

Meet Our Muskie Scholar: Gabit Zhanysbayev

Gabit Zhanysbayev holds at least two firsts among AREC graduate students. He's the first M.S. student from Kazakhstan and he's the Department's first Edmund S. Muskie Graduate Fellowship Program fellow.

When pressed, Gabit admits there's one more first he'd like to achieve: become the Department's first alum to serve as finance minister in Kazakhstan. If that's his goal, then he's certainly moving along the path towards it.

Gabit hails originally from Taraz, a city along the southern border of Kazakhstan's vast expanse. He grew up there along with his sister, his physician mother, and his entrepreneur/businessman father. When it was time to start university, Gabit headed off for the capital city Al-

maty where he attended the Kazakhstan Institute of Management, Economics, and Strategic Research and received his B.S. "It's the best in the country for market-oriented specializations," Gabit says.

Even before finishing his undergraduate degree, Gabit worked as a research analyst for Halyk Finance covering oil and gas and analyzing stock market exchanges. More recently, he worked in finance and economics at Saipem Eni Group, a North Caspian Service company. Gabit hasn't limited himself to economics, business, or finance, either. He worked as an English/Kazakh interpreter providing services to U.S. delegations to Kazakhstan. He also spent 2005–2006 in the U.S. at Puget Sound Community College (as a participant in the U.S. State Department-sponsored program UGrad) where he both tutored international students in business and economics and soaked up American culture.

In 2010, Gabit applied to the Muskie program and was one of those selected from a field of more than 500 applicants. The program was authorized by the U.S. Congress in 1992, soon after the breakup of the Soviet Union, and is now administered by IREX (originally the International Research & Exchanges Board). From the IREX website: "**The Edmund S. Muskie Graduate Fellowship Program** brings emerging leaders in key professional fields from Eurasia to the United States for one to two years of graduate study at institutions across the United States." Areas that Muskie scholars focus on include business administration, econom-



ics, education, environmental management, international affairs, journalism and mass communication, law, library and information science, public administration, public health, and public policy.

Gabit seems a great fit for the program and for AREC. After arriving in Tucson in fall 2010, he settled quickly into his classes in the master's program and then went out and found tutoring opportunities with the Strategic Alternative Learning Techniques (SALT) Center on campus. There he spends more than 12 hours a week tutoring in math, economics, finance, and accounting. You can also find him swimming laps at the pool or doing power lifting at the gym.

However, Gabit admits that he's a traveler at heart and a roadtrip junkie. Whenever he can, he hits the road and heads off to some new part of the U.S. he hasn't visited before. Recent trips have taken him to Yosemite, Lake Tahoe, and many parts of California. Should you be planning a cross-country trip or, even better, a cross-continental one—perhaps across Asia or Africa—give Gabit a call. He's your man!

Positive Externalities +

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Graduate Doings

Abdoul Sam (M.S. 2002, Ph.D. 2005) has been promoted to associate professor in the Department of Agricultural, Environmental and Development Economics at The Ohio State University. He reports that he “owe[s] much of my promotion to associate professor with tenure at Ohio State to the training, mentoring, and financial assistance I received in Arizona. I will always remember my years in Tucson in a very positive light. I am still involved in and enthusiastic about research that I started as a graduate student: applied nonparametric econometrics and voluntary pollution control initiatives.” Abdoul and his wife recently welcomed their third child and first daughter Jeynaba. She joins brothers El-hajj, age five and a kindergartner, and Bokar, age three.

Massimiliano De Santis (M.S. 1999) and his wife, Min, have announced the arrival of their second son, Giacomo Lee, born in June. Giacomo joins his older brother Cosimo. Massimiliano works



Abdoul Sam and family.

for a consulting company in the Boston area.

Yanfei Liu (M.S. 2008) sends news that she and her husband have a daughter, Aayushi, who has just turned one. “It is a lot of work but a lot of fun to be a mom. Time is really flying away, it is already more than three years after graduation. I really miss those days in Tucson.” Yanfei works as a purchasing and accounting manager for a Maryland landscaping firm.



