



## Economics Newsletter

### Issue 8: Fall 2021

#### Eco has Leadership changes

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After having the majority of our classes meet virtually last year, we are all excited to be face-to-face with our students this fall. While we have to wear masks, we no longer have to socially distance, so our classrooms are once again full. Learning in a virtual environment was very challenging for both students and faculty, yet it also provided the impetus for faculty to seek innovative ways to engage students using asynchronous videos, online chat rooms, phone-based text apps, and many other ways that will strengthen even our face-to-face teaching.

We have a few personnel changes to note. Both Mike Curme and George Davis have retired – leaving impossibly big shoes to fill. After chairing the department for two years, Melissa Thomasson has become the new Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs and Personnel for the Farmer School of Business (although she assures us that her heart is in econ even if her office is in the Dean's suite). Chuck Moul ('94) is serving as interim department chair this year. Professor Austin Smith has taken over the new role of Graduate Director. We also welcome Carla Nietfeld as our newest assistant teaching professor.

We had a couple other great faculty acknowledgments. Professor Mark Tremblay was recently named the Thomas Endowed Assistant Professor. Professors Janice Kinghorn and Ling Shao were the 2021 Howe award winners. Professor Riley Acton received a Gates Foundation grant.

We had two great student honors: Innara Ladha was chosen as one of the Fulbright recipients. Aaron Garner was awarded the Provost's Student Academic Achievement Award for 2021.

Please enjoy our latest newsletter, and as always, let us know if you have feedback, are interested in mentoring some of our students, or wish to contribute to Miami's econ department in another way!



New Interim Chair: Chuck Moul

New Graduate Director: Austin Smith



Professor Mike Curme retired after 33 years of holding positions in both faculty and administrative roles.



Professor George Davis retired after 36 years. He will be doing the retire/rehire program. He was Department Chair for 14 of those years.

## Alumni Spotlight: Hayley Berg

I graduated from Miami in 2015, with a BA in Economics and a BA in Spanish. After graduation, I spent 3.5 years working at Nielsen as a data analytics consultant, working with large manufacturing clients to integrate data into their decision making processes and strategies across the brand and category departments. While working at Nielsen, I completed a MS in Applied Economics at Johns Hopkins University, which enabled me to make a career pivot towards a role better aligned with my love for economic theory and applied research. Today, I work at a mobile travel app (Hopper) that predicts hotel and airfare prices and notifies users when it's the right time to book. I lead the Pricing Intelligence team, which focuses on developing our price prediction model and fintech products which reduce the risk of booking. We use basic economic and econometric principles on a daily basis- from debating the right approach to improving the time series model which drives our price prediction, to researching user willingness to pay through AB testing features and models in the app.



**Hayley Berg**  
Miami '15 graduate

Something I've always appreciated about Miami and the Economics department is the commitment to enabling students to study abroad. While an undergrad I studied abroad twice (a semester in Spain and a summer in London) and was able to graduate on time! Facilitating both my love for travel and economics led me to my role at Hopper today, which I'm incredibly grateful for.

## Faculty Spotlight: Austin Smith



**Dr. Austin Smith**

I was originally drawn to economics after reading *Freakonomics* and realizing the broad range of questions economists can answer. After enjoying my role as a peer tutor during college, I decided to pursue a PhD at the University of Colorado, with the goal of becoming an economics professor. My research is in applied microeconomics, with a focus on labor and education policy. My research projects often arise from my personal interests or observations – for instance studying markets surrounding poker players or the impact of fraternity and sorority membership on academic performance and earnings of college graduates. One highlight of my academic career was an email exchange with Steve Levitt about our mutual interest in poker research. I was attracted to Miami due to the emphasis placed on the teacher-scholar model, which has allowed me to dedicate substantial efforts to both teaching and scholarship. Outside of work, I love spending time with my family, hiking, travelling, and enjoying craft beer.

