MIRHR Students Place Second & Third at the International Negotiation Cup In Montreal

“The School of Industrial Relations at the University of Montreal is proud to host the ‘International Negotiation Cup’ for a fifth consecutive year. This event represents a unique and stimulating opportunity for students to put into practice their knowledge of employment relations and to demonstrate their mastery of challenges in the world of work.”

“The 2015 competition includes two components: a strategic analysis of industrial relations and a negotiation simulation. The overall goal of this competition is to allow all participants to exchange ideas and be exposed to different viewpoints in the world of work.”

Results for the University of Toronto Teams:

“The event tested the students’ strategic case analyses as well as their bargaining skills and included representatives from UdeM, Queen’s, McGill, Rutgers and Seneca College.”

“In the strategic analysis portion, UofT placed both second and third in the competition (Queen’s took first place). In the Negotiation portion, UofT placed second (UdeM took first place). Also, there was an impressive number of highest individual scores that were achieved by our students. In other words, UofT was the most prominent school there.”

Strategic Analysis Second Place Team: Hani Al-Dajane, Sarah Hartney, Jordan Romano, Hye Chong Yi
Strategic Analysis Third Place Team: Jonathan Glick, Stefan Karajovic, Ali Lefcoe, Laura Settino
Negotiation Second Place Team: Hani Al-Dajane, Jonathan Glick, Sarah Hartney, Ali Lefcoe, Jordan Romano, Hye Chong Yi

Individual High Scores

Jonathan Glick -- Highest Points for Role
Ali Lefcoe -- Highest Overall Points at Table & Highest Points for Role
Kendra Martin -- Highest Points for Role
Laura Settino Team Seven -- Highest Overall Points at Table

“All ten of the students put an inordinate amount of time into this endeavour, not to mention the time and expense of travel to get there at such a busy time in the semester. And I know they are grateful to the Centre for the opportunity and for covering the cost of the registration fee.”

“Please join me in thanking Alyssa, Hani, Jonathan, Sarah, Stefan, Ali, Kendra, Jordan, Laura and Hye Chong for representing the Centre so well. I can assure you they were a fun group to be with. They really did demonstrate the strength and integrity of our program and made me very proud.”


The Future's In the Past

Rafael Gomez, Professor at the University of Toronto’s Centre for Industrial Relations and Human Resources and Woodsworth College, appeared on the April 3, 2015 edition of TVO’s The Agenda with Steve Paikin to discuss the reasons behind, and the consequences of, the demise of Canada’s Future Shop and the future of the Canadian retail job market.

TVO’s The Agenda with Steve Paikin, April 3, 2015: “The Future’s In the Past”

“All 65 Future Shop stores that have been consolidated under the Best Buy brand re-opened on [April 4, 2015] as planned, including seven in the Greater Toronto Area, the company says. Another 66 Future Shop stores across Canada remain closed permanently, including 15 in the GTA.”

“It was unclear how many Future Shop employees were rehired at Best Buy. Some 1,500 employees, including 500 full-time and 1,000 part-time positions were eliminated during the closures.”

The Toronto Star, April 6, 2015: “Future Shop stores re-open under Best Buy name,” by Dana Flavelle

What If the Sunshine List Is Actually Driving Salaries Up?

“Some believe that disclosure creates an upward salary spiral. It's the Lake Wobegon effect. Everybody wants to be above average. Employees comb through the salary disclosure lists, comparing their pay to that of their peers, and seeking redress for any perceived inequities. Employers trying to attract above average workers, especially for senior management positions, offer above-average compensation packages, further fueling salary growth.”

“There is little more than anecdotal evidence to back up this theory. We can't prove that Ontario public sector salaries grew more rapidly after disclosure legislation came into effect. Salaries weren't disclosed before, so it is hard to do a before-and-after comparison.”

“And ... there may be good reasons for the silent escalation in administrative salaries. Institutions such as universities might be more difficult to administer than they once were. Because the market for top talent is international, rising executive compensation in the United States and elsewhere puts upwards pressure on Canadian salaries. Perhaps high salaries are simply a reflection of supply and demand -- institutions have to pay well to get the best people, but getting the best is worth it.”

“But my gut feeling is that disclosure does raise salaries, especially for senior, mobile employees. In 2000, when most university professors’ salaries were below the $100,000 threshold for disclosure, academics working in Ontario earned 4 per cent more than the national average. After a decade and a half of salary disclosure, the average salary for a professor in Ontario is 8 per cent above the average Canada-wide. The increase might be due to other factors, such as the end of a
standard retirement age, but salary disclosure is one possible cause.”

Visit the Government of Ontario’s website for more information and to view the Public Sector Salary Disclosure for 2015.