Yanfei Liu with husband and daughter.

on her Ph.D. at Washington State University. **Elizabeth Basta** (M.S. 2011) has joined the Fontana Group in Tucson;

Jorge Lara A. (M.S. 2011) is at Oxford University working on a Ph.D.; **Pete Burns** (M.S. 2011) is in Washington, DC, with Price Waterhouse Coopers; **Ibrahima Sall** (M.S. 2011) is at the UA working on a Ph.D. in arid lands. **Ben Albright** (M.S. 2011) has joined Allstate as an associate predictive modeler; and **Todd Gaston** (M.S. 2011) has just departed Arizona for Colorado. Todd tells us “I have been hired as an economist with the Bureau of Reclamation at their Western Headquarters in Denver, CO. The Bureau of Reclamation, a federal water management agency within the Department of the Interior, is the largest wholesaler of water in the country and the second largest producer of hydroelectric power. Responsibilities of the position include preparing economic and financial studies for the planning, formulation, construction, and operation and maintenance of major water projects in the western U.S. Currently, a major focus of the USBR economics team is performing cost-benefit analyses on the decommissioning of dams in the Pacific Northwest.

My AREC graduate education and thesis work prepared me extraordinarily well for this position. The selection committee was impressed with the analytical skills and experience I gained from completing the Master’s program. They were equally impressed with the knowledge of natural resources management and policy I displayed, thanks to the multidisciplinary nature of AREC coursework. I cannot thank the AREC department enough for the education, support, and overall great experience it has provided me over the past two years.”



Giacomo De Santis in June 2011.

In Brazil, **Raquel Gomes** (M.S. 2003) and her husband, Rogerio, are expecting a new addition to the family in January 2012. Baby Alice will be joining her older brother Gabriel, who arrived in 2009.



Raquel, Rogerio, and Gabriel waiting for the arrival of Alice.



All of the De Santis family in late 2011.



Ana Unda and sister on a trip to India.

Another newly finished grad, **Ana Unda** (M.S. 2011) took her first trip to India during the summer break.

David Bessler (B.S. in economics, M.S. [AREC] 1973) has been named a fellow of the AAEA. David is a professor at Texas A&M University.)



David Bessler

Fei Yi (M.S. 2010) writes that she is in Phoenix at American Express as a Manager, Risk Management.

Harsha Bollenini (M.S. 2004), who works for Fair Isaac has transferred from San Rafael, CA, to Bangalore, India. In his old position he was the Lead Consultant, Analytic Business Consulting Americas Region. In Bangalore he is now Manager, Analytic Business Consulting Asia Pacific Region where he leads a team that “deliver[s] client facing engagements with the objective of client satisfaction, high performance and employee satisfaction.” Harsha notes that the job is

also “responsible for achieving revenue targets by quarter and assist[ing] in customer sales discussions of new analytic methodologies.”



Arif Rasheed and family.

Kumaran Seenivasan (M.S. 2006) lets us know that he has joined WellCare where he is a Senior Analyst. He gets “requests to answer business questions from the se-

nior management and my responsibility is to dig in to the data and get the information that answers those questions. I am also responsible for database design and development, weekly and monthly regular reports delivery and campaign analytics.” Kumaran says that learning SAS and assorted analytical techniques

at AREC stood him in good stead in both getting the job and doing really well at it.

Arif Rashid (M.S. 2004) sends greetings to everyone and best wishes for the new year.

New Alumni at May 2011 Commencement



Upper left: Ruth Penniston (B.S. EWRE 2011) poses with Gary Thompson.

Upper right: Spring crop of master's graduates: Ibrahima Sall, Ben Albright, Ana Unda, Pete Burns, and Todd Gaston.

Lower left: Newly minted AREC undergraduate alumni.

Lower right: Alyssa Meyer after receiving her B.S.

