A Cross–Disciplinary Approach
The Specialization in Environmental and Resource Economics

ALLYSON SAMUELS
Graduate Student, English

The Specialization in Environmental and Resource Economics offers graduate students the opportunity to develop expertise in topics ranging from land economics to environmental policy. It focuses on the economics relationships between humans, human behavior and the environment. The Environmental and Resource Economics Program is affiliated with the departments of Agricultural Economics; Economics; Fisheries and Wildlife; Forestry; Park Recreational and Tourism Resources; and Resource Development. The faculty, internationally recognized in their areas of expertise, provides grounding in problem solving and an approach that is wide-ranging and multidisciplinary. In addition, they provide strong methodological training in environmental and resource economics fields.

According to Dr. John Hoehn of the Department of Agricultural Economics, “the problem of resource use is fundamental to economics, particularly agricultural resources. Living in a suburban or urban environment, we don’t tend to think much about how much of our economy comes from these natural resources. The Specialization’s concern with the ways in which the economy allocates and uses these resources.” As a result, the Environmental and Resource Economics specialization draws upon the faculty and courses in six departments: Agricultural Economics, Economics, Forestry, Fisheries and Wildlife, Park, Recreation and Tourism, and Resource Development.

The Specialization offers a formal transcript certification in the area of Environmental and Resource Economics. Graduate students who enroll in the interdepartmental program gain a broad and focused grounding in theoretical and applied economics. This has led students to positions in academia—in a department of Economics, Agricultural Economics or Forestry. Also, many graduates from this program work for government agencies such as the Department of Environmental Quality, Department of Natural Resources and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The program’s advantage lies in combining the study of economics with the problems of managing resources in agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and in the more general public domain of the environment. Applications range from issues in the Great Lakes region to coral reefs of Indonesia.

Dr. Karen Potter-Witter of the Department of Forestry points out that in the 80s, “the application of economics to environmental and resource questions was becoming more important. We thought we could help focus the applied discipline by having a more formal program—we could not only certify students but use it tool both to attract student and to help them in their careers.” For example the Departments of Forestry; Fisheries and Wildlife; Resource Development; and Park, Recreation and Tourism have programs that cover issues from biology to the social and economic, but the specialization gives their students an additional background in applied economics and economic theory. For Dr. Frank Lupi, of the Department of Agricultural Economics and the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, the specialization “focuses on the allocation of resources, on understanding incentives and economic forces, and their effect on natural resource utilization. It is an economic exposure applied to various natural resource and environmental issues.” According to Dr. Patricia Norris, of Agricultural Economics and Resource Development, “the environmental and resource economics specialization would be useful for students going to go into academic positions, or for students interested in a policy analysis position related to natural resources.”

Students in the program work with faculty to develop research and teaching in economics. According to Dr. Frank Lupi, “it is in part a way for departments that are not disciplinary-based to provide exposure to environmental and resource economics.” Dr. Norris concurs, adding “for Agricultural Economics and Economics majors, the specialization provides more depth, whereas for majors in areas such as Fisheries and Wildlife, Forestry or Tourism it gives more emphasis on economics than they would otherwise gain from a focus in their major field.”

For former student Brady Deaton, Ph.D., the specialization provided a response to his interests. “It seemed to fit my background and experience prior to coming to MSU. It has an excellent faculty and provides instruction in both institutional and neoclassical economics. It has what might be called a 21st century approach to understanding resource allocation issues across space and time.” The faculty is able to provide a mix of applied methods—statistics and applied theory—as well as a major focus on the major social and institutional structures that are also important to determining how resources are allocated. As an Environmental and Resource Economics major, his work concentrated on what kind of structures are needed to deal with environmental problems in these areas, and how to spend resources.”

Part of Deaton’s research examined ways in which money is spent to achieve certain land uses. This project, under the guidance of Dr. Norris stemmed from her interest in land use issues. “The survey questioned how notions of productivity, environmental amenities, or landscape aesthetics figure into people’s decisions about land preservation,” she says. Because Dr. Norris was working on a
project in this field, Deaton was able to participate, and his work became a component of the larger study on which she was working.

