maintains the following email lists that may of be of interest to our members.

stat-jobs	jobs in statistics are regularly forwarded to this email address
stat-seminar	seminar announcement at SFU in our Department

Please contact us (sholmes@sfu.ca) if you wish to be added to these lists.

## Contacting the Department:

We like to hear from our students, faculty, and alumni. Please visit us on-line at <http://www.stat.sfu.ca> and send us email to any of the faculty or staff.

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## Chair's Report:

# Statistics – Valium for the modern world

SARS, West Nile, and Mad Cow Disease have been at the top of newspaper headlines for much of this year. For many people, these represent the next coming of the Black Death. But, a soothing calm is available to our citizens.

As Ian Brown states in his article<sup>1</sup> in the Globe and Mail, "In Canada's *annus horribilis*, in the midst of an international panic attack that hasn't abated since two planes hit the World Trade Center a year and a half ago, statistics have emerged as the new Valium. More unlikely still, the men and women who gather them and water them and display them have never been more popular."

To us Statisticians, numbers have always made us feel comfortable – "In God we trust, but all others must bring data". We are calm in knowing that the average person is more likely to be struck by a car than to contract West Nile. Yet for many people, Statistics are not comforting – indeed the thought of a class in Statistics strikes fear and loathing in a large number of students. In their view, watching paint dry is more exciting!

There have been many articles written about this subject by many eminent statisticians. And the

solutions proposed have much in common.

First, Statisticians must be stronger, more visible advocates for our profession. How many times have we apologized at a cocktail party for being a Statistician? This is a perfect opportunity to present a dynamic face to our friends and colleagues. Show them why we are so excited about our profession. As graduates from our fine program, you are our profession's ambassadors to the world.

Second, Statisticians should not shirk from confronting our modern day perils. Where should our scarce health dollars be spent to provide the greatest good for the greatest number of people? What makes the greatest impact in educating our young children? Again, as graduates from our programs working in industry and government, you have the opportunity to make a difference.

Thirdly, teachers of statistics should move away from the dry recitation of formula and show students just how exciting this subject can be. We hope that as faculty, we were able to impart to you our interest and excitement about this profession. If we can improve, please let us know.

Carl Schwarz  
Chair  
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<sup>1</sup>

<http://www.globeandmail.com/servlet/ArticleNews/TPStory/LAC/20030531/FCCENT/Comment/Idx>

## **Substantial Expansion – we hope more to come**

### **New Members Joining Our Department**

The Department is pleased to welcome the following members who joined the Department since the last newsletter

**Derek Bingham** joined the Department in July 2003 as a Canada Research Chair in Industrial Statistics. Derek was previously at the University of Michigan and will be continuing his work in Industrial Applications of statistics – particularly in the design of highly fractionated experiments.

**Daniel Chao** is our department's computer technician – he receives calls and e-mail pleas for help almost every day! With Mac, Windows, and Unix operating systems all active in the department, it requires a multi-talented person to keep all our machines operating smoothly. Daniel is also a student in the undergraduate program Management and Systems Science.

**Joan Hu** joined the Department in September 2003 coming to us from the University of Memphis. Her research area is in Biostatistics, particularly in the analysis of very large scale longitudinal studies.

**Gary Parker** (re)joined the Department also in September 2003. Dr. Parker was a former faculty member of our Department who expanded his horizons in industry for the last few years, most recently as a Vice-President in TransAmerica Life Insurance. He will take over direction of the Actuarial Program.

**Boxin Tang** joined the Department in September 2003 also coming to us from the University of Memphis. His research area is in Experimental Design.

**Kathryn Thiessen** is our new receptionist in our main office. With our small office staff, each one must master new processes and Kathryn fills this need as a multi-talented individual.

We are very pleased to have been able to attract these excellent young members to our small department. The Dean of Science and Vice President Academic have been very supportive of our expansion efforts. We hope to make a new hire this fall in Biostatistics and a second Actuary in 2004-2005.

Recent graduates may be bit puzzled – how will the Department find space for its new members. As many of you know, space is severely constrained at SFU, but we are happy to report that a renovation project is underway with completion in the early new year which will add eight new offices and lab space to our Department.



## Annual Award Ceremony – May 2003

The Department of Statistics and Actuarial Science is pleased to honor its students and faculty every year in our Annual Awards Ceremony.

