

UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING

# in the MARGINS

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL AND APPLIED ECONOMICS

## Experimental economics lab dedicated

Robert Waggener

A ceremonial ribbon-cutting formally opened the Department's Experimental Economics Laboratory this semester. Speaking at the ceremony on March 5, Dean Frank Galey said, "Today, we have the first permanent experimental economics lab in Wyoming".

"The lab is outfitted with 16 workstations, a master computer for controlling the experiments and a state-of-the-art projection system. All are now housed in an attractive and functional facility."

Professor Dale Menkhaus and colleagues in the Department designed the laboratory and developed the software.

"Until recently, economics was not thought to be an experimental discipline," Menkhaus said. "Traditionally, observations from naturally occurring economic phenomena were the primary data for analyses."

Menkhaus said experimental economics – or collecting data in a controlled laboratory setting – has become an increasingly important and accepted way of investigating economic issues and problems and has given economists access to a new source of data.

Associate Professor Roger Coupal, interim department head said, "From a research perspective, you can focus on particular aspects of a policy. Does it cut back on production? Does it give producers more income? How does it affect supply and demand?"

Already more than 50 experimental sessions have been conducted in the laboratory since the lab became operational last autumn. Experiments have tested hypotheses on livestock auctions and other trading institutions work, family behaviour and food choices, individuals behaviour in the face of risk, and agricultural policy.

The facility is the first "full-fledged" experimental



Dedicating the new experimental economics laboratory March 5 were, from left, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs Nicole Ballenger, Vice President for Academic Affairs Myron Allen, and College of Agriculture Dean Frank Galey.

economics lab in Wyoming. While its primary function is research, it also will support teaching in an active learning environment.

"I am confident the imaginative minds of our faculty and staff members, and students, will continue to advance the discipline and contribute to solving relevant economic problems using this facility," Menkhaus said.

Others besides Menkhaus involved in the design of the lab and development of software were Assistant Professor Mariah Tanner Ehmke, Assistant Professor Chris Bastian, Associate Research Scientist Tom Foulke, and Farm and Ranch Man-

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# AGECON

## Department Head Letter

Hello from the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics! I hope the world is treating you well, wherever you may be. The department is doing well and there are exciting new avenues of research, extension, and teaching that we think are vital to building a sustainable rural economy for the West and beyond.



### Personnel

We have two new faculty focusing research, teaching and extension on natural resource and wildlife issues related to agriculture. Topics might include brucellosis, conservation issues, private land game management issues, and agricultural water management. Dr. Dannele Peck and Dr. Benjamin Rashford come from Oregon State University. Both received Bachelors degrees and Masters Degrees from this University. Dr. Peck has a teaching/research appointment and Dr. Rashford has an extension/research/teaching appointment. We are also hiring an agricultural production economist for this next year.

### Teaching

Our teaching program has continued to grow over the past four years. Currently we have 123 undergraduate students, which is a four percent growth rate over the past four years. Also, our diversity has substantially increased over the years. In the early 1990s around one in five undergraduates were female, currently between a third to 35 percent are female. We expect this percentage to increase each year as it has done in the past. A recent study by graduate student Dalin Winters identified where our students end up in the world of work. Figure 1 provides a quick summary of what he found.

### Extension

The Department's outreach has expanded in prominence considerably. Award-winning and publicly noted extension programs include risk management programs, small acreage programming, community leadership, and public land economics with respect to Forest Plan revisions and BLM Resource Management Plans. Faculty continue to be involved in the Wyoming Open Space Initiative looking at the public benefits from agricultural opera-

tions such as wildlife habitat and fiscal stability. Finally, the department's alternative dispute resolution program run by Dr. Alan Schroeder continues to sponsor workshops related to conflict mediation in areas of agriculture and natural resources, rural living, and workplace mediation.

