

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS

NEWSLETTER: WINTER 2019



UNIVERSITY OF
CALGARY

ISSUE: WINTER 2019

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Message from the Head	1
Graduate Student Awards	2
New Members of the Team	4
New Faculty	5
Research with Impact.....	7
Reflections of Recent PhDs	8
Notable Faculty Accomplishments	9
Student Spotlight.....	10
Conferences	11
2018 SSHRC Grants	11

Message from the Head

By Rob Oxoby



Welcome to the Winter 2019 Newsletter from the Department of Economics at the University of Calgary. This is our opportunity to keep you up to date on changes and successes in the Department and keep in touch with our alumni, former faculty, and friends.

For those of you who don't know me, I am the new Head of the Department of Economics, having started a 5-year term in July 2017. I've stepped into this position after Dr. Daniel Gordon served two years as Interim Department Head. We are all grateful for Dan's service as Department Head and are thankful for his commitment to the Department. As

for myself, I've been in the Department since 2000, joining the University of Calgary after completing my PhD. I look forward to my years as Department Head as we will be embarking on many new initiatives over the coming years.

Some of the initiatives we will be pursuing this year include a broad curriculum review, developing the Department's strategic plan, and increasing our engagement with the community and our stakeholders in Calgary and Alberta. The latter will include bringing professionals, non-profits, and representatives from federal and provincial organizations to campus to discuss their work with faculty and graduate students. If you are interested in participating in these activities, please take a moment and reach out to me so we can get you involved in the Department.

As is always the case, the Department is ever changing. This year we said goodbye to Dr. Pamela Campa who left the Department in 2018 to join the Institute of Transition Economics (SITE) at the Stockholm School of Economics. We will miss Pamela and wish her the best in her new position.

At the same time, we are very happy to welcome four new Assistant Professors to the Department. Dr. Alex Jakobsen (PhD Princeton University; microeconomic theory and behavioural economics) and Dr. Dimitri Migrow (PhD University of Warwick; microeconomic theory and information economics) joined the Department in July 2017. More recently, Dr. Jeal-William Laliberte (PhD, University of Toronto; labour and public economics) joined the Department in January 2018 and Dr. Eric Mbakop (PhD Northwestern University; econometrics and industrial organization) joined the Department in July 2018. Further, we are pleased to announce the promotions of Dr. Lucija Muehlenbachs, Dr. Stefan Staubli, and Dr. Kunio Tsuyuhara to the ranks of Associate Professor (with tenure).

Looking forward, we are excited to have Dr. Joshua Angrist from MIT presenting the 2019 Dr. Frank Anton Distinguished Lecture in Economics on March 8th 2019. This annual lecture is open to the public and brings leading economists to the University of Calgary to discuss their research and topical economic issues in an open forum. This event is one of the highlights of the Department's activities and I hope to see you there.

We also have our two annual workshops organized by Department members. The Empirical Microeconomics Workshop and the Rocky Mountain Empirical Trade Conference are increasingly recognized as leading conferences in the field and bring top researchers to the Banff Centre to present and discuss leading edge research in economics.

In closing, please enjoy our newsletter as an opportunity to learn about our new faculty, our research successes, and opportunities to become involved in the community that is the Department of Economics.

Student Awards for 2017-18

Every year, the Department of Economics proudly recognizes academic performance, cutting-edge research, and teaching excellence through awarding students with a suite of awards and scholarships in both our graduate and undergraduate programs.

Graduate Students:

- James Conville was awarded the MA Prize for Economic Theory.
- Catalina Cuzzani was awarded the MA Teaching Assistant Excellence Prize.
- Melanie Varkey was awarded the Stephen G. Peitchinis Memorial Graduate Recruitment Scholarship to begin her Master's program.
- Felix Fosu was awarded three prizes for his outstanding academic performance: the Econometrics Prize, the Macroeconomics Prize, and the Microeconomics Prize.

Student Awards for 2017-18, continued

- Safoura Moeeni was awarded the PhD Teaching Assistant Excellence Prize, as well as the new Anton and Dalgarno Memorial Post-Candidacy Research Award
- Dennis Nsafoah was awarded the James D. Gaisford Research Prize for the best second year paper, titled "International Monetary Policy Spillovers".
- Blake Shaffer was awarded the Victor Yang Song Graduate Student Teaching Award.
- Eashita Dabas, Marjan Habibi, Jinan Liu, and Dimitrios Serletis were also awarded the new Anton and Dalgarno Memorial Graduate Scholarships to begin their PhD program.
- Aashay Tripathi was awarded the Graduate Alumni Scholarship to begin his PhD program.
- Kangyu Qiu was awarded the Economics Society of Calgary Graduate Scholarship to begin his PhD program.

