



ALUMNI NEWSLETTER



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN
FALL 2020 EDITION

EDITORS' NOTE



A HYBRID EXPERIENCE

The Fall 2020 semester is one like no other. Throughout the heights of a pandemic, the University of Illinois demonstrates great resilience and adaptability by shifting to a mix of virtual and in-person instruction.

The main reason why our university was successful in mitigating COVID-related risks was because of the collaborative efforts of both students and faculty in being socially responsible and understanding throughout it all.

In this newsletter, we discuss the challenges brought upon us, and the innovative strategies used to combat them. While many facets of the college experience may have changed, our Illini pride remains steadfast.

Go Illini!

ABOUT THE EDITORS

Shreya Kodati



Major: Actuarial Science & Economics

Year: Sophomore

Shreya is the Publicity Chair and is from Edison, NJ. In her free time, she enjoys playing the piano and exploring new ways to stay active.

Anna Schulz



Major: Actuarial Science

Year: Freshman

Anna is part of the Publicity Committee and is from Mt Prospect, IL. In her free time, she enjoys reading and traveling.

Julia Wagus



Major: Actuarial Science

Year: Junior

Julia is part of the Publicity Committee and is from Ellicott City, MD. In her free time, she enjoys shopping, skiing and playing board games with friends.

Tina Guo



Major: Actuarial Science & Statistics

Year: Senior

Tina is the Vice President Internal and is from Hinsdale, IL. In her free time, she enjoys badminton, puzzles, and Pixar movies.

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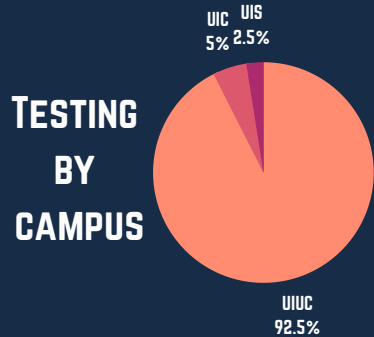


UIUC COVID-19 MANAGEMENT

The University of Illinois has done a phenomenal job in containing the spread of COVID-19 on campus. Since a hybrid approach was adopted, students and faculty engaging in any on-campus activities are required to get tested **twice a week** using a saliva-based test, created by researchers at the university.

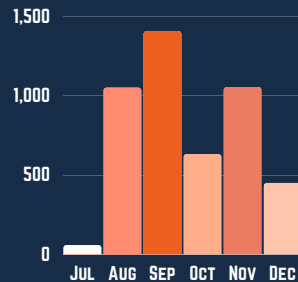
6 testing sites are available throughout the campus. Over 40,000 students and faculty use the **Safer at Illinois app** to see their testing status and get alerted if they are near someone with documented symptoms or a positive test.

\$36 MILLION
COVID-19 EMERGENCY FUND



10,000+
TESTS A DAY

MONTHLY NEW CASES



OVER 1 MILLION
TESTS GIVEN

FALL RECRUITMENT

Throughout the recruiting season, ASC provided students with a plethora of opportunities to develop their networking skills, connect with recruiters, and prepare for the upcoming career fair known as Meet the Firms.

ASC made a seamless transition in shifting the recruitment process to a virtual space, by having 19 company presentations, 7 workshops, 4 advice panels, a field trip, and an entire career fair all conducted over online platforms. The majority of workshops and advice panels were led by company representatives that are alumni of the U of I. The strength of our alumni community serves as a driving force for our actuarial program and aids in our successful recruitment efforts.