### Research

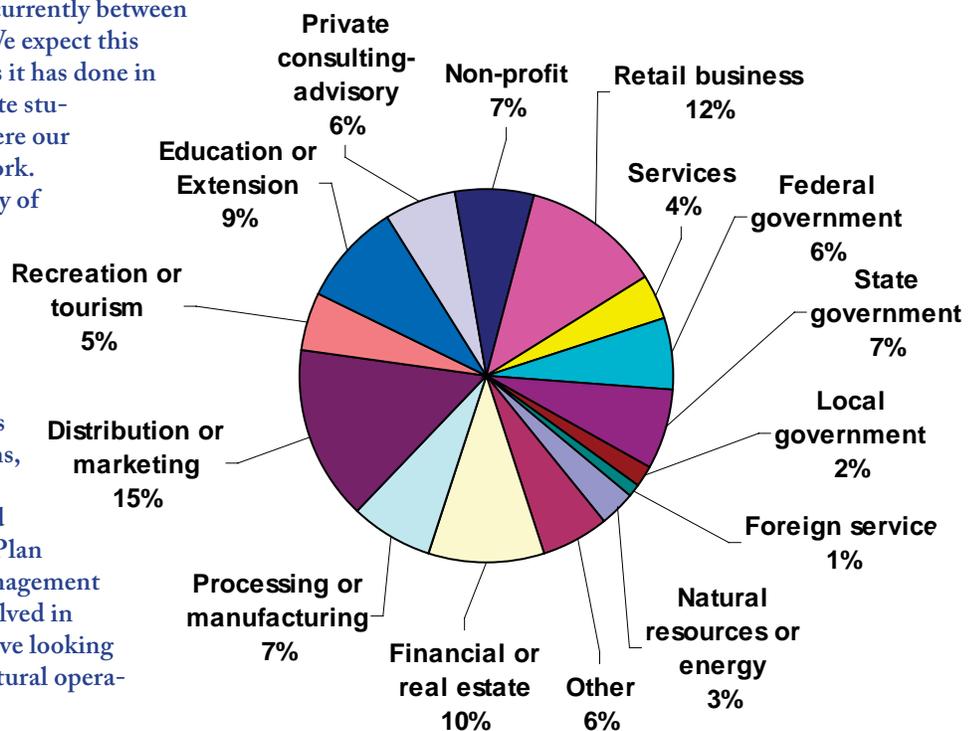
The research agenda in the department has increased significantly. We now have the new Experimental Economics Laboratory that several faculty use to evaluate public policy issues ranging from USDA programs to childhood obesity (in conjunction with Family and Consumer Sciences.) We continue to concentrate on an applied research focus with projects related to risk management, agricultural policy analysis, public lands planning and analysis, energy development, wildlife issues, water development, drought, nutrition, and more.

In summary our department is doing well. We have ongoing projects across the University and beyond. If there are issues that you feel are important and/or suggestions on what we can do to improve our service to Wyoming and beyond please let me know. Thank you for your support.

Roger Coupal, Interim Head  
Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics

**Figure 1. Sectors of the economy where graduates in Agricultural Business work.**

Source: Winters, D. (2006). "The Market for University of Wyoming Graduates from the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics". M.S. Thesis. University of Wyoming.



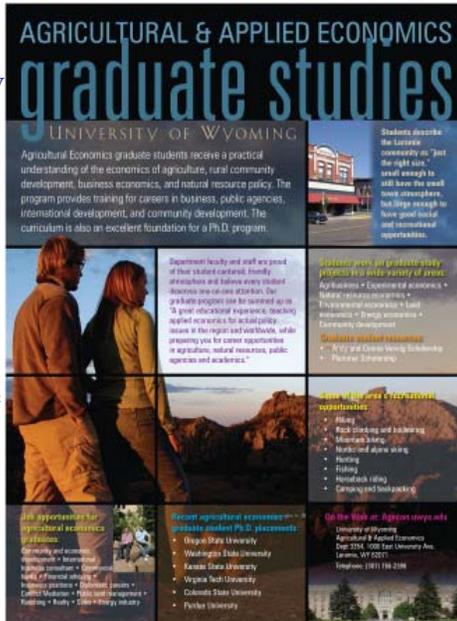
## New Grad Poster Released

The Department has produced a poster to help attract more graduate students to the department.

“There are three main messages: why a student would want a graduate degree in agricultural economics, the area’s recreational opportunities and environment, and the people in the department,” Roger Coupal notes.

The poster was developed by Coupal and the department’s graduate committee (Mariah Tanner Ehmke, Don McLeod, Dale Menkhous, Tom Foulke, and Larry Held), and was designed by Tana Stith in the College of Agriculture’s Office of Communications and Technology.

250 copies were in printed and are being mailed to many agricultural economics departments across the country and in Canada and Australia.



# AGECON

## New Faculty: Dannele Peck

Dannele Peck is a new assistant professor in the Department. She received a B.S. (2000) in wildlife biology and an M.S. (2002) in agricultural economics from UW. She graduated from Oregon State University (OSU) with a doctorate in agricultural and resource economics last fall.

“She will focus on anything dealing with livestock production and wildlife,” says Roger Coupal.

Peck has a teaching and research assignment. Her dissertation focused on optimal drought preparedness and response in irrigated agriculture.

She was raised on a dairy farm in upstate New York and earned a bachelor’s degree in wildlife biology and a master’s in agricultural economics at UW.