Alumni Meetups

Quite a few alums reside in the Washington, DC, area and have enjoyed some social get togethers. In attendance at the September event were **Ingrid Ardjosoediro**, **Abby Boor**, **Melissa Burns**, **Pete Burns**, **Rob Ebel**, **Pinar Gunes**, **Anand Murugesan**, **Matt Mealy**, and **Irina Payasova**. Rob Ebel also informs us that a December party was planned around the Arizona-Florida basketball game. Go Wildcats!

Out into the World: Alumni After AREC

AREC alums come from all over the world. At the start of every new academic year, it's always a pleasure to meet incoming undergraduate and graduate students, many of whom are international or from other U.S. states and new to Tucson. But equally interesting is where alumni venture after they finish their degrees.

Joseph Choi

Joseph Choi received his B.S. in agricultural economics and management in 2006 and since then he's visited at least three conti-

nents other than North America. After graduation he ventured to the Republic of Moldova as an agricultural and rural business volunteer in the U.S. Peace Corps.

Joseph tells us that he "won a \$3,000 small project assistance grant to construct the first ever greenhouse in the Glodeni region of Moldova." And he recognizes that "cash flow and sensitivity analysis techniques" that he learned in Paul Wilson's AREC 450 class "were helpful in proving the viability of the project and securing the funds." Choi is now back in New York where, in addition to pursuing an MBA at Fordham Uni-

versity, he's a Content Specialist for the economics group of FactSet Research Systems. He works on "enhancements with the software engineer team in integrating economic data into FactSet's proprietary databases for use in charting and analytical applications used by financial professionals." He also spent several years as an economics data manager for Haver Analytics and put to good use the econometric techniques he learned in Satheesh Aradhyula's 403 class.

But with his acquired taste for seeing new places, Joseph admits he has "managed to travel quite a bit since graduation." He lists Chile, Peru, and Turkey as favorite spots and has sent us a picture taken at Machu Picchu, Peru, after he'd been hiking there along the Inca Trail for three days.



Kristine Crandall

An AREC degree doesn't limit you in what you do after graduation. *Kristine Crandall* is a case in point. Crandall was a master's student in the program in the 1990s, working closely with Professor Bonnie Colby and finishing in 1991. Her M.S. thesis, titled "Measuring the Economic Benefits of Riparian Areas," reflected her interest in the environment.

Since graduation, her path has been full of twists and interesting directions. She has, as she puts it, "experienced great diversity in [her] professional endeavors, ranging from consulting on

water projects to watershed conservation work to commercial property management (family business). One steady activity throughout the last twenty years has been editing and writing."

Several years ago, Crandall was "inspired to blend [my] environmental background with creative writing, entering a low-residency graduate program through Naropa University." She says she is making progress on an MFA in creative writing and that



she hopes to finish in spring 2012 then begin teaching at college level in the fall. Crandall also has a column that she writes monthly for a newspaper, and she acts as caregiver to her elderly father. Crandall resides in St. George, Utah.

Ruth Penniston

Late in the summer of 2011, new AREC EWRE graduate **Ruth Penniston** (B.S. 2011) embarked on an adventure to Norway as a Fulbright Scholar. With plans to spend a year in Bergen, Ruth is conducting “climate research by studying the effects of global warming on alpine tree lines.” She notes that the altitude of the tree line is changing in the Scandinavian region. “Variations in the altitude of alpine tree lines can be an indication of climate change. Despite various studies, the question remains: What is the driving force for the current change in the alpine timberline? To answer this question, I will conduct a comparative study using aerial photographs from the 1950s to present day for three locations within Norway.”

Ruth is now midway through her time abroad, so we asked her a few questions.

How are things going? Are you still in Bergen? Do you like it?

Things in Norway are great! I’m still in Bergen and enjoying every day. It’s been a big change in a lot of ways however. When I arrived in August the weather was lovely and the sun was up until 9 or 10 pm. Now the days are short and usually cloudy. After living in Tucson all my life, this has been a huge adjustment. All the rain ensures that the vegetation stays lush and green however, which I love after living in the desert. I hike a lot, both for my research and for pleasure and I’m lucky to have amazing trails within walking distance from my dorm.