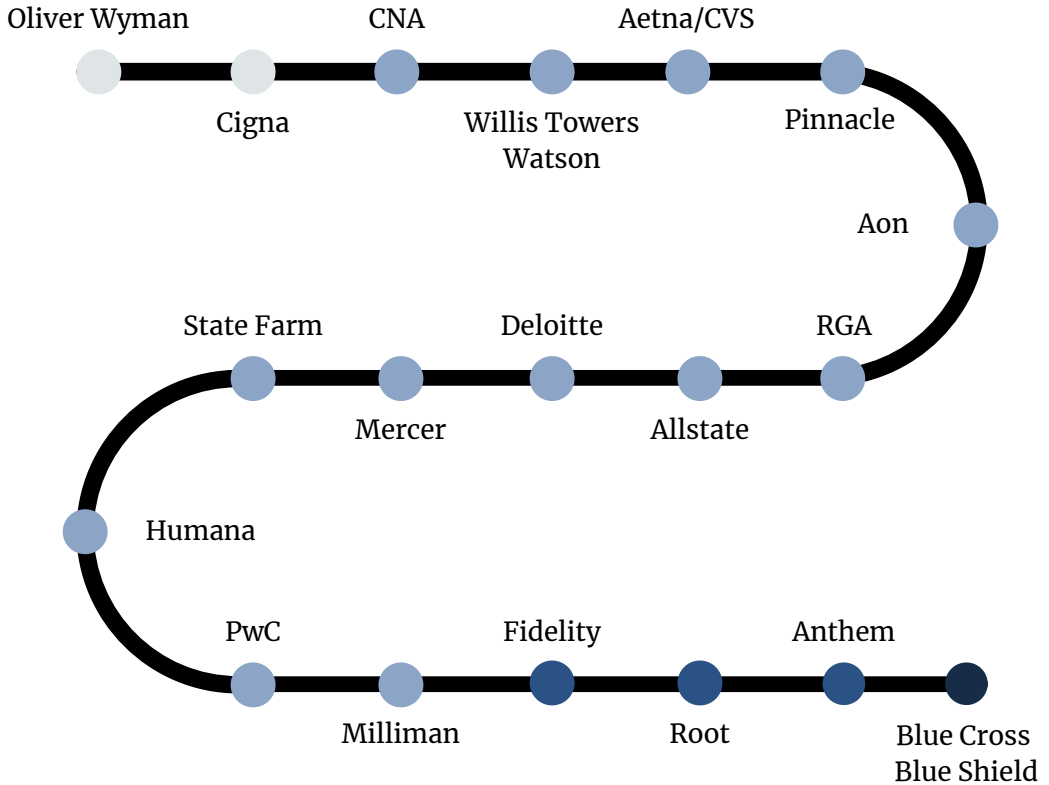
To read more about our recruiting season, click [here](#).

MEET THE FIRMS

ASC hosted its first virtual Meet the Firms through Career Fair Plus, an online platform that allows students to secure time slots with recruiters. Students could select 10-minute appointments with specific recruiters from companies they are interested in. In addition, recruiters would be able to see an uploaded resume and student information prior to a meeting. About 150 students participated in this virtual career fair, with dozens of recruiters joining us from 21 companies. Overall, this event received immensely positive feedback from both students and recruiters alike, urging us to reconsider how Meet the Firms will look in the future.

COMPANY PRESENTATIONS

FALL 2020



This semester, there were 19 companies that gave presentations over a virtual platform. Starting as early as August, the presentations carried on until December. Typically, company representatives would present a company's structure, culture, and employment opportunities in the form of a slideshow or an interactive activity. Some companies took it a step further and elaborated on an industry topic, in a fashion comprehensive to students ranging from freshmen to graduate students. Towards the end, students would have the opportunity to ask questions. Given the virtual format, some presentations had breakout rooms at the end for students to have more individualized attention from the representatives.

If you or your company is interested in presenting to our students, please feel free to reach out to our company presentation chair Henry Wu at companypresentations@asc-illinois.com.

MEET THE FIRMS

FALL 2020



"MTF2020 was very well organized, kudos to you guys! I was happy to meet many serious, qualified candidates. Keep up the great work, surely Illinois continues to live up as a great Actuarial program (thanks to you all in the club)!"

"I thought Meet the Firms went very well. Students were timely, professional, and well-prepared for the virtual meetings. The platform was easy to use and being able to schedule the meetings in advance and see who we were meeting helped with the conversations."

FALL EVENTS

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

WORKSHOPS

- Resume Workshop
- Elevator Pitch Workshop
- Interview Workshop
- Visa Workshop
- Mock Meet the Firms
- Coaching Actuaries Tutorial Workshop
- Course Selection Workshop

PRESENTATIONS

- Alumni Recruitment Advice Event
- International Alumni Recruitment Advice
- Actuarial Exam Panel Discussion
- CAS President-Elect Talk

FIELD TRIP

- State Farm Virtual Field Trip

FALL EVENTS

SOCIAL NETWORKING

- New Student Welcome Meeting
- Fall Kickoff
- Virtual Club Dinner
- Trivia Night
- Freshmen Hangout
- Among Us Social
- Graduate Student Dinner
- October Virtual Club Dinner
- Virtual Happy Hour
- Welcome Party for New Professor and Lecturer- Frank and Claudia
- Virtual Escape Room Social
- Holiday Baking Competition





ALUMNI MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

ASC's Alumni Mentorship Program has provided opportunities for students to gain an understanding of the actuarial science field and develop their professionalism since 2017.