### Graduate Student Awards

#### NSERC Post-graduate Scholarship

**2003/04 PGSA**

David Beaudoin

#### PGSB

Jason Loeppky

Jason Nielsen

**2002/03 PGSA**

Simon Bonner

#### PGSB

Crystal Linkletter

#### Faculty of Science Graduate Entrance Scholarship (Fraser Valley College)

Stephen Overduin

#### Special Graduate Entrance Scholarship

Jeremy Hamm (02-3)

Chunfang Lin (02-3)

#### WNAR Student Paper Award

Grace Chiu

#### NSERC Postdoctoral Fellowship

Grace Chiu

#### PhD Graduate Fellowships

**03-1**

Wen Lu

**03-2**

Laura Cowen

Farouk Nathoo

#### MSc Graduate Fellowships 02-3

Kelly Burkett

Jacqueline Gregory

#### President's Ph.D. Stipend 03-1

Jason Sutherland

#### C.D. Nelson Scholarship 03-1

Crystal Linkletter

#### ASA/EIA Research Fellow Award

Crystal Linkletter

We are particularly pleased to announce that **Dr. Grace Chiu** was the recipient of the **Pierre Robillard Award** for the best Ph.D. thesis in Statistics in Canada in 2002. She was recently recognized for this achievement at the 2003 Annual Meeting of the Statistical Society of Canada held in Halifax. The Award is in honour of Pierre Robillard, a very talented and dynamic young statistician, whose untimely death in 1975 cut short what promised to be a brilliant and distinguished career in his chosen profession.

Grace's thesis was titled 'Using the Bent Cable to Assess an Abrupt Change in Species Abundance and Other Phenomena' and was written under the supervision of Professors Richard Routledge and Richard Lockhart of our Department. She is currently a PIMS Postdoctoral fellow. She previously won the International Biometric Society Western North-American Region (WNAR) Student Paper Award in 2002 for the same work.

Grace's thesis can be used in many practical situations. For example, one application of her work was in examining if the decline in sockeye abundance was gradual or abrupt.

Full details are available at :

<http://www.stat.sfu.ca/News/news2003-06-12.chiu.shtml>

# Annual Award Ceremony – May 2003

## Undergraduate Student Awards

The Department has several major awards:

- The Watson Wyatt Scholarship for students with high standing in Actuarial Science established by the Watson Wyatt Company.
- The Statistical Society of Canada (SSC) award established by Canada's professional society.
- The Statistics and Actuarial Science Endowment Awards
- The Management and Systems Science Endowment Awards

We are particularly pleased to award for the first time the SSC Award. This was founded by a generous donation from the Statistical Society of Canada in recognition of the wonderful job in organizing the Annual Meeting at SFU in 2002.

The recipients of the major departmental undergraduate awards in 02-03.

Dong Chen	Statistics and Actuarial Science Endowment Award
Debra Fulton	Management and Systems Science Graduation Award
Lin He	Statistics and Actuarial Science Endowment Award
Yin Bin Li	Management and Systems Science Third Year Prize
Julia Lin	Statistics and Actuarial Science Endowment Award
Jane Rozina	Management and Systems Science Fourth Year Prize
James Wong	Watson-Wyatt Scholarship
Clement Wu	Statistical Society of Canada Award
Wei Clair Zhang	Statistics and Actuarial Science Endowment Award

Biographical sketches of our major award winners is available from our web site at <http://www.stat.sfu.ca/Awards>

### **Undergraduate Open Scholarships during 02-2, 02-3, 03-1**

Andrew Balo (02-3, 03-1)  
Jessica Ou Dang (02-2, 03-1)  
Debra Fulton (02-3)  
Tyler Gray (02-3, 03-1)  
Joseph Kwok (02-2)  
Rowena Lai (02-3, 03-1)  
Lai Yin Lee (02-2, 02-3, 03-1)  
Dawei Li (02-2, 02-3, 03-1)  
Julia Lin (02-2, 03-1)  
Xiao Lu Wang (02-3, 03-1)  
Kwang James Wong (02-2, 02-3, 03-1)  
Clement Wu (02-2, 03-1)  
Henry Yuen (02-2)