*—Austin Smith came to Miami in 2015. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Colorado in 2015 as well. He received promotion to Associate Professor and received tenure this year. He was also recently appointed the new Eco Graduate Director.*

## Placements

142 students graduated with an economics degree in May. According to our senior survey, 41% of our majors secured full-time employment before graduation. Our students reported accepting jobs with a wide variety of private firms and job descriptions. The most commonly reported job titles were analyst and consultant. The average salary reported was \$59,233, and for students who reported receiving a signing bonus, the average was \$11,211. An additional 27% of our students reported that they would attend graduate or professional school after graduation, in fields such as economics, law, medicine and analytics. Our other students reported that they would be self-employed, entering military service, or seeking employment. We are proud of our graduates and wish them the very best!

## 2020-2021 Senior Awards/ Departmental Honors

### George. W. Thatcher Award



Ryan Burghart



Morgan Uveges

### William J. McKinstry Award



Sidney Hutson



Michael Molchan

### Delbert A. Snider Award

Daphne Benson-DuMaurier



Inaara Ladha

### Gerald Flueckiger Award



Turner Morris



Eli Winett



Justin Tingley

### Hart-Noble-Hall Award



Julia Draeb



Noah Tilton

### Paul M. Vail Award



Jessica von Zastrow



Henry Shaneyfelt

### Honors Students

Ryan Burghart (Adv: Dr. Jing Li)

Elliott Crummer (Adv: Dr. John Bowblis)

Julia Draeb (Adv: Dr. Jing Li)

Emma LaGuardia (Adv: Dr. Greg Niemesh)

Michael Molchan (Adv: Dr. Tyler Henry)

Ruku Pal (Adv: Dr Greg Niemesh and Melissa Thomasson)

Henry Shaneyfelt (Adv: Dr. Chuck Moul)

Noah Tilton (Adv: Dr. Deborah Fletcher)

Morgan Uveges (Adv: Dr. Chuck Moul)

## Student Spotlight: Ruku Pal



**Ruku Pal is currently a senior Business Economics majors**

I am the daughter of two economists. As such, I entered college determined to not catch the “econ” bug. Little did I know that one microeconomics course with an amazing faculty member would quickly turn into my major and define a future career path. At Miami I have had the incredible opportunity to study with dedicated faculty such as Drs. Curme, Davis, Fletcher, Li, Niemesh, Shao and Thomasson, who have all shaped my curiosity to formal frameworks and experiences. My sophomore year I observed poverty and income inequality firsthand, traveling through Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand and Singapore with Drs. Kinghorn and Sompolvorachai. In Spring 2021, I completed my undergraduate honors economics thesis on the “Economic Effect of Sole Hospital Closure on Rural Community” with advisors Drs. Niemesh and Thomasson. This summer I was in Washington, D.C. with an internship at a national polling firm supporting their client-based research. I am excited to explore future opportunities that combine my passion for economics and policy. I am incredibly thankful to the economics department as I would not be where I am today without the committed faculty.

## Women Who Invest

Women Who Invest started about two years ago with the mission to educate women across Miami's campus about investing. Within two years, we've expanded our mission to include all aspects of personal finance - including loans, credit cards, budgeting, etc. We host workshops every month open to all majors explaining these topics in a fun and easily understandable way.

Our organization recently received a grant from the MIAMI WOMEN Giving Circle to propel their project: the Women Who Invest Financial Freedom Series. With the grant, we have the ability to bring in speakers from specific financial industries to provide expert advice on each financial topic. Our goal this year is to host two workshops per month, one produced by our education team and the other bringing in an expert speaker. Additionally, we plan to expand our website to include more resources and presentations.

If you would like to help our organization out by being a speaker, please reach out to [dormanna@miamioh.edu](mailto:dormanna@miamioh.edu). Check out our website [muwwi.com](http://muwwi.com) for resources to begin investing, recordings of our workshops, and market updates written by our editorial team! Add Women Who Invest on the Hub if you're interested in joining.