Students are paired with alumni based on interests and goals.

This semester, there are 37 mentors from a wide variety of industries and backgrounds who are partnered one on one with students ranging from freshmen to graduate students.

The mentors and mentees meet for a total of six hours, in 1-hour monthly sessions or 30-minute biweekly sessions, to discuss anything from industry trends to work life to resume reviews.



"The Alumni Mentorship Program gave me the opportunity to learn about actuarial science in a different and more casual way than our classes allow. I received great advice regarding exams and internships, and also learned from my mentor's past mistakes. My mentor will continue to help me grow personally and professionally despite the program coming to an end."

-Naomi Logan
Mentee

"I learned a lot from the Alumni Mentorship Program! It was a fantastic opportunity to learn more about the actuarial science field — my mentor was great. I think everyone should take advantage of the program, because it was great to have all of my questions answered by someone who has gone through this experience before."

-Daniel Polites
Mentee

"It was really wonderful getting to know my mentee, first of all. I got to talk with her about the profession more in depth than I could at a company presentation or Meet The Firms. And it was great to have the space to connect without it being tied to recruiting! I feel like that allowed us to be more open since I was representing myself, not my company."

**- Sarah Manuel,
Willis Towers Watson**

"[This program is] a way to give back to the Actuarial program at Illinois. [I enjoyed] finding out about how life is for them now at the University and what their goals are."

**- Eric Besman,
Retired**

"I believe in giving back. This is a small contribution on my part, but hopefully it helps the next generation of leaders. I want to help the mentee with the "light-bulb" going on."

**- Mehb Khoja,
BCS Financial**

ALUMNI MENTORS' TESTIMONIALS

If you are interested in taking part in this program as a mentor, please sign up [here!](#)





MEET THE ASC RECRUITMENT CHAIR: Sara Lagvankar

Tell me about yourself.

I'm a junior studying both actuarial science and communications. I'm the Recruitment Chair for this year and I'm in charge of ASRM 199 and also recruitment efforts for the actuarial program at UIUC.

What is your favorite part about being on the ASC executive board?

I would say getting to meet a bunch of people, and meeting the freshmen especially being personable and just meeting others with a common interest.

What is the Recruitment Chair and how did it come to fruition?

Recruitment Chair is basically a new position that was created to bridge the gap between high school seniors and incoming freshmen. So I actually was recruited to actuarial science from someone who came to my math class in high school and I wanted to be that person for someone else. I think this role advocates for that. And then also having ASC being able to teach ASRM 199 is super helpful because we know what it's like to be a freshman and can relay that important information that we've learned that maybe we would not have known had we not learned from other students. Just having that role as the medium to do that is cool, so it was created!

Our club has been focusing on alumni and current students, but this new position is our opportunity to branch into the prospective students realm.

MEET THE ASC RECRUITMENT CHAIR

What goals do you have as Recruitment Chair and how have they been affected by COVID-19?

[The main goal is] improving our high school outreach and building relationships with different teachers at different high schools, for students who are even considering Illinois. Due to COVID, we can't go to different high schools. Even with the freshmen, I'm glad we could have taken over the ASRM 199 course, but we could have had better interaction with the freshmen if we were in person, but I wouldn't say it was a negative experience because of it. Being virtual has made it easier to meet with students from farther away high schools. Also, being virtual, freshmen are more inclined to attend events because they are more accessible.

Can you give a brief description on how ASRM 199 came to be?

Drew and I laid out the outline for the course. We basically built it based on things we wish we knew as freshmen. I know a lot of it was heavy recruiting in the first half of the 8-week class and just knowing how to act at Meet the Firms. We encouraged them to attend and also helped in providing the materials for them to build their confidence. In the latter half, we focused on what classes to take going forward and four-year plans. Also connecting with other students in the club like the coffee-chats- a really popular week for ASRM 199. It came about because we wanted the freshmen to have a good experience within actuarial science and feel like they have someone if they had questions.