For further information on each of these awards, visit <https://econ.ucalgary.ca/graduate/student-recognition>.

Undergraduate Students:

- Chloe Pavelka (Fall 2017) and Joel Balyk (Winter 2018) were awarded the Professor Z.M. Kubinski Prize in Economics.
- Joel Balyk also was awarded the Dr. Lawrence W. Copithorne Memorial Scholarship.
- Gilbert Lybbert was awarded the 40th Anniversary Undergraduate Alumni Scholarship in Economics.
- Jordan Bartsch was awarded the Frank Mink Undergraduate Economics Scholarship.
- Liam Lindsey was awarded the Horst Betz Book Prize for Excellence in Microeconomics.
- Marbello Bejarano was awarded the Horst Betz Book Prize for Excellence in Macroeconomics.
- Natasha Ahluwalia was awarded the Faculty of Arts Silver Medallion in Economics (formerly the Economics Society of Calgary Medal in Economics).

For further information on each of these awards, visit <https://econ.ucalgary.ca/undergraduate/student-recognition>.

New Members of the Economics Team

Kate Innanen, Manager, Administrative Services

Hello! Kate here. I'm the new manager for our department, having taken over for Julie Suffield when she retired at the end of the 2017. When I joined the team on January 22nd, I also joined the university — I'm brand new here and am learning lots fast as I get up speed! Before UCalgary, I worked in non-profit management and consulting, but my career began in human resources. My husband Kris and I moved to Calgary in 2009 when he started in the Department of Geoscience, and though we grew up in Toronto, we've also lived in Vancouver and Houston, Texas. I did my bachelor's degree at York University in linguistics and completed an MBA from the University of Houston-Clear Lake. When not busy obsessing about organizational development and administrative efficiencies, I like to plan family trips to take with our 14-year-old twin daughters. We also like to camp and hike in the summer, and have spent many nights by the fire pondering the pros and cons of USRIs, how to balance teaching, research, and service, and how we plan to retire in style on the West Coast.

Erin Booker, Undergraduate Advisor

Hi! I'm Erin, and I joined Economics in early October 2017. My job here is to help our undergrads navigate their way through their degrees, maximizing their utils and returns as they go. I love solving problems and helping people, and this role's a wonderful blend of both. My past business cards have read program manager, advisor, and editor, and before @ucalgary.ca, my work emails came from @ubc.ca, @utoronto.ca, and @randomhouse.ca. I've completed a bachelor's degree at UBC in political science and international relations and certificates at Ryerson University in publishing and public relations, and I'm in the midst of a master's degree at Royal Roads University in professional communication. When I'm not in the office or studying, you'll most likely find me experimenting in the kitchen, getting lost on my bike, or tumbling down internet rabbit holes.

Mika Mann, Administrative Assistant to Scott Taylor

Allô! I'm Mika and I started working as an administrative assistant mid-March 2018! My job consists of being first contact for Dr. Scott Taylor, while also assisting in general administrative duties around the Department of Economics' front office. I moved back home to Calgary after completing my bachelor's degree at McGill University in Montreal while also doing some administrative work in the Faculty of Arts. I completed a double major in English literature and psychology, so if you want to stop by SS 454 to chat about your friends' quirks or what you're reading right now, I wouldn't mind at all! Outside of the office, you'll find me taking language classes, trying out every food I possibly can, and over-analyzing media to the point of existentialism.

New Faculty Appointments

Since July 1, 2017, the Department of Economics has welcomed four new faculty! In order of arrival they are:

Dimitri Migrow, Assistant Professor

Hi, I am Dimitri and I joined Economics in the Fall 2017. Having previously lived (and studied) in Germany, UK, Israel and Russia, now I am looking forward to the new exciting chapter in my life in Canada! The positive vibes in our faculty, and Calgary in general, are inspiring and it is easy to do research here in a concentrated and happy way. Until now, I was mainly working on how information affects the efficiency of markets and organizations. How do we, as individuals and society, acquire and exchange information, and how do informational flows influence political outcomes, in particular if some of us misperceive or misinterpret information relevant to our collective decisions? I am trying to tackle this questions from the perspectives of economic theory which means that paper and pencil (and of course, talking to colleagues) are my main research supporters.



