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## Welcome to Decision 411: Forecasting

Before the first day of class (Tuesday, March 22), please do the following:

- (i) Install Statgraphics version 5 on your own computer (if it is not already installed) by downloading it from the Duke OIT web site. See the attached handout entitled **“How to obtain and install Statgraphics 5”** for detailed instructions. Statgraphics is the statistical software package that we will use for most of our data analysis in the course.
- (ii) Read the other attached handout, which is entitled **“Statgraphics: Overview and Tutorial Guide”** and/or look at the first few screencam movies on the first **Decision 411 CD**. There are two Decision 411 CD's containing screencam movies that provide a tour of Statgraphics. I will distribute copies of them to mailboxes during the week before classes start, but if you want to obtain them in advance you can pick them up from my secretary, Carol Bray, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor Keller Center West. See the **readme.txt** file on Disc One before starting. I encourage you to install the Statgraphics software and try to familiarize yourself with its basic functions prior to the first day of class. By the end of the first week of class, before starting the first homework assignment, you should be familiar with basic data manipulation and graphics procedures in Statgraphics.
- (iii) Visit the Decision 411 **course web page** and **newsgroup**, which you should find linked to your “my courses” page in **Fuqua World**. (The web page is currently under construction—expect some updates prior to the first day of class.) The web page provides links to my on-line forecasting notes, and it will also be an archive for my Powerpoint slides as the course progresses. The web page additionally provides links to a variety of internet forecasting resources. The course newsgroup will be used for announcements and discussions of questions concerning lecture material and assignments. Think of it as an “FAQ” file—you should get in the habit of checking it every few days. If you have a *question* for me, please send it to me by direct e-mail ([robert.nau@duke.edu](mailto:robert.nau@duke.edu)) rather than by posting it on the newsgroup. If the question and answer are of general interest, I will post copies on the newsgroup later for others to read.

The required reading for the course consists mainly of my notes on the course web page and Powerpoint slides used in class. I will hand out hard copies of the on-line notes and Powerpoint slides in class, as well as some supplementary readings, as the course proceeds. Your first-year stats textbook (*Data Analysis, Regression, and Forecasting* by Schleifer and Bell) will also be useful as a supplement. My lecture notes will provide all the theory and practical advice that is absolutely necessary for the purposes of this course, but the Schleifer/Bell book provides additional discussion and examples. (I will have extra copies for those who did not take the first-year stats course.) The grading basis will consist of 3 “regular” homework assignments, a one-hour in-class quiz (in class 7), plus a final project. The final project can be a data analysis project of your own choosing or else an assigned project (essentially a fourth homework assignment). You can work on the homework assignments and final projects **in teams of two**—i.e., you can pair up with one other person.

See you on March 22...