What valuable skills did this course provide for freshmen?

Freshmen learned how to interview. So there's this platform that Illinois has called Big Interview where they learn how to answer basic interview questions. They had to record themselves and it was almost like a practice virtual interview, which would be perfect because if they had an interview it would be virtual this year. They practiced elevator pitches, how to present themselves professionally, and other mannerisms.

How can alumni play a role in helping ASRM 199?

I would say volunteering to be a guest speaker. Or I know alumni mentorship is another great opportunity for freshmen as well.

Interview with Claudia Freiji




Claudia Freiji is a new instructor and actuarial advisor at the University of Illinois in the Department of Mathematics. Previously, Claudia worked as a statistical analyst, and then became a senior lecturer for 20 years in Lebanon at Notre Dame University. She is a credentialed actuary with an ASA designation. With her multidisciplinary academic background in economics, computer science, statistics, and financial economics, Claudia has acquired a unique perspective to actuarial science.

What classes do you teach at U of I?

This semester I taught two classes, ASRM 469, ASRM 499/ASRM 533: [casualty actuarial mathematics and risk management and regulation respectively].

What made you want to become an instructor at U of I?

I have been in academia for the past 20 years after working for a while as a statistical analyst in a major third-party administrator (TPA). I started teaching part time while being fully employed, and discovered my passion for the academic life and thus sought a full-time position. During this period, and in my capacity as the academic advisor of the actuarial program, I investigated many prestigious actuarial programs partly to keep abreast of the latest course offerings given by such schools and partly to help some of our students seeking to pursue a Master's degree in the US and Canada find a solid and rigorous program. Evidently, UIUC was one of my favorites in the US, to which many of our actuarial students joined for graduate studies. When I came across an academic search for an Actuarial Science teaching position at UIUC, I applied and filled the position.



Has it been challenging teaching during the pandemic?

Yeah, very challenging. The amount of preparation needed to teach a course on-line is threefold that needed to teach on-site. In a regular course, you normally prepare your lectures and deliver them in person, on the board. You interact with the students and get to perceive their reactions and sense whether they are following you or not. When you are in a virtual world, you prepare your lectures just like before but additionally, you need to write the notes on a word processor, make a video explaining the concepts, then give your presentation in synchronous sessions. Moreover, lecturing in synchronous sessions does not give you the privilege to see and interact with your audience since most the students turn off their cameras. In addition, when teaching online, work schedule loses its meaning and everyone becomes accessible 24 hours a day especially with the different time zones. All of this compounded made teaching online an overwhelming experience.

Do you feel like living in Lebanon gives you a different perspective about the actuarial science field or actuarial science education than in the United States?

No because my actuarial and relevant higher education were acquired in American based universities. I pursued my Master's degree in Statistics in the United States and sat for the actuarial qualifying exams with the Society of Actuaries. I may still have remnants from my pre-university French based formation, stressing subjective, theoretical concepts over practical and objective style, however, this tendency is tapering and I find myself more inclined to the more focused and practical American education methodology.

What interactions do you wish to create between current students and alumni of the University?

I see that at the University of Illinois the interaction between alumni and current students is already very solid. I was amazed by the creative initiatives launched by the Actuarial Science Club such as the Alumni Mentorship Program and the Actuarial Connection Program. It reminds me of the close-knit Actuarial community we built during the years I worked at the university in Lebanon. Because of the program's small size, every actuarial graduate, had a mentoring role to play vis a vis the current actuarial cohort. Actuarial graduates helped in securing summer internships, job placements, giving professional guidance and even feedback on program development. At UIUC, the Actuarial Club has done a wonderful job implementing systematic programs to maintain alumni student tie. We should all support and help the ASC members in their endeavors.

Interview with Frank Quan



Zhiyu (Frank) Quan is an assistant professor of actuarial science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He currently serves in the Actuarial Science department and the IRisk lab. Before coming to the U of I, he worked as a data scientist in the insurance industry. His research, including tree-based model and natural language processing, allow him to make use of his strong data science background.

What classes do you teach at U of I?

This semester, I am teaching ASRM 499/569 - Extreme Value Theory and Catastrophe Modeling, and I just wrapped up the last lecture as of today. I will teach Predictive Analytics next semester, which is ASRM 499/552.

What made you want to become an instructor at U of I?