Alex Jakobsen, Assistant Professor

Hi, I am an economic theorist working on behavioral economics and decision theory. I joined the department in July 2017 after completing my PhD in economics at Princeton University. A forever-student, I previously completed master's degrees in mathematics at UBC and economics at UCalgary, as well as undergraduate degrees in economics and computer science at UCalgary. I am excited to be back among family and friends here in Calgary. I am especially looking forward to injuring myself this ski season.

New Faculty Appointments (cont.)

Jean-William Laliberté, Assistant Professor



My academic trajectory brought me to Calgary all the way from Université Laval (BA), in my hometown of Quebec city, with a short stop in Vancouver (MA, UBC) and a longer stay in Toronto (PhD, U Toronto) in between. My research interests span many subfields of applied microeconomics, but the core of my research program focuses on the economics of education. For instance, my recent work examines long-term neighborhood and school effects among people who grew up in Montreal (oddly enough for a Quebecois, I have lived in Toronto, Vancouver and Calgary, but never in Montreal!). Prior to settling on an academic career, I've worked as an economic consultant as well as a political aide. In my non-academic life, I love to read and cook, a passion I've developed while working as a line cook for over 5 years. I'm also a big hockey fan who grew up watching the Nordiques, but who eventually accepted to cheer for the Habs. I recently bought a Flames jersey to commit myself to my new home team.

Eric Mbakop, Assistant Professor

I completed my Ph.D. at Northwestern University in 2018, and my research interests are in Econometrics and Industrial Organization. My most recent work, on the econometric of auctions, establishes new identification results for auction data with unobserved heterogeneity and incomplete bids. Prior to my doctoral studies, I obtained a bachelor degree and a master degree in Mathematical Sciences from Worcester Polytechnic Institute.



Lindsay Tedds, Associate Professor

Lindsay Tedds is the Scientific Director of the Fiscal and Economic Policy program at the School of Public Policy and an Associate Professor in the Department of Economics at the University of Calgary. Lindsay is a specialist in applied economic research and policy analysis, with a particular focus on the design and implementation of tax policy. Her work spans a number of topics including the underground economy, income underreporting, the tax treatments of stock options and exploration expenses, user levies, insider disclosure, generosity of coverage for assisted reproduction, birth seasonality, and basic income. She is the co-author of two books and has published a number of book chapters, technical reports, interactive guides, and papers in peer reviewed journals.



Research with Impact

Fellows, G. Kent, Robert Mansell, Ronald Schlenker, & Jennifer Winter. 2017. “Public-Interest Benefit Evaluation of Partial- Upgrading Technology.” *The School of Public Policy Publications*, 10 (January).

This paper was heavily cited in the report produced by the [Government of Alberta’s Energy Diversification Advisory Committee](#). Following the report, the Government of Alberta introduced the Energy Diversification Act in March 2018, which includes loan guarantees and grants for partial upgrading technologies. This paper had a significant influence on policy in Alberta.

Beattie, Graham, Jean-William Laliberté, and Philip Oreopoulos. 2018. “Thrivers and divers: Using non-academic measures to predict college success and failure.” *Economics of Education Review* 62: 170-182.

This paper collects and explores a comprehensive set of non-academic characteristics of incoming college freshman in the United States. They focus on student outliers whose first-year performance is significantly below (the “divers”) or above (the “thrivers”) the average. They find thrivers “express more philanthropic goals, are purpose-driven, and are willing to study more” while divers “express superficial goals, hoping to ‘get rich’ quickly.” This research generated media interest, including a discussion in a recent Washington Post article.

Reflections from Recent PhD Graduates

Blake Shaffer

Going into the PhD, many people told me it would be like a marathon. They were right. Except it's more like a marathon that begins with a gruelling uphill climb, transitions to a soul-crushing spell of never-ending flat running (often in circles), and when you finally see a glimpse of the finish line it gets up and runs away from you!

So yeah, a “marathon”, of sorts.

Looking back, that gruelling first year and the pressure-filled comps were a necessary rite of passage. It set me up with the core knowledge and economic intuition I would need (and later use) as foundation for my research. The field courses drove it all home, taking the core theory and applying it to specific problems. I recall my “aha” moment in Ken McKenzie’s public finance course. We were applying elements we had learned in micro theory to understand principles of optimal taxation and lightbulbs were going off. I left class and took the c-train downtown, to my then extra-curricular activity of working on the 2015 Alberta Royalty Review. I was able to apply what I had learned in class that very same day to influence changes to the new royalty structure (and I’m proud to say that the recommendations stuck – they were ultimately adopted by the Province).

