

The Marginalist

A PUBLICATION OF THE ECONOMICS STUDENT ASSOCIATION
Southern Illinois University, Carbondale
2025 ISSUE

Letter from the Director



Greetings from Carbondale!
Hope you are doing well.

This year we welcome a new faculty member, Soo Lee, a recent graduate from Michigan State University. She is an econometrician who studied under Jeff Woolridge. Woolridge is a leading figure in Econometrics and so hiring someone from his "academic tree" enhances our program. Unfortunately, we were not successful in filling the Vandever Chair, vacated by Sajal Lahiri when he retired a year ago. The Vandever Chair goes to a globally renowned full professor and luring a successful academic from her/his current position often proves challenging. Of course, we will keep trying.

This past spring, the campus celebrated SIU becoming an R1

research university, the highest level designation a university can achieve. Producing PhDs is an important metric in attaining and keeping this status. Economics is one of the leading programs on campus in terms of matriculating doctoral students and the leading one in CoBA.

The masters and doctoral programs remain our strength. We have 30 graduate students this fall, 21 of whom are doctoral students. These numbers continue the high enrollment we have enjoyed these last few years. As for undergraduates, we have 30 majors and so need to do more to increase our numbers. One way to increase enrollment is to attract more international students (recognizing that some aspects of the global climate are not as favorable as in previous years).

Last year, I wrote about potential partnerships with universities in Malaysia and China. We are also discussing possibilities with Horizon University in Sri Lanka. I just returned from China and a visit to Sias University in Zhengzhou. Our goal is to create a 3+1

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Letter from the Director (continued)

program where students spend three years at Sias and then complete the degree at SIU in their last year and even possibly stay for another year to obtain their master's through our accelerated master's program. I had a great visit at Sias and met both administrators and faculty interested in this connection. The agreement between Sias and SIU is pending as both universities' legal teams haggle over terms. Thirty years ago, our Economics program enjoyed a perennial inflow of students from Japan, strengthening our numbers. I hope we can rekindle some of these international partnerships. Of course, we will continue to reach out to domestic students as well.

I am also delighted to report that one of our Quantitative Economics majors, Allison Bradford, was recognized in April as the CoBA Graduating Student of the Year. Not only was Allison a great student, but she was active in many campus organizations. She now attends law school at SIU.

A college-level initiative has restarted the mentorship program where an alumnus gets

paired with an undergraduate. This mentor can offer advice about the 'real world' while also providing a sounding board away from campus that some students might find preferable when concerns or other problems arise. If anyone would like more information about becoming a mentor, please contact me. This is an invaluable program that can boost retention and even help some students that might not otherwise graduate.

SIU's Homecoming runs from October 20th through the 26th. We hope you can make it. If so, please let us know. Hopefully, we can meet up. A schedule of activities can be found at: <https://homecoming.siu.edu/>

As always, please feel free to ask questions about the program or drop me a line if you just want to chat.

With Saluki Pride,
Kevin Sylwester, Professor and Director

Scholarships and Awards

Thomas and Chany Chung Scholarship

Undergraduates

Oscar Andrade-Villagomes	Yolina Lindquist
Madison Bevis	Allen Middleton
Jonathan DSouza	Gage Morgenstern
Tiago Simao Faleiros	Megan Peak
Sarah Farris	Cassidy Potter-Kirch
Parker Foote	Dain Richie
Megan Gobert	Emily White
Dylan Harkins	Sevyon Williams

C. Rafiq Khan Scholarship

Gautam Kumar Biswas

Glenn W. and Cornelia Y. Miller Scholarship

Allison Bradford ~ Parker Foote

Garrett E. and Susan J. Pierce Scholarship

Sercye Haynes

Mrs. Elizabeth F. Goyak Scholarship

Madison Bevis

Outstanding Juniors

Cassidy Potter-Kirch ~ Timothy Sunny

Outstanding Seniors

Allison Bradford ~ Yolina Lindquist

Alumna Profile — Reina Irene Mejía Chacón



I was born in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, into a family that provided me with the foundation from which my life is built. My father framed my vision for my professional life, he taught me discipline, responsibility and the principals of business and finance. From my mother, I learned the other side of who I was, teaching me empathy, resilience, faith and a sense of purpose. I've always

strived for these two sides to be compatible for where my life takes me, always feeling blessed to carry both influences, the sharpness of my father's mind and the depth of my mother's heart.

When I came to Southern Illinois University in Carbondale (SIU), I was leaving my country and this comfort zone. However, I had been prepared to deal with this uncertainty with determination, curiosity, and hope. At SIU, I studied Economics with a concentration in Money and Banking, and later earned my MBA. Those years were transformative as they not only gave me technical knowledge and resilience, but also a sense of confidence and the joy of friends for life, building upon the lessons I already had growing up. At SIU, I was presented with the opportunities to be shaped into who I wanted to be. My career as a consequence has not only been shaped by education and family, but also by the many mentors I have been privileged to learn from along the way. At every stage — whether in Honduras, SIU or other communities I've been a part of — colleagues and leaders shared their wisdom, opened doors, and challenged me to grow. I carry deep gratitude for all of them. I was part of the International Student Association and had the honor to lead the Latin America Student Association (LASA), where I had the privilege to share experiences with students from all over the world. SIU gave me this gift.