## Emeritus Spotlight: Bill Even

After finishing my first (and only) semester of online teaching in Spring 2020, I retired in July 2020. The first 8 months of my retirement were rather subdued given the remaining risk of COVID, but life is returning to normal and I have greater appreciation of the freedom retired offers since my wife (Monna) and I received our vaccinations. In recent months, we've done some travelling to visit family and friends and are making plans for more road trips in the future to visit our son, his wife, and our one year old granddaughter. We also hope to make some trips to national parks out west. Over the last several months, I've been spending more time golfing, biking, and getting caught up on some home projects. I am also trying to stay professionally active with a few research projects, as well as some consulting on personal injury cases.

As I think about my 37 years at Miami, I have many fond memories. On the teaching side of my job, I was able to teach over a dozen different courses ranging from the introductory Principles of Economics courses to the graduate courses in econometrics. Each course had its challenges and rewards, but I always enjoyed interacting with students. I especially enjoyed working with students on their honors or Masters theses. The research side of my job allowed me to continue to learn over my career, and I especially enjoyed working with my colleagues as we tried to figure out answers to new questions. The interactions with colleagues and students are the things that I miss most since retirement. The things I miss the least are grading and getting up early to teach 8:30 classes!



**Bill Even retired in 2021 after working at Miami for 37 years.**

## Professors in Print

One of our newest faculty, Professor Riley Acton had two papers published in 2021 so far at *Education Finance and Policy* and the *Journal of Labor Economics*. Professor Ling Shao had a paper accepted at *Applied Economics* so far in 2021. Professor John Bowlblis had multiple papers published in 2020 at journals ranging from *Innovation in Aging* to the *Journal of Applied Gerontology* to the *Journal of American Medical Directors Associate*. Professors Chuck Moul and Greg Niemesh published their joint paper at *Applied Economics*. Professor Mark Tremblay had papers published at the *International Economic Review* and *The Review of Economics and Statistics*. Professor Nam Vu had papers published at *Macroeconomics Dynamics*, *Review of International Economics*, and *Southern Economic Journal*. Professor Jing Li had a paper published in the *Economics Bulletin*. Among those publications, many professors also had papers accepted throughout 2020-2021.

Professor Peter Nencka had his work about libraries discussed in article with Fordham Institute. Professor Greg Niemesh spoke on 91.6WVXU about the economic forecast for the Cincinnati region.

Be sure to keep an eye out for more professors' research activities on our departmental social media outlets.

## Get involved!

Ways you can build up the Economics Department

**The Gift of Financial Support:** With university budgets under pressure, many of the opportunities that were available in the past are being squeezed. If your household would like to make a financial gift, the department would appreciate it.

**Our funds at [givetomiamioh.org/economics](http://givetomiamioh.org/economics)**

- The Student-Faculty Engagement fund is used to sponsor Honors and MA thesis advising. Gifts can be made in honor of your favorite economics professor, and student theses will be given the faculty designation. For instance, our first thesis support in honor of Jerry Miller is in place for this year.
- The International Scholarship (established by Denny Sullivan) helps economics majors study abroad.
- The Economics Club and Women in Economics funds help offset expenses as they explore economic concepts outside of the classroom.

Kirk Bogard (FSB, [bogardks@miamioh.edu](mailto:bogardks@miamioh.edu)) or Evan Lichtenstein (CAS, [lichteec@miamioh.edu](mailto:lichteec@miamioh.edu)) can also assist with giving questions.

**The Gift of Time: The department is looking for alumni support regarding:**

- Student case interviews and competitions (judging & Zoom-lessons)
- Zoom-lectures in economics class
- Information about internship opportunities with your company
- Mentorships with recent alumni and current students

Reach out to Chuck Moul with any questions about the Economics Department: [moulcc@miamioh.edu](mailto:moulcc@miamioh.edu)



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Miami Econ (Group)