How is your research progressing? Do you have any findings or tidbits to report at this point?

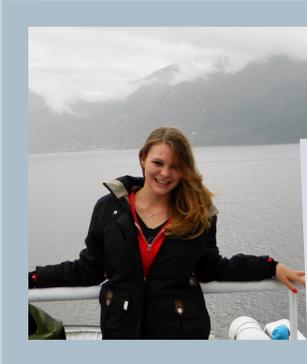
My research project has evolved a bit since arriving at the University of Bergen, but if anything, has become more interesting and important. For the past three months I have been documenting the spread of trees into an area that had previously been used as grazing land. Now that the grazing pressure is gone, the trees are able to expand back into their natural habitat. This is of particular concern to Norwegians who use

this area for recreation and in many ways prefer the open shrub land to forests. In this way my project has two objectives. First to gain a better understanding of the ways trees reclaim altered landscapes and second, to discuss the differences between Americans’ and Norwegians’ views on nature and cultural landscapes. At this stage, I have completed my field research. The information I collected has been uploaded into a mapping program and I’m currently analyzing the data. Next semester I will start to write up my findings for publication.

Have you been doing interesting or exciting things? Any travel? Any

neat people? Any different Norwegian customs?

I just got back from a trip to Dublin with two other Fulbright Scholars. It was amazing! I also had the opportunity to travel to the fjord region of Norway. I got to see a hydroelectric power plant, learned about traditional Norwegian agriculture and saw stunning waterfalls and glaciers. I will be in the South of France over the holidays and will attend a Fulbright conference in Berlin in March. Before coming to



Norway I’d never been to Europe and I am so excited for this opportunity to see this part of the world.

I live in student dorms here and I’m surrounded by students from all over the world. It is an interesting experience to interact with students, who in some ways, are very different than U of A students, but also quite similar. I have enlightening conversations with these students every day. If I have a question about the Euro crisis, I can ask a French or German student and when Putin announced his bid for president,

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First-year grad students (l to r): Michael Dehn, Hunter Richards, Gan Jin, and Georgia Pfeiffer.

Georgia Pfeiffer: Spotlight on First-Year Grad Student

When not in class or studying, you can find first-year graduate student, Georgia Pfeiffer, riding her bike exploring Tucson neighborhoods. “I like being outdoors in the sunshine as much as possible. I just pick a direction and go.” Georgia has always appreciated a sense of small town community. She grew up in Blacksburg, Virginia, a small town with a population that varies with that of Virginia Tech. “I like

the local feeling of small communities and the person-to-person connection you get when you meet people.” Georgia also enjoys swing dancing and taught it for years. She swing dances on the third Saturday of the month at the Arizona Ballet Theater on Sixth Street.

Georgia double-majored in math and economics at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia, and participated in the Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) in the summer of 2010 at Texas A&M University that culminated in her being listed as second author on an article entitled “Coexistence of Competing Stage-Structured Populations,” in *Scientific Reports*, article number 107, published October 5, 2011. The article examines biological modeling to help explain the behavior of two-stage structured populations in their competition for resources. Georgia describes the research experience as having its ups and downs but it was helpful because “it taught me not to be afraid to do research, to be less afraid of messing up and to

keep going.” The REU experience included presenting the research at math conferences in Richmond and New Orleans. She liked the conferences because they gave her the opportunity to “see other people’s approaches and their creativity in solving different challenges.”

Georgia chose the AREC program at the UA because of its innovative research in solar and water management. “This program has a lot of practical application training that provides students with tools to process data and find solutions.” She says there is a lot of creativity in solving problems using upper-level math because “you get to use different tools and theorems in an order you’ve never used before.” Georgia is keeping her options open but she wants to do something in the long-term to help change people’s perspectives about alternative energy, address the challenges to make alternative energy more efficient, economically viable and non-destructive to the environment.

Her advice to students conducting research echoes her experience with REU: “There will be parts that challenge you but you work through them keeping in mind your long-term goals to motivate you to keep going.”

