

# **The Applied Economics Graduate Club's Unofficial Guide**

## **General Information**

### **Academic Year 2009-2010**

Welcome to the Department of Applied Economics at the University of Minnesota. The Graduate Club hopes that you find the following information helpful and relevant as you settle in to your new life as a graduate student in our department.

Graduate students of the Department of Applied Economics have prepared this unofficial guide for you. While the authors feel that accurate information has been provided in this packet, it by no means replaces the department's official guide and policies; in fact we feel they complement each other. When in doubt about a particular issue, consult your advisor, the M.S. or Ph.D. representative, or the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), Jeffrey Apland. We hope you find this guide helpful.

Sincerely,

Applied Economics Graduate Club

## GENERAL INFORMATION

**Office Space:** We do our best to provide each graduate student with their own office space, which they share with (usually) two other graduate students. We encourage you to spend time in the department and occupy an office. This will allow you to develop relationships with other students and faculty in the department. However, we know that every student has unique needs; some students are rarely on campus, while others are here every day.

Because not everyone will require an office space, we ask that you inform us of your intention to use an office. Therefore, in order *to get assigned an office space, you must contact Matt Hendricks ([hendr360@umn.edu](mailto:hendr360@umn.edu))*. Matt is the office space coordinator. Once you have told him of your interest to have an office space, he will assign one to you based on availability.

Many students use their office as a convenient place to store items, but only infrequently work at their desk. If this is the case for you, we ask that you request a shared desk. Also, note that you need not have an office to receive mail in the department and to get building keys (e.g. for evening access to the computer lab). If you choose not to have an office or to occupy a shared desk, you will be given first priority if/when you request an individual desk. In rare instances, you might be asked to wait until an office space opens. Although this most likely won't happen, if it does, we ask for your patience while we find you a space.

Once the office space coordinator has assigned you an office, you will go to Karen Routhe in 231 COB to pick up your keys. You will need to leave a \$10 key deposit with Karen to receive your keys. You can pay in cash or write a check made out to the University of Minnesota. You will be refunded this deposit when you return your keys to Karen upon completion of the program.

You will be given keys to the office space, the Classroom Office Building, and any other relevant pods. (For example, sometimes mailboxes are located in the space next to your office, so you would receive a key to your office plus to the pod where your mailbox is located.) Once you have your office and building keys, you will have access to your office space 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

**Phone and Mail System:** Each office module has a graduate student phone from which you can make phone calls. To retrieve messages, press \*5 and, when prompted, the mailbox password. The phone will then prompt you to retrieve messages. If you need more information about the voice mail service, see Missy Sullivan in the front office (231 COB). Again, be considerate of others when you are using these phones.

The University of Minnesota has an extensive interoffice mail system. You may find a need for this service occasionally, but be certain that the address you use is as correct as possible. You can generally obtain interoffice envelopes from the secretary in your

module or a nearby module.

**Security:** Graduate students have access to the Department 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. At 4:30 p.m. all doors that open to the Department's hallways are closed and locked. You must keep your keys with you at all times and use them to enter the office space after 4:30 and during the weekend. Please do not prop the doors open during this time! This is for your personal safety and to avoid loss of equipment and personal belongs from theft.

**Shared Spaces:** As a graduate student community, we have shared spaces in the Classroom Office Building. We have a graduate student lounge (325 COB), a graduate student computer lab (314 COB), and a study space in the back of Waite Library. It is very important that you respect both spaces by cleaning up after yourself and making sure that you lock the door on your way out if no one else is using the student lounge or computer lab. You will learn the code to open the graduate computer lab and the Waite Library doors (the code is the same) during orientation.

The Waite Library, on the second floor of the Classroom Office Building (232 COB) is a library solely dedicated to the Department of Applied Economics. You will find that this library will become a very convenient and essential part of your daily life. There are three computers in the Waite Library for students to use, plus a study space in the back. The graduate student copier is located in Waite Library, along with course materials on reserve. You will soon become acquainted with the Waite Library, but we encourage you to go there and meet the librarian, Louise Letnes, and Sharon Kill, information technology professional, who both have their offices in the library.

Note: There is a key hanging in the computer lab (to the right of the printer), which opens the graduate student lounge and the kitchen space next to it. If you use the key, it is essential that you put it back in its proper place when you are done using it.

**Copying and printing:** The Graduate Club manages a photocopy machine as a way of providing students with a cheaper way to make photocopies. It is located in Waite Library (232 COB) for use by applied economics graduate students. Copies cost 7 cents per page and payment should be put in the box next to the machines. The fee helps pay for toner, paper and any required maintenance. The graduate club can not continue to provide this service if we do not all pay for our copies so for the sake of your fellow graduate students, no free riders!

If you have questions about the copying policy please email Katie Genadek ([kgenadek@gmail.com](mailto:kgenadek@gmail.com))

A favorite alternative is the use of the various copy machines scattered around campus. One is located in the University's Copies on Campus office in the St. Paul student center. In the Classroom Office Building, there is one machine on the first floor near the vending machines. However, that machine is frequently out of service. The remainder of the copy machines found in many campus buildings and the libraries, but please be aware that all

of these other copy machines cost more per copy than our own copy machine in Waite Library.