*The Globe and Mail, March 27, 2015: “What if the Sunshine List is actually driving salaries up?,” by Frances Woolley*

**Canadian Executives Weigh In On the State of the Economy**

“The fall in oil prices has caused a deep malaise among Canadian executives, a significant proportion of whom expect Canada’s economy to shrink in the coming year. But there is a significant regional split, with western executives far more pessimistic than those in the East. They’re also split on whether a further cut in lending rates is a good idea.”

*The Globe and Mail, March 30, 2015: “Canadian executives weigh in on the state of the economy”*

However, while the “optimism of Canada’s C-Suite executives may be falling right along with oil prices -- [the] business leaders have low expectations for the Canadian economy over the next 12 months, there remains a glimmer of hope: projections for their own companies’ prospects.”

**For complete coverage of the Globe’s C-Suite series see:** Topics: C-Suite Survey

*The Globe and Mail, March 30, 2015: “Executives’ confidence in the economy both shaken and a bit stirred,” by Rob Brouwer*

**For an American perspective on the Canadian economy see:**

*PBS News Hour, March 27, 2015: “Why Canada’s economy is headed off the cliff,” by Vikram Mansharamani*

**The Enabling Society**

“As changing demographics, globalization and rising income inequality bring the future of social policy to the forefront of public debate, a new essay in the IRPP’s Policy Horizons series argues that an entirely new framework is needed to replace Canada’s outdated welfare state.”

“Social policy expert Peter Hicks warns that fine-tuning the existing system will not be enough to fix the architecture of Canada’s social programs. While he does not disagree with recent calls to enhance access to child care, pensions and pharmacare, Hicks argues we are missing the basic point -- Canada’s social policy framework must be modernized to meet new realities.”

*IRPP, April 9, 2015: “The Enabling Society: Summary”*

*IRPP Policy Horizons Essay, April 9, 2015: “The Enabling Society,” by Peter Hicks (48 pages, PDF)*

**Foreign Worker Exodus Expected In Canada**

“Changes to the Temporary Foreign Worker Program will force the removal of tens of thousands of workers from the country starting today [April 1, 2015]. This will have an immediate impact not only on workers who have been in the country for more than four years, but also on industries that use foreign workers such as restaurants, construction and the agricultural sector. The new rules will apply to an estimated 70,000 temporary workers, migrant advocates claim, but the exact number is not known and has not been revealed by Citizenship and Immigration Canada.”

“Under the rules, workers who have been in the country longer than four years must leave. Once out of the country, they
can't re-apply for another work permit to enter Canada for another four years, hence the 'four-in, four-out' description."

"Many foreign workers have been in the country longer than four years and they had hoped the program would lead to permanent residence in Canada. Migrant advocates argue that the new policy is unfair and will uproot families from their communities."

"Even labour unions, which have expressed opposition to entire temporary foreign worker program, are urging that long-time employees be exempted from the policy. 'We're still calling for the program to be shut down,' said Alberta Federation of Labour president Gil McGowan. 'But we're asking the government to grandfather in temporary foreign workers already in the country.'"

The Tyee, April 1, 2015: “Foreign Worker Exodus Expected as New Rules Kick in,” by David P. Ball

"Canada’s budget watchdog says there isn’t enough information about temporary foreign workers, noting the dearth of data makes it difficult to assess the impact these workers have on the economy.”

The Tyee, March 13, 2015: “Canada Doesn’t Know What 154,000 Foreign Workers Actually Do,” by David P. Ball

Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer, March 12, 2015: “Temporary Foreign Workers in Canada: A look at regions and occupational skill,” by Tracy Lemieux and Jean-Francois Nadeau (28 pages, PDF)

Goodbye GM Plants? Goodbye 33,000 Jobs.

“Ontario would lose up to 33,000 jobs within two years if General Motors’ auto assembly plants in Oshawa closed, a study done for the auto workers union predicts.”

The report also estimates that “Canada’s economy would shrink by more than $5 billion a year....”

“As well, government coffers would suffer a permanent loss of tax revenues, boosting their deficits by up to $1 billion a year, according to the study by Robin Somerville of The Centre for Spatial Economics, an independent economic modeling firm.”

“'Canada is a great place for GM to do business, and we all benefit greatly from them being here,' Unifor National President Jerry Dias told a press conference. 'This underlines why Canada needs a focused strategy to win new auto investment, just like other countries have.'

“The study comes amid growing concerns about the future of GM’s two remaining Oshawa plants. A spokesperson for GM Canada said no decision about the assembly complex would be made until the end of 2016 following contract negotiations with the union.”

The Toronto Star, March 30, 2015: “GM plants support 33,000 jobs, union says,” by Dana Flavelle

Canadian Labour Reporter, March 30, 2015: "Shuttering GM Oshawa plant could cost 33,000 jobs: Union"


This Equal Pay Day, Ask4More

“'Go ahead, ask for more!' As National Equal Pay Day approaches on April 14, stand-up comedian and actress Sarah Silverman is joining Levo's Ask4More campaign that encourages women to stand up for their success in the workplace.”