### **R. Purewal Memorial Scholarship** Wei Claire Zhang (02-2)

**Watson-Wyatt & Company  
Scholarship in Actuarial Science**  
Kwang James Wong (03-1)

**W & A McMahon Scholarship**  
Xiao Lu Wang (02-3)

**High Academic Performance in Upper  
Division Statistics/Actuarial Science  
Courses**  
Won K. Dean Chang, **Acma 335** (02-2)  
Gurbir Dhadwal, **Stat 302** (03-1)  
Tyler Vincent Gray, **Stat 350** (03-1)  
Greg Philip Jones, **Acma 490** (03-1)

Lisa Helene Kirkham, **Stat 403** (03-1)  
Tsun Y. Joseph Kwok, **Stat 350** (02-2)  
Dawei David Li, **Stat 402** (03-1)  
Nga Bong Bosco Mok, **Stat 302** (02-2)  
Jason Pal, **Stat 490** (03-1)  
Zozo Tam, **MSSC 480** (03-1)  
Stanley Wong, **Acma 425** (02-3)  
Pui Man Kelly Ying, **Stat 490** (02-2)  
Nancy Xiao B. Zhang, **Acma 310** (02-3)

**Statistics and Actuarial Science  
Endowment Award for excellent  
achievement in the Majors and  
Honors program**

Dong Chen  
Lin He  
Julia Lin  
Wei Claire Zhang

**SSC Endowment Award**

Clement Wu

**SFU Alumni Scholarship**

Dong Chen (02-2)  
Lin He (02-3,03-1)

Alex Kwan (02-3)  
Joseph Kwok (02-2)  
Xiao Lu Wang (02-2,03-1)

**Paul Cote ENSC Scholarship**

Alex Kwan (03-1)

**ENSC Project Award**

Alex Kwan (02-3)

**SFU Piping Award**

Mary Ellen Bruce (02-3)

**Bruce Coles Scholarship**

Wei Claire Zhang (02-3, 03-1)

**Management and Systems Science  
Graduation Award**

Debra Fulton

**Management and Systems Science  
Prize**

Yin Bin Li (3<sup>rd</sup> year award)  
Jane Rozina (4<sup>th</sup> year award)



## Faculty Achievements

### Canada Research Chair in Industrial Statistics

As noted earlier, **Derek Bingham** is a new Canada Research Chair in our Department. His research to date can be broadly classified as the development of theory and methodology related to the design and analysis of industrial experiments. He has already shown potential to be a leader in the field, and his work in industrial statistics is considered the definitive work in this area. Full details at:

<http://www.stat.sfu.ca/News/bingham.crc.2002-11-13.html>

### Heart and Stroke Foundation Award of Merit

**David MacLean**'s contributions to health promotion, disease prevention and public health policy on a regional, national and international scale have garnered him two prestigious awards. First, he has been named one of 17 Canadian health heroes by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). A coalition of countries representing 14 per cent of the world's current population, the PAHO is the oldest international public health agency in the world. It is the regional office for the Americas of the World Health Organization (WHO). Second, the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada also recently awarded MacLean its 2002 award of merit. The award recognizes MacLean's leadership internationally, nationally and provincially in promoting the importance and value of research in primary health care with special emphasis on heart health. Full details at:

[http://www.sfu.ca/mediapr/sfu\\_news/sfunews11280203.html](http://www.sfu.ca/mediapr/sfu_news/sfunews11280203.html)

### International Statistical Institute (ISI)

**Larry Weldon** was elected as a member of the International Statistical Institute (ISI). The ISI is one of the oldest international scientific associations functioning in the modern world. It was established in 1885 and therefore celebrated its Centenary in 1985. The Institute is an autonomous society which seeks to develop and improve statistical methods and their application through the promotion of international activity and co-operation. Elected members are elected by virtue of their distinguished contributions to the development or application of statistical methods, or to the administration of statistical services, or the development and improvement of statistical education. Full details at:

<http://www.stat.sfu.ca/News/weldon.2002-10-07.html>

### CRM-SSC Prize

We are very pleased to recognize **Charmaine Dean** for receiving the 2003 CRM-SSC Prize for her outstanding contributions to the statistical sciences and her exemplary dedication to the profession, in Canada and abroad. The announcement was made at the 31st Annual Meeting of the Statistical Society of Canada (SSC), held in Halifax, Nova Scotia, June 8-11, 2003. This prestigious award, jointly sponsored by the SSC and the Centre de recherches mathématiques de Montréal (CRM), is given each year to a Canadian statistician in recognition of outstanding contributions to the discipline during the recipient's first 15 years after earning a doctorate. Full details are available at