I know that the U of I has one of the most distinguished actuarial science programs, and from the job description, our program tries to focus more on the data science aspect, which fits my background very well. At the beginning of this year, I came to U of I, and I had pleasant conversations with faculty members and staffs, and I had further knowledge about the IRisk lab, which was a program that aligns with my interests. I also talked to some students during the interview, and they are interested in data science, and they asked a lot of good questions. In the end, I think this is a good opportunity for me.



Has it been challenging teaching during the pandemic?

It was awkward for me to teach really abstract material remotely, and because it is remote, you can't really tell whether students are getting it or not. I was trying to create as many opportunities as possible to talk with students one-on-one. Sometimes when students send me emails, I could have replied through emails, but I tried to set up zoom calls. During the one-on-one meeting, students feel more comfortable turning on their videos, and they are more willing to express their concerns. All synchronized lectures are recorded, so they are afraid of being recorded in the lecture, so they were more aware of good appearance. Again, I think this kind of one-on-one meeting can be very helpful. Sometimes they come to me and ask questions about the industry, some of them are concerned about their project, sometimes they also want to know how they can find their career path. In addition, some of them are asking me to write reference letters for graduate schools.

What is your involvement in the IRisk lab, and how has that been going? Have you been facing any difficulties doing the projects?

I think it has something to do with time management. There are nearly 50 students divided into small groups with 2-3 people, and you can imagine that there are more than 10 groups, which means more than 10 subprojects. For me, it was a pretty challenging semester. I had to work until 1 or 2 AM to catch up with everything. As you know, data scientists must study data and come up with some information. In addition, it's also my first semester here; I also need some time to adjust to the new environment. We will have the final presentations on December 10th. One [project] is the cyber risk project, and it's a continuation of last semester's project. This semester, we are more focused on using real data. The second one is AI lifecycle. Again, this is a huge project that we need to figure out all aspects of the lifecycle, such as your income consumption, assets, liabilities, retirement benefits, and everything has to be modeled. The other one uses natural language processing to extract the text information related to actuarial science or risk characteristics. This project was a real-life project. I worked with my previous employer, Carpe Data, and they provided a dataset. Students are able to extract information and try to refine the segmentation of commercial insurance. Then they try to do the analysis, topic modeling reviews, sentiment analysis.

What words do you have for alumni?

Please come back to campus and share your experience. Tell us how to improve our program! Go Illini!



Risk Analytics Symposium 2021:

Actuarial Innovations to Emerging Risks

In March of 2021, the U of I's Actuarial Science Club anticipates to host its annual Spring Symposium. This event aims to do an in-depth exploration on the industry-wide trends that are happening in the fields of risk management and insurance. The theme for the 2021 Symposium is Actuarial Innovations to Emerging Risks, with a focus on the transformations that are happening in the insurance industry.

This year will be different from previous symposiums in two ways. First, in order to stay safe during the ongoing pandemic, the 2021 symposium, like many events this year, will be held virtually. The virtual platform will allow attendees to view upcoming and live presentations, and has advanced virtual networking capabilities. In addition, the Actuarial Science Club Symposium will be combined with the Risk Analytics Symposium, hosted by the Illinois Risk Lab. This combination will bring several positive changes, such as additional speakers and the event being extended from a half day to a full day.

There will be several topics that will be featured that represent the theme Actuarial Innovations to Emerging Risks. Each topic featured will have two speakers to present, one from academia and one from the industry, in order to have diversity of experience on the topic. There are three topics of interest this year: cyber risk, health or life contingent risk, and auto risk. After the two presentations on each topic, there will be a panel discussion led by a UIUC faculty member that will provide a more in-depth look for audience members, who will be encouraged to ask questions and gain a greater understanding of the emerging industry trends. Another exciting addition to this year's symposium is a showcase of the Illinois Risk Lab and Actuarial Science Club's accomplishments in the virtual environment.

Anyone is welcome to join this year's symposium, including alumni. If you are interested in participating in the symposium, please contact Tina Guo at vpinternal@asc-illinois.com or Andrea Wilcox at workshops@asc-illinois.com for more information.

ILLINOIS RISK LAB

WHAT IS IRISK LAB?