And now, nearing the finish line, I’m thankful for the opportunity to think of a question – any question, no matter how esoteric or essential – and use everything I’ve learned over the past few years to find a way to answer it. As someone who has spent most of his adult life answering to shareholders and bottom lines, it’s been an absolute pleasure to have the freedom to ask and answer questions solely because I find them interesting and important. Hopefully somebody else does too.

Younes Ahmadi

I started my career as an Economist at the Alberta Climate Change Office (ACCO) a year ago while I was finishing my PhD thesis on carbon pricing and global warming. The type of work I do here at ACCO is quite related to my research background but the focus is different. In academic work, we tend to focus on the big picture of policy issues and policy designs, but abstract from practical issues associated with implementation. My work at ACCO focuses mainly on what the economic and environmental impacts of different policy designs could be on Alberta’s economy. I regularly collaborate with colleagues across the Climate Change Office and other ministries on practical difficulties of implementing the Climate Leadership Plan (CLP). One main difference between my work at ACCO and U of C is the type of research questions I face and the methodology used. In academia, you find an important research question and, typically, develop a theoretical model and an empirical methodology to answer the question. This process takes between six months to couple of years for each paper depending on the research project. At the ACCO, I face multiple research questions on a weekly or monthly basis and the goal is to provide useful results under competing timelines. So I always have to consider the time constraint in my analysis and choose the right level of sophistication to strike the balance between rigor and delivery.

We use a variety of sophisticated models for analysis in the ACCO. My training on CGE models during my PhD program really helped me to immediately add value and perform analysis of the economy-wide impacts of the CLP. The empirical training during my PhD helped me know what kind of data is available and where. These experiences have allowed me to answer many research questions more quickly with empirical validity to my methodology, which is highly valued at ACCO. The economic insight I learned during my PhD allows me to look at the big picture and have a forward-looking view at policy issues. In some instances, this forward-looking view allowed me to design analysis in a way that can easily be extended to answer further follow up questions and in a faster way. Working at ACCO was a great opportunity for me to be involved in the development of a complicated climate policy suite from the outset. I learned a lot about policy implementation difficulties that, for simplicity, we tend to ignore in academic work. I also gained invaluable experience on how to communicate complicated economic issues with non-economists.

Recent Faculty Accomplishments

Apostolos Serletis has been elected President of the Society for Economic Measurement. He will give the Presidential speech at the 6th annual conference of the Society for Economic Measurement to be held in August 2019 at the European Central Bank in Frankfurt. He has also been appointed Director of the Energy Industry program at the RUDN University in Moscow.

Alex Whalley had a recent paper (joint with Shawn Kantor) accepted at the *Journal of Political Economy*. He is part of an NSERC CREATE “Materials for Electrochemical energy Solutions” team that won a \$1.65 million grant. In addition, he received funding from the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research to bring some of the world’s best urban economists and computers scientists together for a research workshop on “Smart Inclusive Cities” that will happen in Banff in May. He was appointed a Lab Economist at the Creative Destruction Lab – Rockies that brings science based early stage ventures together with venture capitalists. His student Mokhtar Tabari received a MITACS award to visit the Institute for Studies in Industrial Development in India this summer. Whalley was also a faculty lead on a student tour of Silicon Valley sponsored by the Hunter Hub. He took 20 of the top students from campus behind the scenes at Uber, Facebook, Shopify, Microsoft, and met some of world best VC’s and the C100. He co-organized a summit on using Big Data to power Calgary’s economy with the Society of Undergraduate Students. There were over 100 students and professionals in attendance and industry leaders from ATB, Cenovus, AESO and Groundswell shared thoughts on how students can build a data science career.

Jen Winter was a recipient of Avenue Calgary's Top 40 Under 40. Professor Winter is also a co-Investigator on a \$1.65 million NSERC CREATE grant that funds an interdisciplinary graduate student training program called ReDeveLoP. Two Economics MA students were funded in the 2017 cohort - Linh Tran and Sobhan Iranmanesh. In addition, she testified to the Senate Standing Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources on carbon taxes in February 2017. Her work on the cost of carbon pricing in Canada, which was requested by the Senate, has received significant media attention this year.

Economics Student Spotlight

Jonah Zankl

Jonah is in his final year, completing an honours economics program combined with applied mathematics. He was a recipient of the 2013 Schulich Leader Scholarship. While on campus, he has been involved in the innovation community and focused on applying his skills to projects such as the University of Calgary Solar Car Team as their project co-chair and launching the inaugural AB2050 Peter Tertzakian Case Competition with Fuse Collective. For over three years, he has worked with ATB Financial as a product manager, designing and managing products that empowered customers using data and technology. He currently oversees Global Transfers, a tool that empowers self-service international money remittances. Jonah will be pursuing a Masters in the fall, combining his passion for technology and innovation with strategy and policy outcomes, through the Judge Business School at the University of Cambridge.