After SIU, I returned to Honduras and began my professional journey at Citibank Honduras, where I spent over 20 years. I held roles in institutional banking, public-sector finance, and corporate strategy, ultimately serving as CEO of Citibank Honduras and leading Corporate and Investment Banking. In 2020, I stepped into international development as Executive Vice

President and Chief Operating Officer of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), and later served as Interim President in 2022.

In 2024, I returned to the private sector and to the institution that shaped much of my career and where I acquired extensive knowledge: Citibank. Today, I lead the Private Bank for Central America and the Caribbean, a role that allows me to bring together all the lessons from my past, technical expertise, regional vision, and a commitment to service.

My career is not the only thing that has shaped my life though. I'm a proud breast cancer survivor. Although it was one of the most challenging chapters of my life, it strengthened my faith, resilience, and gratitude. Surviving cancer gave me a renewed sense of purpose and today I work to raise awareness of not just breast cancer, but health prioritization. It is part of my mission to encourage others, especially women, to prioritize their health and early detection. What defines me most, however, is my family. I am married and the proud mother of a daughter and two sons. They are my source of joy and strength, reminding me daily of what truly matters.

Looking back, I see how my journey has been paved by so many influences, my parents' example, my religious community, my mentors' guidance, lifelong friendships, my family's love, my experience as a cancer survivor, and the education I received at SIU. To today's SIU students, I would say: value every challenge, every connection, every late night of study. You cannot yet see where your path will lead, but each step is preparing you for opportunities beyond what you can imagine and a life that you don't know yet. Remember, to walk life with transparency, strong values and you should see a good harvest, nothing in life is worth compromising your values!

For me, Carbondale was the beginning of a lifelong journey — one that has taken me from Honduras to boardrooms, to the presidency of the IDB, through my battle with cancer, and right back to leadership in the private sector. Through it all, I remain grateful to God, to SIU, for the education, the mentors, the friends for life, and the foundation it gave me to write my story. Lastly, my advice to you: Never lose faith, and never give up! Go Salukis!

Students' Perspectives - Yaren Gocer



I am a fourth-year PhD student in the Economics program at SIUC. As I move into the final part of the program, I have started to reflect on what this journey has meant to me. It has helped me grow not only academically, but also personally and professionally.

One of the best parts of my time here has been the strong sense of community among graduate students. Preparing for qualifying exams and keeping up with coursework can be stressful, yet I learned that working with others makes a big difference.

Since my first semester, I have studied with classmates, shared notes, and explained ideas to each other. We often spent long hours in Faner hall, trying to solve problems or review materials. Those times showed me the significance of peer support and teamwork.

Another great aspect of my program is its diversity. It is very diverse, both culturally and academically. I have had the chance to study with students from many different countries and backgrounds that made our discussions more interesting and helped

us learn from one another. It is very different to read about global issues compared to talking about them with someone who has seen them in real life.

I also greatly appreciate how kind and helpful the professors are. Even when they are not working in your research area, they will still answer your questions and give you valid advice. It does not matter if you are doing theory or applied work. The faculty are supportive and want to see you succeed.

The program also helps students a lot during the research and dissertation stages. After finishing core and field courses, we start working on our research topics. We meet with our advisors regularly. I usually meet with mine every week or every other week. These meetings help me stay on track and improve my work. My professors are always willing to give feedback and answer my questions. We also present our research in seminars and get useful comments from our colleagues. All these types of support make the process easier to manage and less stressful. It also helps me feel more confident about my progress.

Being involved in student organizations like the Economics Student Association (ESA) made a big difference too. ESA organizes events like seminars and casual get-togethers which gave me the chance to meet other students outside of class. During my first year, these events helped me feel like I belonged. Over time, they helped me feel more connected and valued as a student in the program.

Now, as I look ahead to finishing my degree, I feel proud to be part of this community. The Economics program at SIUC is challenging, but it also gives you a lot of support. If you enjoy working with others and learning in a diverse environment, I think you will feel at home here too. That is how I felt from the beginning.

Students' Perspectives — Timothy Sunny



My name is Timothy Sunny; I am a senior majoring in economics with a minor in finance, specializing in Law and Economics. Originally from India, I was born and raised in Oman, and currently I call Carbondale, Illinois my home.

I've always been fascinated by how businesses operate, how the government and economy function, and the ways in which consumer behavior influences the market. I am particularly appreciative to the College of Business and Analytics for providing opportunities for participation in extracurricular activities and for promoting wide exposure to various professions. I decided to study economics after taking an introductory macroeconomics course at my community college and realizing the potential of the major in my professional life.

