November

Student Spotlight

Alex Ruiz – Political Science and Statistics

– is a data analysis intern. He is also a legislative intern for Representative Jared Moskowitz (D) at the Florida House of Representatives and a player on the FSU Men’s Rugby Club.

N’Namdi Green – Economics and International Affairs

– is a policy analysis intern. His research for the DMC focuses on faith-based organizations and their role in economic development.

On June 13, 2017, the FBI served subpoenas to the Tallahassee City Hall and another to the Tallahassee Community Redevelopment Agency. These subpoenas requested records of communication between city officials and local business owners regarding redevelopment projects. The DeVoe L. Moore Center worked in partnership with the Tallahassee Democrat to gain access to the records for its long-term research on urban redevelopment policy in Florida.

The aim is to provide a meaningful and significant contribution to public discussion about urban redevelopment. Local government transparency and accountability is a continuing focus of the DeVoe L. Moore Center, and these unique data will provide new opportunities for understanding the practical workings of the redevelopment process.

“By using subpoena records from the investigation in Tallahassee,” says Austin Eovito, manager of the center’s Data Analytics Group, “we are able to compile a list of individuals involved in the development process and their relationships with each other and with the Community Redevelopment Agency. There are a lot here: tens of thousands of records, upwards of a hundred thousand.”

COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY RESEARCH

Data Analysis Team Works to Increase Transparency in the Tallahassee Government

by Mike Avi

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**Does an “open borders” policy make sense for the United States?**

by Megan Bogshinger, photos by the author

Fabio Rojas, acclaimed sociologist and professor at Indiana University-Bloomington, met with students at FSU on November 2, 2017. He spoke in favor of open-border immigration policies and offered a wide array of arguments to dubious audience members.

He was joined by a panel of FSU faculty, including Patrick Mason (Economics), Terrance Coonan (Ctr. for the Advancement of Human Rights), and Deana Rohlinger (Sociology).

Rojas argued that immigrants do not harm the economy as many would suspect. Rather, he says, immigrants make up an important part of the labor market. Borders themselves operate like regulations on the labor market, artificially disrupting natural equilibrium. He addressed common objections to immigration such as increased threats from terrorist attacks, unemployment, and slow economic growth. Panelists such as Dr. Mason pushed back, pointing to wage inequities between native born workers and recent immigrants. Panelists further tackled immigration concerns, citing evidence such as economic advancement and the cultural empowerment of minorities.

**FRENTCHTOWN RENAISSANCE**

Faith-Based Initiative Aims to Empower through Economic Redevelopment

by N’Namdi Green

Bethel Missionary Baptist Church— a staple in the Tallahassee community— has served as a hub for social and religious engagement for over a century. Recently, Bethel has taken the initiative to find and manage economic development projects to help stimulate the economy of the surrounding Frenchtown area. In these efforts, Bethel is an important part of a national movement by faith-based organizations focused on revitalizing key parts of American cities.

Bethel Church has contributed to numerous development initiatives. These include Bethel Towers, which is an affordable retirement home for the elderly, and the Bethel Family Life Center, a recreation center. The main objective for each project is to provide the Frenchtown community with services and infrastructure that promote growth and stability.

Bethel is working in conjunction with Frenchtown Redevelopment Partners LLC. Bethel plans to purchase land on the 400 block of West Tennessee Street and construct a mixed-use business and housing complex ranging from 16 to 150 units. This would include apartments, townhouses, a local grocery store, an urgent care facility, and a community bank. They hope to revitalize and boost the local economy.

**RETHINKING FLOOD INSURANCE**

National Flood Insurance Needs Reform

by Giaovanna Da Silva

For published in the DeVoe Moore Center policy map, October 26, 2017

With the national spotlight on flooding caused by hurricanes Harvey and Irma, the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) has come under scrutiny. The federal program focuses on offering flood insurance coverage and reducing the impact of flood damage. The NFIP is currently $25 billion in debt to the U.S. Treasury. The program also charges higher premiums to those in lower-risk flooding areas, leaving many questioning the efficiency of the NFIP as a whole.

Jennifer Wrighits, professor of law at the University of Miami, notes flaws with this: by giving discounted rates on old, risky properties, Congress discourages replacement. These subsidies in turn encourage further infrastructure development in high-risk areas, which increases liability. The NFIP fails to accurately price insurance premiums for the properties it insures. In Florida, High risk properties are usually owned by affluent citizens living in coastal areas. By artificially lowering the price of these properties, low-risk property holders subsidize the cost to affluent citizens. Yet, according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency one of the NFIP’s goals is to provide affordable flood insurance for the everyday citizen.

**A RADICAL SOLUTION TO UNIVERSITY PARKING**

by Austin Eovito

The Data Analytics Group at the DeVoe L. Moore Center has launched several projects intended to provide transparency to local government spending. The floridaopengov.org transparency website is being reformatted to create a more user-friendly interface with relevant, informative graphics to show how Florida governments spend money and raise tax revenues. The website is updated to display the most current information available.

Data analytics researchers are also examining urban redevelopment initiatives using an interdisciplinary research approach, working with faculty and staff from the Department of Scientific Computing and Astronomy and Assistant Professor of Geography.

**DATA ANALYTICS RESEARCHERS LOOK AT GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY**

by Mike Avi and Megan Bogshinger

The DeVoe L. Moore Center hosted the first in a series of workshops on empirical methods for undergraduate students in October 2017. Martha Evans, adjunct professor in the Department of Economics and a practicing business economist, gave students insights into visual presentation techniques when handling data. Evans argued that well-conceived charts communicate more effectively than information presented in verbal or tabular form. And anyone in business, economics, or accounting knows that visual presentation skill set is essential to those fields. However, poorly designed and inappropriate charts and graphs can confuse more than clarify. To help workshop attendees avoid these pitfalls, presenters should take care not to use the wrong graphical presentations for the intended message. The goal is to grab an audience’s attention and make an impact that will be remembered long after the presentation has ended.

**WORKSHOP SERIES:** MARThA EvANS

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