Farah Kammourieh



Farah Kammourieh is currently a programs coordinator at a non-profit that supports economic diversification in Alberta (specifically, by investing in small and medium enterprises to grow geospatial technology in the province). Her interest in entrepreneurship and business took off when she worked as an advisor to a Canadian project targeting youth unemployment in Tamale, Ghana. She is a UCalgary 2015 alum and holds a BA in International Relations (minors in Economics and Political Science). Her Economics course history helped her stand out when applying for a Students for Development Internship (organized by University of Calgary International and funded by what was then the Canadian International Development Agency) as a third year student. She chose to minor in Economics at that point, and was enormously pleased by how it helped her narrow down her interests and build an understanding of international affairs. She aims to pursue an applied degree in Economics for her graduate studies. Farah is almost trilingual and has dreams of working for the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia.

Conferences

The Department of Economics hosted conferences this year.

The Rocky Mountain Empirical Trade Conference was held at the University of Ottawa this year, instead of its usual home at the Banff Centre. We welcomed had roughly 30-40 researchers and there were approximately 15 presenters. The conference drew people from institutions across North America and outside NA as well, and is now well established and well known in the community of empirical trade economists. In addition to the regular academic conference, **Prof. Eugene Beaulieu** organized a **Trade Experts Roundtable** at Global Affairs Canada where conference participants and public servants with the Government of Canada could discuss the latest research in trade and various public policy issues.

The Banff Empirical Microeconomics Workshop focused on political economy topics and involved a focused group of 25 attendees. There were two keynote speakers and 15 full presentations. Our graduate students helped to organize. It is a great opportunity for them to be exposed to top level research.

2018 SSHRC Grants Awarded to Three Faculty

The Social Science and Humanities Research Council awarded grants to three of our faculty members in 2018: Professor Eugene Beaulieu, Professor Alex Whalley, & Professor Mehdi Shadmehr.

Professor Beaulieu received the Knowledge Synthesis Grant—a joint SSHRC-ESRC grant—for work on Canada-UK relations. Working with a UK legal scholar at University of Sussex, Professor Beaulieu is engaged in a high-level collaborative research project on trade policy in the UK, including economics, law, and political science.

Professor Whalley's project is titled "Patents and Performance in the Global Economy", exploring how Canadian firms are increasingly concerned with protecting their intellectual property in foreign markets. However, we know relatively little about whether foreign IP actually affects firm performance. Professor Whalley's project will harness newly available data on firm performance and global patenting to provide an answer.

Professor Shadmehr's project is titled "Investment in the Shadow of Conflict: Globalization, Capital Control, and State Repression", to develop a tractable general equilibrium framework that integrates a model of the economy with a model of regime change. In combining the intertwined economic and political decisions of allocating capital into domestic or foreign markets and allocating efforts into economic production or politics, one is able to collect data and test the influence of the political risk of regime change, uncovering policies that foster economic development while reducing violence.

Consider Supporting the Department of Economics

With the support of alumni, friends, and benefactors the Department of Economics has successfully established a number of scholarships and student prizes over the last few years. These include: (1) The Economics Alumni Graduate Scholarship, (2) the Stephen G. Peitchinis Memorial Graduate Recruitment Scholarship, (3) the Horst Betz Prizes for Excellence in Economics, and (4) the 40th Anniversary Undergraduate Alumni Scholarship in Economics.

Gifts to the Department of Economics Annual Fund and Contributions to the endowment for the Stephen G. Peitchinis Memorial Graduate Recruitment Scholarship can also be made by credit card at the department website: <http://econ.ucalgary.ca/home/giving> or by contacting the Department Head.

Alumni We Want To Hear From You!

We want to get in touch with you. If there are any special events and news that you wish to share with us and fellow alumni, or if you want attend any of our events please drop us a line. Send us your news together with your contact information at econ@ucalgary.ca For other ways of staying in touch, please check out our website: <http://econ.ucalgary.ca>

Contact Information

How to find us:

Department of Economics
Social Sciences Building, Room 454
Phone: (403) 220-5857
Fax: (403) 282-5262
Email: econ@ucalgary.ca

Mailing address:

Department of Economics
The University of Calgary
2500 University Dr. N.W.
Calgary, AB, T2N 1N4
Canada

Contributions: Lucija Muehlenbachs, Rob Oxoby, Trevor Tombe