Officially established in Fall 2018, the Illinois Risk Lab (IRisk Lab), in the Department of Mathematics at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, grew out of the Research

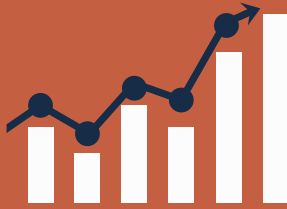
Program in Risk and Actuarial Science, which was sponsored by the Society of Actuaries from 2014 to 2017. The IRisk Lab currently serves as an industry-academic collaboration hub, facilitates the integration of discovery-based learning experience for students, and showcases state-of-the-art research in all areas of Risk Analysis and Advanced Predictive Analytics.

Faculty, industrial partners, and students collaborate to address business-oriented research problems. Throughout the semester, students will gain real-life experience in innovative research, collaboration, and presentation skills. Besides, our industry partners will be able to access the latest progress and new perspectives from our collaborative research, and identify potential future employees from our student researchers.



INTERESTED IN INDUSTRY AND UNIVERSITY COLLABORATION?

PLEASE REACH OUT TO
RUNHUAN FENG (RFENG@ILLINOIS.EDU),
ZHIYU (FRANK) QUAN (ZQUAN@ILLINOIS.EDU),
AND ALFRED CHONG (WFCHONG@ILLINOIS.EDU)



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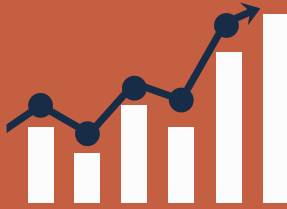
FALL 2020 PROJECTS

AI-Powered Lifecycle Financial Planning

Life is a game with sophisticated rules. With today's AI technology, we can develop a lifecycle strategy guide for successes in such a game. This project aims to build algorithms that optimize decision making processes for meeting important financial goals in life. We look for students who can assist in programming various life-changing scenarios for the system.

Implied Value-at-Risk: Model-Free and Forward-Looking Risk Estimates for the US Banks

A rapid and persistent market value decline of the US bank equity, around 50% since January 2020, can be observed during the COVID-19 pandemic. While the economy as a whole is under stress, stock returns of banks have done worse than those of non-bank financial institutions such as broker-dealers and insurance companies, and non-financial firms. Bank equity returns have been shown to contain information about future macroeconomic consequences like credit contractions and output gaps, and can serve as an indicator of bank distress. However, given the dynamic behavior of financial markets, the information contained in stock returns is deteriorating rapidly with the horizon and equity-based risk estimates are not always a good representation for the true risk levels. Especially in times like now, when a market is in distress, the discrepancy between the expectation and the realized outcome is large resulting in a bad risk estimate when it is needed the most. Therefore, we investigate how option data can be employed to determine the risk level of the US banks. Such an estimate is called an implied estimate. Option prices contain the aggregate view of the market on the future stock price level, i.e., not just on its expected value, but rather on the distribution around that expectation. Therefore, an option-implied estimate is automatically forward-looking. The selected risk estimate is the Value-at-Risk (VaR) measure which can be seen as the maximal future loss in a given time frame. We examine model-free approaches for determining the VaR such as the binomial tree option pricing.



Descriptions on

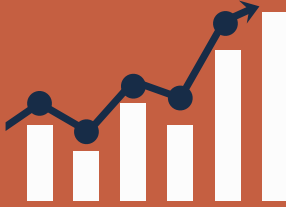
FALL 2020 PROJECTS

Using Text Mining and Natural Language Processing (NLP) to Extract Actuarial-Related Information from Online Customer Reviews for Businesses

For the insurance industry, the potential to understand customers and businesses using new dimensions represented by social and other online data can unleash significant new insights from both customer behavior and risk perspective. These insights can drive insurance automation, underwriting efficiency, and enhanced customer experience. This project is a real-life actuarial data science project provided by Carpe Data. Carpe Data (<https://carpe.io>) is an Insurtech company that provides insurance companies with next-generation data solutions to gain a more in-depth insight into risks. Carpe Data will share online reviews (text data, for example, Yelp reviews) with IRisk Lab. Using these text data, we will investigate the following tasks, but not limited to: Sentiment analysis of customer reviews. Extract possible risk characteristics for business. Refine business segmentation.

covidplan.io Maintenance and Development

Data visualization is a great tool for you, a wannabe actuary or data scientist, to communicate with your teammates and clients. And interactive visualization is even better. R Shiny is a framework that makes the process of developing an interactive web application easy. This project is a continuation of a Summer 2020 project, in which we have developed a website (<https://covidplan.io>) to showcase our data, models, and results for pandemic contingency planning and medical resources allocation, based on the preprint by Chen et al. (2020). A part of this project is about improving and maintaining the website. In the process, you will get the chance to learn some basic web development knowledge and practice your R programming skills. As the vaccine for the novel coronavirus is on its way, we will move forward to the next phase of this research topic and focus on the optimal allocation for vaccination. Therefore, the second part of this project will be integrating new data, models, and results, with the existing website.