## New Faculty: Ben Rashford

Ben Rashford is a new assistant professor in the Department. He received a B.S. (1999) and an M.S. (2001) in economics from UW, and a Ph.D. (2006) in agricultural and resource economics from Oregon State University.

Rashford will split the majority of his time between extension and research but will also teach. His dissertation examined the design of cost-effective wildlife management on agricultural land.

He grew up in upstate New York and earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees in economics at UW.

## New Staff: Lorraine Harrison

Lorraine Harrison is a new Accounting Associate Senior in the Department. Having been with UW for the last 20 years, she has extensive experience with departments as diverse as Coe Library and the Small Business Administration. She received her B.A. in Sociology and her M.S. in Public Administration from UW.

Harrison is responsible for all departmental accounting. She is a Wyoming native and says she has been enjoying her work in the department, and the people.

## Seniors Finalists for Awards

Agricultural Economics graduating seniors Becca Freeburn and Ryan McConnaughey were finalists for the University of Wyoming’s top student awards. Freeburn was among 10 finalists for the Rosemarie Martha Spitaleri Award for the outstanding graduating woman from UW this year. McConnaughey was among three finalists for the Tobin Memorial Award for the outstanding graduating man from UW this year.

## Program Review Held

As part of the land grant system, each department can request a review of its program to improve effectiveness. In September 2006 the Department hosted its review.

The voluntary review involved CSREES (Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension) staff assessing the strengths, identifying future opportunities, and recommending strategies for enhancing the department. Reviewers included Henry Bahn of USDA CSREES, Kitty Smith of USDA ERS, Paul Wilson of University of Arizona, and Bruce Weber of Oregon State University. The team conversed with staff and stakeholders to develop a report document.

Their report has become the impetus for a series of staff meetings aimed at identifying future action in several areas, including graduate and undergraduate instruction, research, and extension activities.



## ORV Study Released

Information from a Department study is helping understand the need for services for four-wheelers, dirt bikes and other off-road vehicles (ORVs).

“Our study estimated approximately 37 percent of Wyoming households owned ORVs in the past year,” said Tom Foulke, an associate research scientist in the Department

“One of the interesting facets of the study relates to the multiple uses of ORVs. People use them not just to ride for riding’s sake but also to access areas they may not normally be able to for things like fishing, hunting and camping,” Foulke said. “When they go camping, ORVs go along as part of the equipment.”

The survey revealed that individual users spent, on average, \$1,599 last year on purchases, repairs and accessories. Residents spent an additional \$27 per day in trip expenses, while non-residents averaged \$35 per day.

The study was conducted for the Wyoming State Trails Program. Working with Foulke on the study were Professor David “Tex” Taylor, Associate Professor Roger Coupal, Research Scientist Desiree Olson and Assistant Professor Chris Bastian.

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agement Specialist John Hewlett. The computer stations and work tables were built by UW Physical Plant.

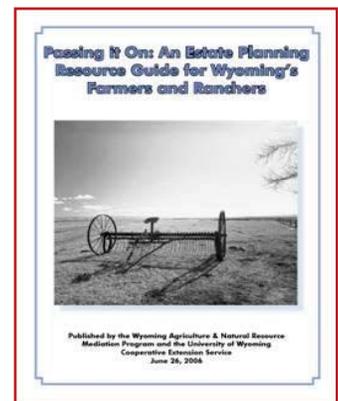
Among those attending the dedication were UW Trustee Dr. Taylor Haynes of Cheyenne, Associate Vice President for Research and Economic Development Roger Wilmot, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs Rollin Abernethy, Outreach School Dean Maggi Murdock, College of Business Dean Brent Hathaway, and Associated Students of the University of Wyoming Vice President Becca Freeburn, a senior in the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics.

## Estate Transfer Book Available

Available now is *Passing It On: An Estate Planning Resource Guide for Wyoming’s Farmers and Ranchers*. The handbook is designed to guide agricultural producers through the process of developing a property transfer plan – it begins with the difficult step of how to initiate a conversation, covers collecting necessary information and understanding available legal tools available, and ends with how a family can achieve agreement on a workable plan.

The handbook is the result of a partnership between the Wyoming Agriculture and Natural Resource Mediation Program and the AgEcon department. Authors include Alan Schroeder and Cole Ehmke, both of AgEcon, Lucy Pauley of the Wyoming Department of Agriculture, Carolyn Paseneaux, and various private legal and estate planning professionals.

Electronic copies are available at [ces.uwyo.edu/passingiton.asp](http://ces.uwyo.edu/passingiton.asp).



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