Visitors to the Department



Tomás Navarro (B.S. 2009) recently stopped by. He is continuing his studies in medical school at the UA.

In November, **Steven Wu** (M.S. 1995) was in town and gave a seminar on “Optimal Tournament Design and Incentive Response: An

Left: Gary Thompson, Ashley Kerna, Tomás Navarro

Middle: Steven Wu

Right: 559 class with Gary Thompson and Chuck Lyon

Experimental Investigation of Canonical Tournament Theory.” Wu is associate professor of agricultural economics at Purdue University.

Chuck Lyon (M.S. 1988) worked with Gary Thompson’s AREC 559 class (Advanced Applied Econometrics) while **Heather Waters** (M.S. 2007) and **Kelly Burkholder** (B.S. 1975) gave presentations to the undergrads in AREC 197a (the Academic Success class).

Summer of 2011 saw three AREC graduate students (Ashley Kerna, Fátima Luna, and Gaurav Arora) attending classes at the Centro per la Formazione in Economia e Politica dellos Sviluppo Rurale in Portici, Italy.

AREC in Italy

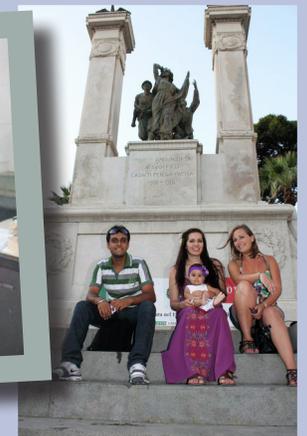
I think I can speak for all of us (Fatima, Gaurav, and I) when I say that our trip to Italy over the summer was an unforgettable experience filled both with growth in our discipline and in our personal lives.

As much as people would like to speculate that Italy was *all* fun and games, I can honestly say that is 100% true... Dr. Thompson's goal of the course was to convince us that econometrics *is* fun, and at least for me, he succeeded. We had the opportunity to cover models that we didn't have time for in regular class, replicate studies done by Italian researchers, and learn to use STATA. We had a unique experience of collaborating with students from different universities and backgrounds and presenting our results in multiple presentations.

Of course, aside from our fun inside the classroom, we had many adventures traveling throughout Italy. We sipped on limoncello in Sorrento, took a gondola ride in Venice, wandered through the streets of Florence, viewed the best parts of Na-



Above: Class in Portici. Above Right: Gaurav Arora, Fátima Luna with Metztlí, and Ashley Kerna.



ples, hiked Mt. Vesuvius, and topped it all off with some history lessons in Rome. One of the best parts of the trip, however, was that we were able to share all these experiences with each other and Fátima's family (husband Oscar Medina and daughter Metztlí).

We are incredibly grateful to have had this opportunity and would like to say "grazie" to Dr. Thompson, Dr. Cembalo and the Italian Ministry of Agriculture for making this possible

—Ashley Kerna

AREC on the Playing Field



Above: Hard fought soccer match.

Fall 2011's AREC sports team was a little less formal than it has been in recent years, but, by all accounts, just as much fun. Grad students got together in Himmel Park for food and soccer matches.

Right: (l to r) Elizabeth Schuster and spouse, Ashley Kerna, Hunter Richards, Gan Jin, Jingyu Liu, and Placide Hiol.

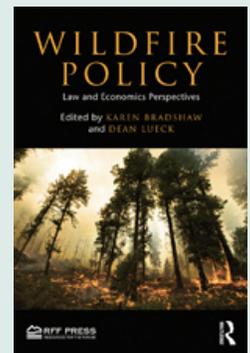


Left: (l to r) Jingyu Liu, Hunter Richards, Gan Jin, Michael Dehn, Anubhab Gupta, Brett Fleck and friend, Gaurav Arora, Ashley Kerna, Georgia Pfeiffer. Missing from all photos is Tattiana Márquez Martínez who wielded the camera.



New Book from Professor Dean Lueck

Just published by RFF Press and available from routledge.com is *Wildfire Policy: Law and Economics Perspectives*, edited by Karen Bradshaw and AREC's Professor Dean Lueck.