<http://www.stat.sfu.ca/News/news2003-06-12.dean.shtml>

Welcome to our family

## Graduands

In the time since the last newsletter, eight graduate students earned M.Sc degrees and two earned Ph.D degrees. Undergraduate graduands numbered 56: there were 34 B.Sc in Actuarial Science, 18 B.Sc in Statistics, and 4 B.Sc. in Management and Systems Science. Details can be found at <http://www.stat.sfu.ca/alumni/index.shtml>.

It would be hard for a lay person to infer exactly what “is statistics” from these titles of graduate projects and theses completed. Application areas span the game of cricket, population biology, genetics, heart surgery, natural gas production, and salmon spawning amongst others.

Graduate Degrees Awarded				
Term	Student	Degree	Thesis	Supervisor
2003-3	Gregory, Jacqueline	M.Sc.	Application of case-cohort methods to data on pulp and paper mill workers in British Columbia	R. Sitter
2003-1	Beaudoin, David	M.Sc.	The Best Batsmen and Bowlers in One-Day Cricket abstract	T. Swartz
2003-1	Lo, Michael S.	M.Sc.	Generalized Autoregressive Conditional Heteroscedastic Time Series Models abstract	R. Lockhart
2003-1	Bonner, Simon	M.Sc.	Continuous, Individual, Time-Dependent Covariates in the Cormack-Jolly-Seber Model abstract	C. Schwarz
2003-1	Sutherland, Jason	Ph.D.	Multi-List Methods in Closed Populations with Stratified or Incomplete Information. abstract	C. Schwarz
2002-3	Burkett, Kelly	M.Sc.	Logistic regression with missing haplotypes. abstract	J. Graham
2002-3	Chui, Michael	M.Sc.	Nonparametric Simultaneous Modelling of Operative Mortality and Long-Term Survival After Coronary Artery Bypass Surgery. abstract	C. Dean
2002-3	Linkletter, Crystal	M.Sc.	Predicting Natural Gas Production in the presence reporting delays.	R. Sitter
2002-2	Joy, Ruth	M.Sc.	Assessing infilling methods for missing data in spawning salmon estimates.	R. Routledge
2002-2	Chiu, G.	Ph.D.	Bent-Cable Regression for Assessing Abruptness of Change	R. Lockhart, R. Routledge

## Undergraduate Honors, Major, and Certificates

October	2003	B.Sc/MSSC	Chan, Betty Pui Chee
		B.Sc/MSSC	Chang, Yao-Chung
		B.Sc/MSSC	Cheng, Jerry Chia Wen
		B.Sc/STAT	Cheng, Yu Hin
		B.Sc/STAT	Chow, Albert Li-Wei
		B.Sc/MSSC	Chung, Stephen
		B.Sc/MSSC	Fulton, Debra Louise
		B.Sc/STAT	Fung, Annie
		B.Sc/MSSC	Hadimulya, Alexander
		B.Sc/MSSC	Inanlou-Shaviklou, Amir Abbas
		B.Sc/STAT	Kuan, Tiffany
		B.Sc/ACSC	Li, Dawei
		B.Sc/MSSC	Li, Kwan
		B.Sc/ACSC	Mok, Nga Bong Bosco
		B.Sc/MSSC	Quee, Ryan
		B.Sc/Math/Minor/STAT	Sham, Kin Man
		B.Sc/MSSC	Torillo, Michael
		B.Sc/ACSC	Wong, Stanley
		B.Sc/STAT	Wong, Sun Yee Goletti
		B.Sc/ACSC	Yeung, Cheuk Ling
		B.Sc/STAT	Ying, Pui Man Kelly
		B.Sc/MSSC	Young, Johnny Maun Chin
June	2003	B.Sc/STAT	Au, Man Wai
		B.Sc/MSSC	Bui, Tran Luat
		B.Sc/AcSc	Chan, Jonathan Kai Lun
		B.Sc/AcSc	Chang, Chia-Chien
		B.Sc/AcSc	Chen, Po-Chien
		B.Sc/AcSc	Chen, Yan Wen Gwen
		B.Sc/STAT	Cheung, Pak Chuen
		AcSc Certificate	Cheung, Pak Chuen
		B.Sc/MSSC	Choi, Gordon
		B.Sc/STAT	Ho, Chung Wai Joanna
		B.Sc/AcSc	Jim, Chung Ming
		B.Sc/AcSc	Kim, Jung Eun
		B.Sc/STAT	Kwan, Julia Lai Man
		B.Sc/AcSc	Lau, Brian Ka-Yin
		B.Sc/STAT	Law, yat-Hang
		B.Sc/AcSc	Lee, Hing Bun
		B.Sc/STAT	Li, Cheong Kit
		B.Sc/AcSc	Li, Dawei
		B.Sc/MSSC	Liu, Chi-Yung Chris
		B.Sc/AcSc	Liu, Thomas
		B.Sc/STAT	Lu, Jia Hui Eric