When you print from the Graduate Student Computer Lab or a computer in Waite Library, your printouts will be tallied automatically through your university login. The University is currently providing a free quota of printouts. After the quota is exceeded, additional printouts will be charged to your student account.

**Computing:** Please find more information about computing needs and services in the additional computing handout provided.

**Jobs, Internships, and Marginal Memos:** Information on jobs and internships is kept on file in Waite Library. When items are added to this file, it is usually noted in Marginal Memos. The Marginal Memos is an invaluable source of listings for job openings, internship opportunities, lectures, and almost anything that is happening in the department. The Department publishes it twice a week. You can register to receive the Memos by e-mail by seeing Ellen Carlson in 249 COB and provide her with your email address. For those interested in employment, seminars, or conferences, you can always find more detailed information in the folders in Waite Library.

**Professional Meetings:** A large group of graduate students from our department frequently go to annual international and domestic meetings. For students early in their program, it may be a good idea to go to the American Agricultural Economics Association (AAEA), Allied Social Science Association, or any of the regional meetings (e.g., Western AAEA) to get to know the current research along with developing outside connections. Students often present papers in Selected Paper sessions or have Poster presentations. Students further along in their program who have international interests are International Agricultural Economics meetings. Students are encouraged to try to present a paper at the meetings during their program to give them an opportunity to present their research before going on the job market. Whether attending or presenting, the Department usually has some funds for travel expenses. The meetings are also very useful for “soon-to-be graduate” students in their search for jobs.

**Building Community:** You will be spending lots of time with your new classmates doing homework assignments and studying for exams. Since you will have to spend so much time together anyway, we think it's important to share in some social, non-academic events as well. Therefore, the Graduate Club offers multiple opportunities for you to share and interact with other graduate students and faculty, as well as their friends and family. The two main events during the year are the *Fall BBQ* and the *Spring International Dinner*, however we've been known to go out an occasional *Happy Hour* at one of the local bars. We strongly encourage you to participate in these events! You may not realize it now, but the academic community is small, and once we graduate we will probably be networking with each other more than we realize - so why not start now?

## FUNDING

Funding can come in the form of fellowships, assistantships, grant money, a salary based job or of course your savings account. Naturally, a fellowship that offers all benefits of an assistantship except the work requirement is the most preferred but also hardest form of funding to secure.

The best alternative to finance graduate school after a fellowship is an assistantship. They cover tuition, health insurance (except for 5% of the premium), and an hourly salary that will vary between MS and Ph.D. students. These assistantships are either offered to you when you were admitted and are then considered “departmental funding” or you could apply every year along with other students without guaranteed funding.

**Research Assistantships:** For students on departmental funding, the department provides its official policy and guidelines for research assistantships, but it is important to know that you do not need to commit to a research assistantship (RA) right away. At the beginning of this year, the faculty members with RA positions open submit a description of the assistantship duties to the DGS who sends copies of this information to all the new graduate students. RAs are assigned based on a matching of preferences and skills of both the faculty members and graduate students. It is also possible to switch your RA, but you are encouraged to work through any problems professionally with your advisor first.

If you did not receive funding through the department and are still interested in funding opportunities, you may still be able to find some through the University of Minnesota Office of Human Resources (<http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/employment/index.html>), click on “Search & Apply for Openings” [on the left side] and then follow the directions on the screen. You will most likely be interested in jobs classified as “Graduate Assistants”. Job postings may also be included in Marginal Memos emails from the department. If you are looking at the University of Minnesota Office of Human Resources postings online, you should check the postings AT LEAST once a week, as new assistantships are always popping up, especially the few weeks prior to and after the start of a new semester.

The University of Minnesota has multiple Centers. If you are interested in a particular topic area, search the University of Minnesota website to see if there is a center related to that topic. Then, you should request a meeting with someone there to find out more about the center and whether or not they support graduate research assistants.

Two centers that have successfully provided Applied Economics graduate students with research assistantships in the past are the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA), <http://www.cura.umn.edu/>, which often has short-term research assistantships relating to local and regional community issues, and the Minnesota Population Center (MPC), <http://www.pop.umn.edu>, which hires graduate research assistants in the spring for the following academic year. In addition to checking their websites, the job posting can be found on the University of Minnesota employment webpage [mentioned above].

Make sure you keep and read the department’s “Policy Relating to Graduate Study and Programs.” Some students who do not receive an offer for an RA from our department can sometimes receive assistantships from another department like the Carlson School of Management, the Humphrey Institute for Public Policy, or Epidemiology. Check their websites and employment postings on-line for more information.

Another alternative is a teaching assistantship. Since many graduate students plan to go into academia, spending a semester or more as a TA is often an invaluable experience. However, general policy in our department is that students on departmental funding are preferred for TA positions.