People, April 6, 2015: “Sarah Silverman Encourages Women to Ask for What They Deserve in the Workplace,” by Lindsay Kimble
“April 14 is Equal Pay Day, a perfect opportunity to reflect upon the fact that women in our country still earn less than men. The figure below shows hourly wages in 2014 for men and women across the wage distribution. At every decile, men out-earn women. At the median, women’s hourly wages are only 83 percent of men’s hourly wages.”

Economic Policy Institute, April 7, 2015: “Women Still Earn Less than Men Across the Board,” by Alyssa Davis

What Our Office Learned Working Naked for One Month

“When it came to light during post-work happy-hour chitchat that nearly all of us worked from home sans pants, it clicked. Perhaps it wasn’t the lack of walls that was hindering our work at the office; maybe there were simply more barriers that had yet to be unbuttoned. Clothes: the last obstruction to the truly perfected working environment.”

“Seeing no benefit in ruining the [office environment] with morale-busting clothes, we decided to try working naked for the entire month of March.”

“Looking back, I can honestly estimate that it took under an hour for things to stop being weird and start being awesome. By day three, it all seemed so incredibly normal, and the benefits were astounding -- everything the open-office trend promised and more. We instantly shared a gleeful camaraderie; a deep and trusting bond permeated every meeting. Productivity skyrocketed once we implemented a ‘nipples hard = need to focus, nipples soft = have time to talk’ system, and it turns out that creativity is at its peak when your genitals are unbound.”

“Sure, our heating bills went up a bit, and we could collect enough rogue pubes to furnish the scalp of a small doll, but it’s a very small price to pay for this level of workplace satisfaction.”

The Bold Italic, April 1, 2015: “What Our Office Learned Working Naked for One Month (Ironically NSFW),” by Jessica Saia and Sierra Hartman

MOOCs at Harvard and MIT Assessed

“What happens when well-known universities offer online courses, assessments, and certificates of completion for free? Early descriptions of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) have emphasized large enrollments, low certification rates, and highly educated registrants.”

“We use data from two years and 68 open online courses offered by Harvard University (via HarvardX) and MIT (via MITx) to broaden the scope of answers to this question. We describe trends over this two-year span, depict participant intent using comprehensive survey instruments, and chart course participation pathways using network analysis.”

“We find that overall participation in our MOOCs remains substantial and that the average growth has been steady. We explore how diverse audiences -- including explorers, teachers-as-learners, and residential students -- provide opportunities to advance the principles on which HarvardX and MITx were founded: access, research, and residential education.”

SSRN, March 30, 2015: “HarvardX and MITx: Two Years of Open Online Courses Fall 2012-Summer 2014”

The Economist’s Special Report on Universities

“The American model of higher education is spreading. It is good at producing excellence, but needs to get better at providing access to decent education at a reasonable cost, says Emma Duncan.”

Special report:

- Excellence v equity
Preparing America's Diverse Workforce for Tomorrow

"Minnesota and the surrounding states of the upper Midwest are experiencing a demographic revolution. Yet that fact and its significance are just beginning to sink in, which is why many residents of the greater Minneapolis-St. Paul area, whatever their own ethnicity, still refer to their community matter-of-factly as 'lily white.' And while it's true that with a 78 percent Caucasian population the Twin Cities are still far less ethnically diverse than other parts of the United States ... it's also becoming less true with every passing year. One big reason: immigration."

"... Tawanna Black of the Northside Funders worries that companies might not fully understand what diversity in the workforce really means. She has been frustrated by the chasm she sees between what corporations say they want and what they actually do in the workplace. She has found that companies say to people of color, 'You're so wonderful, we need to have difference,' then you get hired and they say 'That's not how we problem-solve, that's not how we communicate.' She wonders whether companies really want diverse perspectives, or just a certain number of people of color on their employment rosters."

"Black also takes issue with the idea of color-blindness. 'I think part of it is, [white] Minnesotans would like to believe that [people of color are] not different, that we just happen to have different skin color. That whole 'I'm colorblind' thing has really messed us up, made us believe that [blindness to difference] is a good thing. My ethnicity brings something I don't need you to dismiss or ignore.' According to research, for companies that value diversity, that ‘something’ can include higher net profit margins, higher return on assets, and higher return on equity than peer firms that are not notably diverse -- as long as the diversity is an intrinsic part of the firm’s values, not just superficial window dressing."


Without a Second Chance

"When I tried to re-enter the workplace at the end of my sentence, I spoke with managers who would gladly have hired me. But the job application had ‘the box’ asking ‘have you ever been convicted?’ The managers couldn’t do much about it. I was rejected each time I responded with ‘yes.’ I started my own business largely as a way to get around that barrier."