		AcSc Certificate	Lu, Jia Hui Eric
		AcSc Certificate	Weinkam, Linda
		B.Sc/AcSc	Wong, Hoi-Wai
October	2002	B.Sc/STAT	Chin, Brrol Andrew
		B.Sc/AcSc	Gould, Susan
		AcSc Certificate	Kan, W.
		AcSc Certificate	Kobylecka, J.
		B.Sc/AcSc	Kwok, Tsun Yin Joseph
		B.Sc/STAT	Lau, Ching Yi
		AcSc Certificate	Lee, J.
		B.Sc/STAT	Leung, Tony
		B.Sc/MSSC	Ling, Ada Patricia
		AcSc Certificate	Ling, C.
		B.Sc/AcSc	Loach, Andrew Frederick
		AcSc Certificate	Nicklom, J.
		AcSc Certificate	Shin, J.
		B.Sc/STAT	Shin, Ji-Hyung
		B.Sc/STAT	Talling, Douglas Norman
		B.Sc/AcSc	Tsang, Chung Yi Jouie
		B.Sc/STAT	Tse, Chi Chiu Ken
		B.Sc/STAT	Wong, Yim Fun
		B.Sc/AcSc	Yick, Haysen Siu-Hay
		B.Sc/AcSc	Yuen, Ching-Kong
		B.Sc/AcSc	Yuen, Henry
		B.Sc/AcSc	Yuen, Pak Wai
		AcSc Certificate	Yung, C.
		B.Sc/STAT	Yung, Crystal Kit Chee

### MSSc graduation prize

**Debra Fulton** had what most undergraduates would deem to be a dream program – she cherry-picked the courses herself. Fulton tailored an individualized management and systems sciences (MSSc) undergraduate program for bioinformatics, a young and growing area that combines the use of computers and computational analysis, to study biological problems. The program not only netted Fulton the MSSc graduation prize, but opened the door to a graduate degree in bioinformatics, which is run jointly by SFU, UBC and Vancouver’s genome sciences centre. Fulton, a former information technology consultant in Vancouver, had her sights set on a graduate degree in bioinformatics soon after she started her degree at SFU four years ago. However, there wasn’t an undergrad program specifically for bioinformatics. Larry Weldon, the undergraduate studies chair in statistics at SFU, suggested Fulton modify a program to lay the groundwork for the interdisciplinary area of bioinformatics. More details at:

[http://www.sfu.ca/mediapr/sfu\\_news/archives\\_2003/sfunews10020307.htm](http://www.sfu.ca/mediapr/sfu_news/archives_2003/sfunews10020307.htm)

## Other News

### More sunshine=more beer?

Who says research in Statistics is dull and boring and no fun? The following is a summary of an article that appeared in the Vancouver Sun on 30 August 2003.

"We're doing a lot more than just drinking in the sunshine this summer. British Columbians are sucking back the suds like never before -- and good weather may be the reason. As the mercury soars, so do alcohol sales -- especially lager and ale. Sales of wine, spirits, beers, ciders and coolers have jumped 8.2 per cent in the past four months, compared to the same time last year.