This book reflects the first-ever forum for law and economics scholars to apply the analysis and methodologies of their field to the subject of wildfire. The only modern legal work on wildfire, the book brings together leading scholars to consider questions such as: How can public policy address the effects of climate change on wildfire, and wildfire on climate change? Are the environmental and fiscal costs of ex ante prevention measures justified? What are the appropriate levels of prevention and suppression responsibility borne by private, state, and federal actors? Can tort liability provide a solution for realigning the grossly distorted incentives that currently exist for private landowners and government firefighters? Do the existing incentives in wildfire institutions provide incentives for efficient private and collective action and how might they be improved? SBN-10: 1933115955 | ISBN-13: 978-1933115955

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I was able to discuss the situation with my Russian friend. Likewise I've been given the opportunity to explain U.S. politics and culture to international students. This has ranged from discussing Occupy Wall Street to introducing my new international friends to s'mores. Living in the dorms has been great, but has also limited the number of Norwegians I've met. For this reason, my exposure to Norwegian customs has been limited. I have been trying Norwegian food, such as brown cheese, a sweet, rich cheese made from goats' milk and waffles however. I've also embraced the cozy winter attitude shared by many Norwegians. This consists of wearing thick, warm socks and sweaters, using lots of candles and knitting.

I know you probably were in Norway when the shootings happened. I imagine that was quite interesting to experience.

I arrived in Norway about a week after the terrorist attack in Oslo. A sense of sadness and mourning was everywhere and one of the first things I saw in Bergen was a monument covered in roses in memory of the victims. Instead of turing towards anger, fear and hate, a feeling of togetherness and love could be felt everywhere. Norwegians refused to

let the violent acts of one crazy individual tear them apart and used the tragedy to grow closer. It was inspiring to see that.

What are your plans for after your Fulbright year is over?

Upon returning from Norway I will begin training as a Teach For America corp member. I hope to teach middle school science and look forward to sharing my experiences at the U of A and my adventures in Norway with my students!

Ruth maintains a blog about her experiences and welcomes visitors. You can find it at <http://ruthiep19.blogspot.com/>

Ag Econ's High Employment Rate Translates to Great College Major

A recent article on Yahoo's news-blog *The Lookout* has reaffirmed what AREC alumni already know: an agricultural economics major is a highly employable major.

Referring to a study done by the Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce, the blog entry (**The 10 college majors with the lowest unemployment rates**) ranks agricultural economics as number seven of the top 10 most employable majors and gives a corresponding unemployment rate of a low 1.3%.

New Undergrad Class Prepares Students for Success

During the fall semester, 29 students pioneered a new undergraduate course offering from AREC: Strategy and Planning for Academic Success. Offered for one hour a week, the class was team taught by Professor Paul Wilson and AREC's undergraduate coordinator Amanda Vescovo. Dr. Wilson explains that they emphasized two basic areas in the class. The first was to promote academic success within the AREC major—to develop a plan of study and to work toward graduating in four years. The second area focused on internships and jobs after graduation. Wilson and Vescovo brought in lots of guest speakers to expose students to a wide range of possibilities. AREC faculty gave short talks on their research and interests and **Kelly Burkholder** (B.S. 1975) and **Heather Waters** (M.S. 2007) visited to talk about their jobs and careers.

Join Us on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn

The AREC alumni network is entering the second decade of the twenty-first century with some forays into social networks: Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. With the superb help of current M.S. students—**Tatiana Márquez** and **Hunter Richards**—and some truly dedicated alumni—**Melissa Burns** (M.S. 2005) and **Mini Kohli** (M.S. 2006), among others—AREC now maintains official groups in Facebook (group name: Agricultural and Resource Economics Alumni & Friends, University of Arizona) and LinkedIn. For all of you so inclined, please join these groups and enrich them with your participation. And for the tweeters in the crowd, be sure to follow AREC on Twitter (@Arec_UA).

Let Us Hear from You

We want news from you, whether you're a recent grad or you finished decades ago. Please let us know what you're doing.

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