In response to the comments that Marty received last spring, we will have periodic newsletters to keep you informed about Department events and plans.

(1) Stephen will be the new Director of the Ph.D. Program. George has been doing the job for five years, and has a well-deserved sabbatical this coming year. We are very pleased that Stephen has agreed to be the Director. He has a great combination of warmth and humor, but he will push you when it is necessary.

(2) Stipend: We raised the fellowship stipend for incoming first-year students to $20,000 for this year. As a result, we hope to also increase the TA stipend to that same amount as soon as the contact negotiation with the TA union is settled. The primary reason for this increase is to make sure that we remain competitive with the stipends paid by other economics departments at the major public universities. Thus, I hope that we can make steady increments to that stipend in future years.

(3) TA Workload: We also revised the composition of the TA workload to increase the number of discussion sections to four sections instead of three sections. We realize that this is a noticeable increase in the TA workload, but we plan to make the workload more standardized across assignments and keep it less than 20 hours a week for everyone. [In his meeting with the second and third year classes, Marty forgot to mention this increase, so he apologizes now for any surprise that he caused.] The primary reason for this change is that we are short of TAs for our large introductory and intermediate courses. As you know, many students are receiving research assistantships with other units such as the College of Business and IGPA. We want to encourage such RAs because it often facilitates the transition to research, but these RAs reduce the number of advanced students with experience as TAs.

(4) Basement Space: We are working on the basement space for Ph.D. students. Marty took a number of students on a tour two weeks ago and received a number of good ideas. There will be two rooms for desk space, each with about twenty four-foot computer tables. The two rooms have windows facing east looking upward at the bicycle racks. The Ph.D. governance association will construct a method to assign these tables to the advanced students. Each room will have a printer connected to a computer. We also plan to have some kind of locker for everyone. Between these two rooms is a labyrinth of connected offices that we will use for TA office hours. In this way, we can avoid holding disturbing office hours in the two rooms with desks. The plan is that these office hour rooms will be equipped with tables and computer chairs, whiteboards, and computers with large monitors. Since there will not enough desks for first and second year students, and probably some third year students, we will create a library room on the north end of the basement with some study tables. We plan to have some other amenities too, but unlike Google, we cannot afford free meals and a full-time chef, ha ha. No current faculty members will be located in the basement until the fall of 2013 because the south end will have to be renovated first.
(5) Faculty Recruiting: We have received permission to embark on a very aggressive recruiting plan for new faculty members. We will be recruiting at all ranks from full professors to new Ph.D. students. We will focus the recruiting on the two core fields of econometrics and macroeconomics, and the four applied fields of labor, public, development, and trade. I am hoping that many of you will attend the recruiting seminars for the candidates. Most of these seminars will occur at the end of the day at 3:30 pm. Some of these seminars will be scheduled during the regular workshop days, but others will be scheduled on days convenient for the candidate. Once our advertisement appears in JOE, we can formally announce which seminars are recruiting seminars. I am hoping that you will attend the recruiting seminars that are related to your field of research. We will schedule at least 30 minutes for small groups of students to meet the candidates. Like last year, I suspect that the best time for these meetings will be after the seminar at 5:00 pm. These recruiting candidates will ask about you, your technical strengths and your research interests. So your participation in the recruiting process is very important.

(6) New Courses: In order to stimulate the research atmosphere, we are beginning a plan to invite a number of visitors each semester to teach full Ph.D. courses (4 credits) or mini-courses (2 credits). Each of these visitors will be distinguished for their career age, and each is making a special effort to create a novel and interesting course. These courses will provide an opportunity to learn about a topic that you would not otherwise learn in a course taught by our regular faculty. Attendance in these courses (for credit or just to audit) is very important for the success of this visitor program. You should relish this opportunity, and not worry about how these courses will count toward your course and field requirements. We plan to integrate these courses into the field requirements and create pairings of two credit mini-courses into four credit courses during the same semester or across semesters.

You have already received announcements about each of these courses for the fall semester, but here is the list of courses by visitors for this fall semester.

Time Series Analysis in Economics (Econometrics) (4 credits)
Mohitosh Kejriwal Purdue University
MW, 5:00-6:20 PM, 125 DKH

Government Regulation of Industry (4 credits):
The New Empirical Industrial Organization with Applications to Network Industries
Neil Gandal Tel Aviv University
Aug. 16-Sept. 15
TR, 2:00-3:20 and 5:30-6:50, 215 DKH

Competitive Procurement and Auction Applications
Roberto Burguet Institute of Economic Analysis, Barcelona
Sept. 16-Oct. 15
TR, 2:00-3:20 and 5:30-6:50, 215 DKH
Topics in Labor Economics (2 credits):

Family Background, Human Capital, and Long-Term Outcomes
    Bhasker Mazumder    Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago
    W, 2:00-4:50, 322 DKH (Every other Wednesday beginning Aug. 29)

The two mini-courses by Neil Gandal and Roberto Burguet will be taught consecutively and will count as a four credit course in industrial organization. For the mini-course by Bhasker Mazumder, we plan to find a visitor to teach a mini-course on another topic in labor economics which can be combined with this course for a four credit course in labor economics.