"The numbers are pretty staggering," admits Daniel Fontaine of the Brewers Association of Canada. Fontaine has an explanation -- more sunshine. "Sunshine has such a huge impact in British Columbia, but oddly not in other places like Saskatchewan which get more summer sun," he said. "For us on the West Coast, being sun-deprived, the impact is actually pretty dramatic." He's basing it on a study done by **Tim Swartz**, a professor at Simon Fraser University's department of statistics and actuarial sciences. Swartz calculated the link between sunshine and beer consumption based on data gathered from 1992 to 1999. "The conclusion was that monthly sales for the industry in B.C. increases by approximately 97 hectolitres [9,700 litres] with every additional hour of sunshine per month," Swartz said. That's 16,975 additional pints quaffed for every extra hour of sunlight. Swartz says the conclusions should still stand today.

As part of story, Tim had a starring role in a segment on the Weather Network.

### Sea-lice problems with farmed salmon?

Statistics professor **Rick Routledge**, also a member of the Centre for Coastal Studies, is helping biologist Alexandra Morton estimate sea lice infestation of wild juvenile salmon in the Broughton Archipelago for the second consecutive year. A sudden decline in wild pink salmon in the salmon farm-laden region off B.C.'s south central coast sparked their concern. More details at:

[http://www.sfu.ca/mediapr/sfu\\_news/archives\\_2003/sfunews03200314.html](http://www.sfu.ca/mediapr/sfu_news/archives_2003/sfunews03200314.html)

[http://www.sfu.ca/mediapr/sfu\\_news/regular\\_features/medbytes09180301.htm](http://www.sfu.ca/mediapr/sfu_news/regular_features/medbytes09180301.htm)

### Health Research expanding at SFU

Senate will be soon considering a proposal to establish a Faculty of Health Science which will require more biostatisticians and epidemiologists. As part of this process, SFNews ran profiles on various faculty involved in Health Research at SFU. Here is one such profile.

“An assistant professor in statistics and actuarial science, **Jinko Graham** is a statistical geneticist. She develops new statistical methods for assimilating genetic data in order to better understand diseases with a genetic component. Currently, Graham is analyzing blocks of genetic material, called haplotypes, collected from children and young adults with type I diabetes. Her work will help to determine whether there is an association between genetic markers and the risk of developing the disease.”

[http://www.sfu.ca/mediapr/sfu\\_news/archives\\_2003/sfunews05010306.html](http://www.sfu.ca/mediapr/sfu_news/archives_2003/sfunews05010306.html)

## Undergraduate Curriculum Developments

A fairly major change in our undergraduate course sequence has been implemented coordinated by **Larry Weldon** as chair of the Undergraduate Studies Committee. The old course in Probability has been revised and renamed to support the upper division courses more directly. With this stronger prerequisite structure we are able to offer our third year courses in parallel rather than in series, so students have more flexible scheduling options. Also, our third year mathematical statistics course (the revised STAT 330) is a strong base from which to build into STAT 450, a course many students have found challenging. A course in Data Analysis (STAT 400) has been regularized and is no longer taught as a special topics course. Other topics have used this special topics label in recent semesters: Spatial Statistics, Survival analysis, and Stochastic Processes.

## Our Statistical Consulting Service Still Growing

To extend the services provided we tried the experiment of offering online help with statistical problems. The online stat consulting service has been accessed by a variety of researchers around the world, although we must pay attention to local priorities when the volume exceeds our resources. It has also been a useful teaching adjunct for the graduate students who get involved answering “Dr. Stat” questions. It allows the students taking Stat 812 to get hands on experience handling a variety of statistical questions. Overall, it looks like we are getting about 3000 hits a year on the web page.

The experience gained by **Ian Bercovitz**, director of the SCS, is invaluable for teaching service courses in statistics. In addition to teaching the consulting courses STAT 8111-812 to our graduate students, Ian is also teaching stat 203 for the integrated studies program at Harbour Centre.

Contracts from external clients such as BC Hydro, Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency have provided the consulting service with sufficient funds to continue to operate on a full time basis. Ian's has become permanent as result of the increases in revenue.