**Lastly, remember that the DGS and professors do not know that you want an RA or TA unless you ask. Be persistent! Think outside the box and voice your need for funding!** You might try to develop a research proposal with an interested faculty member; however, when doing this work, be sure that if you are successful that it is clear that you will receive some funding for this work.

## **BECOMING INVOLVED**

### **Applied Economics Graduate Club**

All graduate students in the department are members of the Department of Applied Economics’ Graduate Club. We are advocates for graduate students and also put on several social events during the year. Participating in meetings and events is a good way to get to know other students besides those you see in class. Notices of meetings and department events appear in Marginal Memos, which will be sent electronically to your email address, and via e-mails to the graduate student list-serve. In addition, hard copies of Marginal Memos are placed on the Waite Library window. Please try to make a point of reading Marginal Memos since it is the major form of communication within the Department and an important source of information regarding preliminary exams, changes affecting payroll, social events, and general announcements.

#### Graduate Club Officers and Committee Representatives

<b>Position</b>	<b>Elected</b>	<b>Officer</b>	<b>E-mail</b>
President	X	Alison Sexton	<a href="mailto:Sexto060@umn.edu">Sexto060@umn.edu</a>
Ph.D. Representative	X	Theresa Baurer	<a href="mailto:bauer222@umn.edu">bauer222@umn.edu</a>
M.S. Representative	X	Hyunkoo Lee	<a href="mailto:Leex3889@umn.edu">Leex3889@umn.edu</a>
International Student Representative	X	Xudong Rao	<a href="mailto:raox107@umn.edu">raox107@umn.edu</a>
Social Chair	X	Jaya Jha	<a href="mailto:jhaxx016@umn.edu">jhaxx016@umn.edu</a>
Treasurer	X	Katie Genadek	<a href="mailto:gena0004@umn.edu">gena0004@umn.edu</a>
Secretary	X	Heather Mattson	<a href="mailto:Matts448@umn.edu">Matts448@umn.edu</a>
Office Coordinator		Matt Hendricks	<a href="mailto:hendr360@umn.edu">hendr360@umn.edu</a>
Computer Chair		Stephen Aultman	<a href="mailto:aultm015@umn.edu">aultm015@umn.edu</a>
Program Priorities Committee Rep		David Smith	<a href="mailto:smit1260@umn.edu">smit1260@umn.edu</a>

Awards Committee Representative		Yu Wang	<a href="mailto:wang1271@umn.edu">wang1271@umn.edu</a>
Outreach Committee Representative		David Smith	<a href="mailto:smit1260@umn.edu">smit1260@umn.edu</a>
Seminar Committee Representative		Kyle McKeever	<a href="mailto:mcke0394@umn.edu">mcke0394@umn.edu</a>
Library Committee Representative		Andy Larson	<a href="mailto:lars1102@umn.edu">lars1102@umn.edu</a>
Publications/Web Policy Comm Rep		Wonho Chung	<a href="mailto:chun0058@umn.edu">chun0058@umn.edu</a>

### **Brief Description of Elected Officer Responsibilities**

**President:** The Graduate Club President leads graduate club meetings and supports the activities of fellow officers. Among other things, the President serves on the Graduate Committee, attends faculty meetings, and is responsible for the annual nomination of student representatives for departmental committees. The President finds representatives and volunteers for graduate club committees and organizes the Graduate Club efforts for New Student Orientation.

**Student Representatives:** Ph.D., M.S., and international student representatives serve on the Departmental Graduate Committee. They act as advocates for students on a wide range of areas. In addition, each representative organizes a committee that is charged with evaluating M.S. and Ph.D. courses taken by students in our Department and presenting student feedback on the courses to the DGS. The International Dinner in the spring is organized by the International Student Representative. If you have ideas, suggestions, or concerns related to your program or as a result of your background, contact the appropriate representative.

**Social Officer:** We hope that some of your best times will be spent at the U of MN. The Social Officer strives to create opportunities for collegial exchange and social bonding, as good relationships with future colleagues and professors can be one of the most valuable things we take away from graduate school. The Social Officer plans the annual welcome back cook-out in the fall. The welcome back party as well as International Dinner (traditions going back decades) are widely attended by students, staff, faculty, and their families. It is important to balance studying with relaxation and fun. With this in mind, the graduate students organize other informal get-togethers throughout the year. These range from local activities like happy hours at local pubs and intramural sports to activities away from the Twin Cities like camping and ice- fishing trips.

Anyone with any suggestions or ideas about social events (want to go canoeing or sky diving?) please tell us!! We are also always on the lookout for volunteers to help with events!

**Treasurer:** The principle duty of the Treasurer is to oversee and manage the funds in the Graduate Club account. The Treasurer reimburses other students and officers for authorized and normal activities of the club.

**Secretary:** The secretary is responsible for announcing grad club meeting times/agendas via email and Marginal Memos, reserving a room for meetings, taking meeting minutes and then distributing them via email to graduate students.

**We encourage you to get involved and consider running for one of these positions at the end of your first year in the program!**