"Along with nearly 200 civil and workers’ rights groups around the nation, [Main Street Alliance of Florida] are calling on President Obama to take executive action to ensure that qualified job-seekers with past arrests or convictions are not automatically shut out of employment opportunities with federal agencies and federal contractors."

"Expanding job opportunities for workers with prior records is fair for our society and smart for our economy. Making sure the path to employment is not blocked for people with records will restore dignity and hope to our communities."

The Guardian, March 31, 2015: “Keeping felons from earning a living doesn’t make us safer, only poorer,” by Paul Heroux

National Employment Law Project, January 2015: "Advancing a Federal Fair Chance Hiring Agenda: Background Check Reforms in Over 100 Cities, Counties, & States Pave the Way for Presidential Action,” by Maurice Emsellem and Michelle
While improving opportunities for ex-felons is vital, reducing the number of people who are incarcerated in the first place is the first step.

“Reliance on overly long sentences and tough on crime policies is both morally indefensible and economically unjustifiable.”

The United States has the largest prison population in the world due to policies such as mandatory sentences for non-violent drug offenses or three strikes laws that encompass low-level crimes. #cut50 is a national bipartisan initiative aimed at reducing the incarcerated population by 50 percent over the next 10 years. Visit their website for more information.

Additional resources:
- The Sentencing Project
- Prison Policy Initiative
- American Civil Liberties Union -- The Prison Crisis

Thrive, Survive, Resilience

“This book presents five possible future scenarios for livelihoods, whose positive or negative outcomes depend on how several emerging challenges are dealt with. It concludes with ideas for global, national and local action that hold significant promise for securing resilient livelihoods for all.”

OECD, Development Centre Studies, March 2015: “Securing Livelihoods for All” (162 pages, PDF)

What's Wrong With the Economy -- and With Economics?

“On March 14-15, 2015, The New York Review of Books Foundation, Fritt Ord, and the Dan David Prize held a conference, ‘What's Wrong with the Economy -- and with Economics?’ at Scandinavia House in New York. We are pleased to present the following video footage of the event.”

“Disputes between economists which seem to derive from disagreements about data and methodologies may on closer examination be rooted in profound disagreements about values. So it can be argued, and often is, that all of us are responsible for making the best of the opportunities open to us. Those who have ended up on the wrong side of the inequality divide must have failed to make the best of these opportunities and must bear responsibility for their errors, with the state providing just enough support to save them from destitution.”

“Or, an opposing view, that those falling behind are very often the victims of circumstances beyond their control -- globalization, technological change, corporate restructuring -- and that the state has a strong obligation to support them generously through difficult times and to provide them with the knowledge and skills needed to cope with new technologies and work practices. But how are these conflicts of values embedded in conflicting views about policy to be resolved?”

“Once again a network of beliefs and judgments extending well beyond economics may be called into play, and once again these may be strung out along the ontological continuum between the humanities and the natural sciences. Does this mean that the economist as scientist is slowly but surely being displaced by that hybrid who seems better placed to bridge these divides -- the political economist?”


Book of the Week

Worried Sick: How Stress Hurts Us and How to Bounce Back, by Deborah Carr. New
From the publisher: "Comments like 'I'm worried sick' convey the conventional wisdom that being 'stressed out' will harm our health. Thousands of academic studies reveal that stressful life events (like a job loss), ongoing strains (like burdensome caregiving duties), and even daily hassles (like traffic jams on the commute to work) affect every aspect of our physical and emotional well-being. Cutting through a sea of scientific research and theories, Worried Sick answers many questions about how stress gets under our skin, makes us sick, and how and why people cope with stress differently. Included are several standard stress and coping checklists, allowing readers to gauge their own stress levels. We have all experienced stressful times -- maybe a major work deadline or relocating cross-country for a new job -- when we came out unscathed, feeling not only emotionally and physically healthy, but better than we did prior to the crisis. Why do some people withstand adversity without a scratch, while others fall ill or become emotionally despondent when faced with even a seemingly minor hassle? Without oversimplifying the discussion, Deborah Carr succinctly provides readers with key themes and contemporary research on the concept of stress. Understanding individuals’ own sources of strength and vulnerability is an important step toward developing personal strategies to minimize stress and its unhealthy consequences. Yet Carr also challenges the notion that merely reducing stress in our lives will help us to stay healthy. Many of the stressors that we face in everyday life are not our problems alone; rather, they are symptoms of much larger, sweeping problems in contemporary U.S. society. To readers interested in the broad range of chronic, acute, and daily life stressors facing Americans in the twenty-first century, as well as those with interest in the many ways that our physical and emotional health is shaped by our experiences, this brief book will be an immediate and quick look at these significant issues."

Questions or comments: cirhr.library@utoronto.ca

For past issues see our Archives (there is a three month embargo on available issues).

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