## Grade Inflation?

In spite of the fact that our admission standards are becoming more stringent each year, the average grades awarded at SFU have been quite stable for many years. Lower division courses average about 2.5 (between C+ and B-) while upper division grades average about 2.8. This pattern is true of the entire university, of the Science faculty, and of our department as well. In fact, average grades in our department have become slightly more rigorous over the last 10 years, declining about 0.1 point. So grade inflation is certainly not a widespread problem at SFU, and certainly does not occur in our department. This information (and much more) is available from the analytical studies home page at [www.sfu.ca/analytical-studies](http://www.sfu.ca/analytical-studies).

## Open House

After a 15 year absence, SFU hosted an Open House for the general public on Saturday 4 October 2003. **Laura Cowen**, **Jason Leoppky**, and **Jason Nielsen**, graduate students in our Department put together an interesting exhibit on our Department. These included “How do we know that 20% of the population has used marijuana – the need for a randomized response method for asking sensitive questions”; “What are the optimal settings for the Stat-a-pult – a siege engine that hurls squash balls down the hall”; “How to tell crooked dice from real dice – an example of hypothesis testing in action”.

## **2003 Annual ASNA Convention**

The Actuarial Students' National Association (ASNA) was founded in 1989 at Laval University, Quebec. Representing over 85% of actuarial students in Canada, the association's goals and objectives are to represent the student body at the professional societies such as CIA, SOA and CAS. It also serves as a communication medium between universities and brings actuarial students from different universities closer together.

Each year, ASNA holds an informational convention. This year, the convention was held in Quebec City, from January 10-12 2003 with the number of students attending more than ever in the 14 years of ASNA history. This year's convention was titled "The Path Towards an Actuarial Career," offering actuarial students an excellent opportunity to meet their colleagues from other universities and representatives from recruiting companies. Through a vast series of seminars and conventions, students were given the opportunity to learn more about current trends in actuarial science, as well as establish contacts with various actuarial companies.

A group of 11 actuarial science students from Simon Fraser University attended this year's ASNA convention. Through the Career Fair, students had a chance to meet with actuarial firms and explore more job opportunities in the Eastern region. A series of conventions provided a vast knowledge to students in topics such as, "How to look for an Internship," "How to successfully prepare, interview and land your first actuarial job", "Actuarial Study Programs from an Employer's Perspective", "The Role of an Actuary in an Acquisition" and "Career Opportunities offered by a National Insurer." These seminars provided a valuable stepping stone to a successful actuarial career, as well as a better understanding of the future roles of actuaries in the business environment. One of the most valuable fruit from this trip is the chance for SFU's students to meet students from other universities such as University of Waterloo, University of Toronto and Laval University. Through various social activities, students were able to share and exchange their knowledge that permitted everyone to become better acquainted with each other, and with the field of actuarial science.

Although everyone was reluctant to end the trip, the wonderful and exciting 2003 ASNA Convention in Quebec will surely remain in everyone's memories.

## **Endowment Funds of the Department**

### **Fan Seafoods donates to Statistics and Actuarial Science Endowment Fund**

The Department of Statistics and Actuarial Science would like to thank Fan Seafoods (Courtenay BC) for their generous donation to the Statistics and Actuarial Science Endowment Fund.

In early June, Fred Lochmatter of Fan Seafoods approached the Department asking for assistance in estimating the density and number of geoducks in some of their leases. Fortunately, Lin He and Wei Zhang were recently awarded a Undergraduate Summer Research Award (USRA) from NSERC to do research in estimation of fish abundance and related ecological problems under the guidance of Carl Schwarz. It seems like a natural fit.

Zhang and He successfully completed the project to the satisfaction of Fan Seafoods. Because He and Zhang's salary was covered by the USRA and contributions from the research grant of Schwarz, Fan Seafoods instead made a donation to the endowment fund to help support future students in their studies.

This type of interdisciplinary, applied work is a hallmark of our program in Applied Statistics at Simon Fraser University

The department is grateful to these and other donors to our endowment fund, which enable us to reward deserving students with scholarships which help to defray the increasing costs of their education. The annual award ceremony prominently features the endowment awards and helps to maintain the culture of high achievement in the department. Potential donors can obtain further information from the department chair at 604-291-3801 by sending an e-mail to [sholmes@sfu.ca](mailto:sholmes@sfu.ca).

### **The Last Words**

This newsletter was edited by Larry Weldon with contributions from members of the Department. The editor thanks every member of the department for working so hard to create notable achievements worth reporting!

Please send us your accomplishments!