Descriptions on

FALL 2020 PROJECTS

Cyber Risk Data Analysis

With the ever-increasing reliance on technology, such as Zoom meeting, online purchase, and even national security for sensitive research, the importance of proper cyber risk management is evident, especially during the time of COVID-19 when everyone works remotely. Learning from the cyber incident history is crucial in order to build risk management and pricing models. Therefore, all the risk management concerning cyber risk should be based on data-driven evidence. This project is a continuation of the IRisk Lab projects in Fall 2019 and Spring 2020, where a set of given cyber data is used to construct multivariate frequency and tree based models. This project aims to take a step back to fundamentally understand the cyber data and investigate the potential pitfalls when employing traditional property and casualty actuarial models to fit the cyber data.

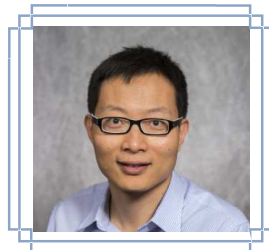
COUNTRY Commercial/Residual Building Age Model

An important variable in assessing risk of a commercial/residual building is the actual age of the building. While this seems obvious, obtaining the true age of the building can be challenging. COUNTRY has made use of data available but would like to explore machine learning techniques for assessing the age of a commercial/residual building. Using available data sources, research modeling techniques and deploy the best model that predicts a commercial/residual building's age. This project builds on existing research done in this space, and COUNTRY is particularly interested in researching how image classification techniques complement modeling approaches on structured data to obtain a robust commercial/residual building age model.

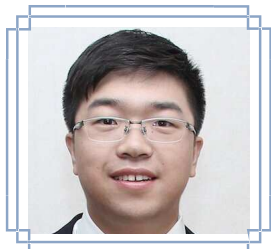
FACULTY PROFILES



Alfred Chong
Assistant Professor



Runhuan Feng
Professor
Director of Actuarial
Science



Frank Quan
Assistant Professor



Richard Sowers
Professor



Paa Kow Cole
Instructor



Claudia Freiji
Instructor
Academic Advisor



Alison Champion
Associate Director
of Undergraduate
Studies



AJ Schmidt
Academic Advisor

FALL 2020 GRADUATE SPOTLIGHT: RACHEL KERESZTURI



Major: Actuarial Science

Post-Graduation Plans: Full-time job at Aon as an Associate Account Executive for the Construction Services Group.

What she will miss about the U of I: Actuarial Science Club, campus, long walks around the Quad and buildings. She will also miss her Statistics professor Alex Stepanov, since his classes were her favorite at the university.

Favorite college memory:

One of her top memories is the Actuarial Science Club's Kickoff Barbecue. She transferred as a junior in the Fall of 2018 and attended the barbecue; she met some of her closest friends at the U of I., including her two best friends.

How ASC has impacted her:

The club helped her see what a career as an actuary looks like. She was introduced to many companies in the insurance industry and helped prepare for internship/job interviews. She also met many amazing individuals through the club.

How do you plan on staying involved with the university as an alum?

She plans to participate in Gamma Iota Sigma events in the Spring of 2021.

BASKETBALL SEASON



With a 9-4 record as of January 14th, and a number 14 ranking, UIUC basketball is looking to be a contender in the Big Ten Championship and the National Championship. The return of Kofi Cockburn and Ayo Dosunmu, who likely would have been headed to the NBA draft without the occurrence of COVID-19, gave the Illini a great starting lineup. Freshmen Andre Curbelo and Adam Miller also helped make Illinois a top team in the nation.

The Illini started off the season with 4 consecutive victories, with an impressive win against ranked Duke. Despite that, Illinois lost to number 2 ranked Baylor, number 14 ranked Missouri, and number 11 ranked Rutgers. It seems the Illini still need to prove themselves against some higher ranked opponents, but our hopes are high and we are looking forward to a successful season.