Being given the chance to serve on the Dean's Student Advisory Council has also given me the ability to organize and carry out decisions in order to comprehend the needs of students while also meeting and interacting with others who have chosen a degree that is similar to mine. Being a part of the Saluki Student Investment Fund on

campus allows me to apply knowledge I have gained from my economics classes to better understand the larger economic aspects affecting the businesses I look into for possible investments. Additionally, I volunteered at the Saluki Food Pantry and my church as a way to give back to the community. My experiences and activities at SIU have supported my development and helped me prepare for future opportunities.

Being part of SIU over the past three years has been a transformative and significant experience. I am incredibly appreciative of the chances I have been given and the Economics program's ongoing guidance. I think the experiences have provided me with the exposure I need to succeed in my corporate endeavors.

GO SALUKIS!!!



Faculty News: Accomplishments in 2024-2025

Dr. Zsolt Becsi

➤ Becsi, Zsolt & Ige, Olaniyi, 2025. "U.S. price convergence: Faster than expected," *Economics Letters*, Elsevier, vol. 255(C). DOI: 10.1016/j.econlet.2025.112456

Dr. Hundanol Kebede

➤ Kebede, Hundanol (2025) "Import trade liberalization and structural transformation: Evidence from China" *World Bank Economic Review*.

Dr. AKM Mahbub Morshed

➤ "External Debt Sustainability and Institutions: A Model-Based Approach," *International Journal of Finance and Economics*, 2025 (in press) (with Nachiket Thakkar).

Dr. Kevin Sylwester

➤ AlBeshier, H., Lahrech, A., Juusola, K., & Sylwester, K. (2025). Nation brand distance and trade flows: A structural gravity model approach. *Australian Journal of Management*
<https://doi.org/10.1177/03128962251331081>

Dr. Alison Watts

➤ Watts, A., "Auctioning off a Non-Rivalrous Good with Interference." *Games* 15, 26, 2024.

Welcome to our new professor, Dr. Soo Jeong Lee



Dr. Soo Jeong Lee joined the Economics Program this fall as an Assistant Professor of Economics. She earned her Ph.D. in Economics from Michigan

State University and holds an M.A. and B.S. in Economics from Sungkyunkwan University, South Korea.

Her primary research interests are in econometrics and the economics of education, with a focus on developing causal inference methods and applying them to education policy.

Prior to her doctoral studies, she worked at the Korea Technology Finance Corporation, a government-affiliated firm, where she supported innovative tech startups through credit guarantees and consulting services.

Her industry background motivates her research and also inspires her teaching. She remembers the difficulty of connecting technical theory with practical applications as a student, and now she strives to bridge that gap for her own students. "What excites me most about teaching is helping students connect econometric tools with real world questions," she said. "I want them to see how what they are learning can be used to answer meaningful problems."

Master's and Ph.D. Graduates

Academic Year 2024-2025

Samiha Tariq (M)	Summer 2024	Evan Bryant (M)	Spring 2025
Weikang Zhang (M)	Summer 2024		
Anthony Baglino (M)	Fall 2024	Kofi Asuako (Ph.D.)	Summer 2025
Erron Johnson (M)	Fall 2024	Gautam Biswas (Ph.D.)	Summer 2025
Miranda Kight (M)	Fall 2024	Lauren Johnson (M)	Summer 2025
Thabang Makau (M)	Fall 2024		
Tanzila Sultana (M)	Fall 2024		



Economics Student Association



The Economic Student Association is a non-profit, student-led association with a mission of enhancing the educational as well as social experience of economics students through mentoring, guidance and providing academic related information.

The Association takes the responsibility of publishing this Newsletter and assists in organizing lectures and seminars. ESA also helps the faculty of the program, by giving a venue for students to voice concerns and thereby helping faculty to improve their teaching. Each semester new entering students express their appreciation to the invaluable advice and mentoring provided by senior members.

Members of the Economics Student Association are graduate students in the Economics Program seeking a Masters or a Doctorate degree. The ESA is organized by the ESA Officers (see current list), all of whom are graduate students. The officers are elected by fellow graduate students to perform unique duties for the organization. All graduate students are encouraged to join and get involved with the program activities.

Membership is FREE, and you can find a place to belong and to have fun! You can discuss concerns and have questions answered by other students, fellow graduate students who have "been there before." Participation is a great way to meet people and make new friends.

2024-2025 ESA Officers

President:

Mahesh Dhole

Vice-President:

Justin Tovilode

Secretary/Treasurer:

Basirat Hammed

Entertainment Committee

Representative/Public Relations Officer:

Anusha Illukkumbura

Computer Committee Representative:

Wahid Haider

Faculty Recruitment Committee

Representative:

Amri Asmara

Graduate Studies Committee:

Yaren Gocer

Graduate and Professional Student

Council Representative:

Obad Asare