Deaton’s work also examined the benefits of allocating resources to achieve given land uses. He examined issues of farmland preservation as well as hazardous waste clean-up. In examining the benefits of hazardous waste clean-up he took into consideration the industrial character of land surrounding hazardous waste sites. “I’m concerned with how we allocate money to preserve farmland and to clean up hazardous waste sites. It is a complicated set of questions because the value of cleaning up a waste site or saving a farm are always differentiated by the character of the site itself or the character of what’s going on around the site,” he says. According to Deaton, differences in the attributes of a site and differences in the character of land uses surrounding the site are important considerations to take into account when making land use decisions. For Deaton, working on these issues within a project whose significance to the field of Environmental and Resource Economics is important to community at large, is one of the great benefits of the ERE specialization. It allowed him to understand resource allocation in relation to different areas and times, by combining the discipline of economics with the practical, scientific knowledge of specific resource and environmental problems.

Endowed Funds:
Providing A Perpetual Stream of Support and Creating A Margin of Excellence

Barbara Ball-McClure
Director of Development
The Graduate School

There is no doubt that private support provides for more graduate fellowships at Michigan State University. MSU’s endowed funds allow us to enhance our colleges and our academic, athletic, and cultural programs as we work to fulfill our land-grant mission of teaching, research, and outreach – our endowed funds provide the critical margin of excellence.

An endowment is the time-honored method of allocating certain gifts, be they current or future ones, to an investment portfolio. The endowed fund is invested to earn income each year, and as the principal grows, so does the income available to award. That ever-growing income is used to support the programs of your choice at MSU, but the principal always remains invested in order to perpetuate the fund and, consequently, the stream of private financial support for the designated purpose at MSU. When you make a gift to create an endowed fund, it can either be outright or deferred through use of a bequest in a will or trust or charitable life income plan. Either way, your gift can turn into a legacy of annual gifts.

Example: Suppose you would like to make sure that a graduate fellowship fund at MSU receives $2500 every year, even after your lifetime. Assume that Michigan State University spends 5% of its endowment each year. This does not mean that MSU earns a total return of 5%, only that it spends that amount. Think of this like a 5% dividend. We reinvest the difference to offset inflation.

To calculate the amount you need to donate to perpetuate your gift, divide the annual gift amount, $2500 by the amount called for in the spending policy (5%) to get $50,000. So, by contributing or establishing a charitable bequest of $50,000 to an endowed fund, you can continue indefinitely the $2500 annual gift.

Here is the best part: when the value of the endowed fund increases, so does the income available to award for the specific purpose designated by the endowed fund. For example, with a total return of 10% in one year and with only 5% spend the other 5% is reinvested. By the second year, the value of the fund is 5% higher, or $52,500, and the “annual gift from the fund is $2625, and so on throughout the years.

If you would like further information about starting an endowed fund or leaving MSU in your estate, please contact: Barbara Ball-McClure, Development Director, The Graduate School at 517.353.3121 ext. 220, email: ballmcl@msu.edu, or download a copy of the Landon Society Planned Gift Statement of Support form via http://grad.msu.edu/gradpost.htm.
Teaching Awards and Rewards: Why Do Great Teachers Teach?

Kevin Johnston
Curriculum Development Specialist and Director
University TA Programs

As part of their annual awards convocation ceremonies, MSU and the MSU Foundation award Excellence-in-Teaching Citations to graduate teaching assistants “...who have distinguished themselves by the care they have given and the skill they have shown in meeting their classroom responsibilities.” The Citations, and awards similar to them given around the country, are impressive achievements.

I seek these award winners out every year for their teaching expertise. They help me develop my own ideas about what constitutes effective pedagogy. Through their efforts in our TA training programs, in my conversations with them about their teaching, and as a result of my good fortune to see some of the Citation award winners teach, I’ve come to regard these TAs not only as some of the best graduate student teachers on campus, but as some of the most committed and conscientious of all teachers at MSU.

I asked recent award winners what the Excellence-in-Teaching Citation meant to them and to their careers, and what they believed teaching awards generally “meant” to the academy. All were very grateful that MSU, their departments, and their students thought enough of their teaching to consider them for the Citation. Interestingly, all of the 2003 recipients also thought the award as an indication they had created successfully the classroom “community” they wanted to achieve with their students. The more I thought about that issue, the more I realized that they were speaking of teaching rewards that extended beyond those for which they had been awarded the Citation. That irony had me realizing how difficult it can be sometimes to identify what makes for good teaching. We know it when we see it, but we don’t always know how to describe it.