Due to COVID-19, there are many new challenges arising in this basketball season. The lack of fans in the crowd have definitely made the playing environment different for the basketball team, as well as upsetting for Illini students not able to be spectators to the games. The Big Ten has done a great job with their COVID-19 protocols. Players, coaches, and referees are required to test daily, and if a player tests positive they must quarantine for 17 days. Unfortunately, many games have been canceled throughout the season. We are crossing our fingers that the Illini remain COVID free and are able to continue games.

Campus Events this Semester

Campus life in the Fall semester of 2020 is unlike any other. Almost all activities, from classes to RSOs, have been moved to a completely virtual setting. Due to public safety precautions, some of the most common college pass times, such as attending college sports games or partying at bars, have had limited attendance. However, the University of Illinois has worked hard to provide access to some social activities on campus, while following COVID safe practices.

Movies and Concerts at Memorial stadium

Although students were not able to attend the football games, they were still able to step into Memorial Stadium throughout October for a weekly movie night and concert. Each Friday, students gathered to see blockbuster movies such as Jumanji and Guardians of the Galaxy for free on the wide screen. Then on Saturdays, musical acts were performed by a range of entertainers, from Matt Ferranti to DJ Silkee. On top of all that, students were able to take advantage of one of the best parts of college- free food!

Throwback Films at the Illini Union

On top of the movies shown at the stadium, there was also the opportunity to see some older movies at the Illini Union. Every Thursday, the Union showed an older movie for Throwback Thursday. Selections ranged from movies of much prior generations, such as The Breakfast Club, to movies we reminisce over from our own childhood, like Up. For those who want a more social-distanced option, the movies were also available to stream for the whole weekend from a link on the Union website.

Virtual and In-Person Cooking Classes

When social distancing first started, many people began cooking more while isolating. In order to help students step up their skills, campus recreation hosted cooking classes throughout the fall semester. Each class had a different theme, from Taco Tuesday to Breakfast for Dinner. In-person cooking sessions were hosted at the ARC, with a virtual Zoom component in order to cater to a larger audience. The best part, of course, is that students get to take home whatever they make.

Virtual Illinites

Illinites were a monthly event hosted at the Union before the pandemic. Campus recreation transformed this into a virtual experience so that students could continue to enjoy them throughout the fall semester. While these virtual Illinites featured an in-person grab-and-go snack station, the rest of the events could be enjoyed from home, from cooking to e-sports. Some events were able to host great talents, including Jyll Everman, a finalist on Food Network Star season 7, and Danielle Feinburg, a Pixar animator.

Krannert Live Streamed Events

While Krannert may be closed for performances for the time being, it is still committed to spreading the joy of the arts to the local community. That is why they have compiled a list of music, performances, playlists and more from artists and art organizations that have offered their creations online for free during the pandemic.

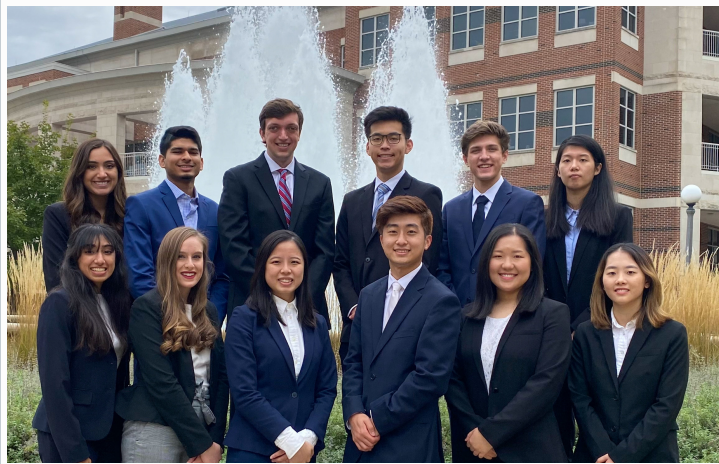
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Illini Alumni Community

2020-2021 ASC Executive Board



Top Row (left to right): Sara Lagvankar, Priyansh Barodia, Drew Taylor, Henry Wu, Luke Janikowski, Tina Guo
Bottom Row (left to right): Shreya Kodati, Andrea Wilcox, Evelyn Lai, Philip Song, Michelle Liu, Xi Lin