Public and Nonprofit Management
Doug Goodman, Program Head and Professor of Public and Nonprofit Management
Dr. Goodman is researching environmental policy and public management with a focus on public human resource management and organization behavior. He is currently working with a former Ph.D. student to analyze the ethical implications of at-will employment in governmental organizations. They will provide normative recommendations for public administrators who work in at-will environments so as to not violate employees’ constitutional rights while at the same time ensuring an efficient and accountable workplace. Dr. Goodman and several of his colleagues are also researching performance pay policies and their impact on productivity in the workplace. He and his colleagues are finding that performance pay schemes do not have the same motivating outcomes among public sector employees as they do among those who work in the private sector. Finally, Dr. Goodman, along with Dr. Paul Battaglio, are looking at sustainability initiatives implemented by local governments across the country. They have been working on upgrading a large data set to include performance indicators for local governments.

Geospatial Information Sciences
Yongwan Chun, Associate Professor of Geospatial Information Sciences
Dr. Chun is currently working on visualization uncertainty in spatial data, specifically visualization attribute errors arising from sampling and spatial aggregation. This work is a part of a larger project by a joint research team between University of Texas at Dallas and George Mason University (sponsored by National Institutes of Health), which investigates a wide range of uncertainty issues in spatial data including visualization attribute errors, model specifications to incorporate uncertainty in spatial analysis, and impacts of aggregation errors. The current investigation visualization focuses on developing a framework for attribute uncertainty visualization in a GIS environment. Because visualization can provide leverage for a data source to meet social and scientific needs, demands for an effective and efficient visual tool have considerably increased. For example, because the American Community Survey (ACS), which reports margin of errors as well as estimated values, has become a major data source for socio-economic data, visualization of attribute error has been getting more attention. The conceptual framework provides an outline for thematic mapping combined with attribute errors, extending bivariate mapping techniques. This research implements the framework in ArcGIS Desktop, so that GIS users can easily apply the framework to their analysis and/or mapping. The results of this research received favorable review from a computer science visualization journal and a final paper describing their work will so be submitted.

Political Science
Vito D’Orazio, Assistant Professor of Political Science
Dr. D’Orazio has recently begun work on the next Militarized Interstate Disputes (MID) data collection project. Along with his coauthors, he has downloaded news documents from LexisNexis and has uploaded the document sets to Texas Advanced Computing Center (TACC). They are now ready to classify these documents into MID-relevant and not-MID-relevant bins using support vector machines. Then, D’Orazio and his colleagues can begin their experiments
with crowdsourcing methods to improve the ways data is collected from news reports. Specifically, they will experiment with (1) the effect of "priming" respondents with automatically generated metadata, and (2) the effect of asking the same respondent the same question for multiple articles as opposed to asking a single respondent many questions about a single article.

Additionally, Dr. D’Orazio has been collecting data on international military exercises to use as a measure of behavioral military cooperation. The argument is that behavioral military cooperation has a socializing effect, which can act to make the militaries in autocratic states behave more like the militaries in democratic states. This should (1) constrain the military from repressing during times of social protest and (2) constrain the military from engaging in coups. This work is in its earlier stages, but the data on military exercises is due to be presented as a poster at the Peace Science conference in November.

Public Policy and Political Economy  
Clint Peinhardt, Associate Professor of Public Policy and Political Economy  
After investigating investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) for the last decade, Dr. Peinhardt is currently examining countries’ responses to a widespread backlash against it. In a paper with Mark Manger of University of Toronto, he examines increasing legal precision in treaties, which occurs as countries learn how specific phrases and words are interpreted by tribunals. Some countries have gone farther and begun renouncing previously signed treaties. In a paper with Rachel Wellhausen of The University of Texas at Austin, Professor Peinhardt is examining all such instances and has found that even these countries are loath to forego the benefits of foreign investment. As such, no country has completely renounced all its treaties. Together, these two papers indicate that countries are revising and reformulating their willingness to allow investors to sue them in international arbitration, but that that system is being reformed rather than scrapped.

In a different line of research, Dr. Peinhardt is investigating other kinds of investor-state disputes that never make it to arbitration. Examination of many such disputes that involve American firms shows some evidence that the political importance of the United States (in aid, trade, or investment terms) reduces time to dispute settlement. Future work calls for a much larger data collection project of cases.

Economics  
Kurt Beron, Professor of Economics  
Dr. Kurt Beron is currently working on a variety of projects. He is conducting a value-added analysis of Texas schools and school districts that will rank all schools and districts in terms of academic achievement of their students. Another project is an analysis for the Dallas Central Appraisal District on the current condition of the residential housing market based on determining the average ratio of appraised to market value of single-family dwellings. Additionally, he is a co-investigator on a multi-year NIH grant analyzing the psychological development of youth from grades 3 – 12, and two monographs from this project are currently under journal review.

A relatively new area of research relates to sports. An example of this is a monograph under journal consideration, “Studying the Determinants of Student Athlete Grade Point Average: The Roles of Identity, Context, and Academic Interests,” co-authored with Alex Piquero. This paper uses a unique data set of about 19,000 student athletes (SAs) to compare what most people think
of when they think of collegiate athletics, NCAA Division I, with the other two NCAA divisions that make up the bulk of the NCAA – both in terms of number of SAs and colleges. Dr. Beron and Dr. Piquero have found that a SA’s GPA is directly influenced by their athletic versus academic identity, the athletic context including the coach’s influence, and the seriousness with which they view academics. Cross-equation joint testing found no statistical differences in athletic or academic identity across division and sex. Thus the authors find no evidence for two commonly-held beliefs: that the focus on athletics of Division I SAs leads them to worse academic outcomes than SAs in the “less competitive” divisions, and that the athletic identity of male SAs has a greater impact on academic performance than female SAs.