Each TA’s comments in our conversations exposed to some degree their firm belief in the importance of teachers’ and students’ shared responsibilities to promote learning. Their students’ support of their nominations reflect in part that these TAs are successful teachers because they have convinced their charges that they are as important to their own learning as any instructor. Lisa Massey Lindsay was “thrilled” over the central role her “...students’ evaluations, comments, and support played in my award.” As a teacher who seeks her students’ evaluative inputs throughout the semester, her students’ role in shaping the award committee’s decision made the Citation “more real” to Kristy Holtfreter. Harry Williams, formerly recognized in Who's Who in American Education and whose 16-year teaching experience spans elementary, middle-school, and higher education, commented that a student of his recently told him that his classroom felt like a “shared community of learning.” The Citation meant to him that his students cared enough about his desire to create that classroom community to want to see him recognized for his efforts.

The ideal community that Megan Mahoney seeks to create with her students (and the one for which her students recognized her) springs from her own experiences as an undergraduate at a small liberal arts college and her research experience at MSU. For her, research institutions increase students’ teaching and learning possibilities significantly because instructors have the opportunity introduce cutting-edge research in the classroom. In an age when so many arguments exist over the role of teaching (and the significance of teaching awards) versus research, Mahoney’s defense of the equal importance of both to the meaningful education of undergraduates is refreshing.

I mentioned that identifying specifically what makes for good teaching could be difficult; particularly when trying to identify how and when good teaching affects students. We can all spot instantly the well-organized instructor, the motivating show person, the intuitive listener, and the excellent class manager by the classroom skills they employ. Each of the 2003 award winners spoke of their own desires to be well prepared, to create supportive classroom environments, and to being committed to spurring their students’ own desires to grow intellectually. These TAs also have focused their teaching energies on what they’ve come to refer to as the “relational” aspects of pedagogy. They’ve gone beyond the “informational” to serve as fundamental catalysts for their students’ future growth on many levels, whenever that growth may occur.

Awards or not, good teachers teach because, at their core, it’s who they are. Like her 2003 Citation award colleagues, Rachel Smith told me she was honored to receive the recognition and extremely grateful for her students’ parts in the process. But her ideas (See inset) about why she loves teaching describe best for me what I’ve heard many teachers claim are the rewards of teaching well. These are things that can’t be measured objectively by consultants, awards committees, or colleagues. I hope they spur you to reflect further on teaching, its purpose in your life, and on its role in the academy. Congratulations to all the recipients of MSU’s 2003 Excellence-in-Teaching Citation. All the best.

For a list of 2003 Excellence in Teaching Citation winners, see http://www.newsbulletin.msu.edu/feb6/awards4.html.
Refocusing Doctoral Education:
The Carnegie Initiative on the Doctorate

JUDITH STODDART
UDF Coordinator, The Graduate School

Three Michigan State University graduate programs have been chosen to participate in the national Carnegie Initiative on the Doctorate (CID). The doctoral programs in Math Education, Teacher Education, and English are engaged in the multi-year research project, which focuses on new initiatives in disciplinary education and training. While several studies have addressed the broad challenges facing doctoral education in American universities, CID begins from a disciplinary perspective. Programs will analyze their own goals in connection with current thinking and challenges in their fields, and then design specific projects that respond both to local and national concerns.

Carnegie Senior Scholar Chris Golde explained that the CID project goals are to support and study experiments in doctoral education with leading graduate programs, to document and analyze the character of those initiatives and, working these innovative departments, to help the disciplinary community create models and evidence of success to inform others in the field. Golde, who visited MSU’s participating programs in March, noted: “There is palpable enthusiasm on the part of faculty in all three programs at MSU to focus on their doctoral programs and work to make them more effective. This is time consuming but important work. We are delighted that so many faculty in each of these departments have made the commitment to do so. MSU has a reputation as a forward thinking university in matters of graduate education. We are pleased to be working with them."

Working across the College of Natural Science and the College of Education, the Division of Science and Mathematics Education (DSME) will focus on training graduates who can assume leading roles in academic and public policy settings to help address critical national problems in mathematics education. As part of the CID project, they will be looking at such issues as: how to ensure adequate breadth and sufficient depth in the range of areas needed to provide expert leadership, including mathematical content preparation, psychology, teacher education, and educational policy. Committed to the idea that practica and apprenticeship experiences are a key component of doctoral preparation, Mathematics Education faculty are working to redesign the program so that such experiences are integral to it and sequenced and organized in useful ways. The project will build on the NSF-funded study of the development of leadership in mathematics and science education, being conducted by MSU faculty members James Gallagher, Robert Floden, Andy Anderson (Teacher Education), and Joan Ferrini-Mundy (Mathematics and Teacher Education, and also part of the CID leadership team). The leadership team includes Natasha Speer (Teacher Education and Mathematics), Karen King (Mathematics), and Jon Star (CEPSE and Teacher Education). Ferrini-Mundy said that she is “very excited about the potential for bringing more coherence and coordination for what we do to prepare Mathematics Education doctoral students across the three degree program options that exist currently for them; the Ph.D. in Mathematics Education in the Department of Mathematics; the Ph.D. in Curriculum, Teaching, and Educational Policy in the Department of Teacher Education, and the Ph.D. in Educational Psychology in the Department of Counseling, Educational Psychology, and Special Education.”

Teacher Education will focus on issues specific to education as both an applied and a research disciplinary field. Graduates must be prepared for specific lines of work—usually the task of educating future teachers—as well as for disciplinary scholarship in their field. During the CID project, the faculty plan to address the tension between the disciplinary foci in education and the social, political, and moral enterprise of education as a field of practice. They also hope to address the fact that students coming into the doctoral program often lack research experience because of the applied nature of the field at the undergraduate level. To develop research skills, they need doctoral course work that is coherent and research intensive; at the same time, they must take courses in a range of disciplinary departments. In part to address this issue, one of the first experiments during the CID project will be the development of a digital advisor on the web. It will provide advice on developing long-term goals, forming a program, and developing a research agenda. Mary Kennedy (Teacher Education), who is part of the CID leadership team, commented: “We are very excited about the digital advisor. It will provide the kind of nuts and bolts advice that students really need. And it will never go on sabbatical and leave students stranded.”

In English, the focus will be on assessment, collaborative exchange, and professional development. The department has recently reshaped its doctoral program with the goal of providing multi-field conversation, focusing on theoretical and methodological problem solving, and offering students a broader way of imagining their own specializations. Through assessment English will address questions such as: which level of change—the course, degree requirements, extra-curricular models and reinforcement—contributes the most to promoting the intellectual goals of the program, and how do these levels need to be related? To encourage collaborative scholarship, the department will sponsor a mini-seminar each term involving faculty, students and visiting disciplinary experts, and extend the discussion into collaborative book projects and dissertation work. In addition, a proseminar will be created to address the connections between teaching and research. The course will be collaborative, involving faculty and advanced graduate students in a series of presentations about both the theoretical rounds for connecting research and pedagogy and the practical experiments of trying to do so. The proseminar will provide a specific setting for a continuous examination of faculty and student assumptions about graduate school, thus incorporating
the goals of the Carnegie initiative into the doctoral experience. According to Patrick O’Donnell, the English Department Chairperson, “being selected for participation in the Carnegie Initiative on the Doctorate is a sign of our commitment to improvement and innovation in our graduate programs, and provides us a wonderful opportunity to explore with English departments in other peer doctoral institutions how we continue to develop a forward-looking program and quality training for our students.

The Carnegie Initiative on the Doctorate provides a valuable framework for thinking about national and local concerns in the evolution of graduate education within disciplines. The Graduate School will partner in this initiative, helping to provide resources and structure for cross-campus conversations about the initiative. Dean Karen Klomparens supports the goals of the project, and the dedication to graduate education demonstrated by the participating programs. “I am very pleased,” she remarked, “that these departments are participating in the Carnegie Initiative. The willingness of the faculty to participate in the activities, without lots of extra funding, demonstrates a serious and ongoing commitment to improving their doctoral programs. Well done! I hope they will share what they’ve learned with the wider campus community.”

CID selected 32 partner and 22 allied departments across the fields of Chemistry, Education, English and Mathematics. Next year the project will be expanded to include programs in Neuroscience and History. Further information about the study and all of the participants may be found on the Carnegie website at http://www.carnegiefoundation.org. Funding for the project is provided by the Atlantic Philanthropies, which identifies and supports leaders, institutions, and organizations dedicated to learning, knowledge-building, and solving pressing social problems, and The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, an independent policy and research center with a primary mission “to do an perform all things necessary to encourage, uphold, and dignify the profession of the teacher.” The Foundation, located in Menlo Park, California, fulfills this mission through its contributions to improvements in education policy and practice.

---

**MISSION OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL**

To serve as an advocate for graduate education to the University and beyond and to enhance the quality of graduate education at MSU in all its diverse dimensions

---

**The Graduate Post**

Michigan State University
118 Linton Hall
East Lansing, MI 48824-1044