



University of
Pittsburgh

Department of Economics
Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences

PANTHERNOMICS

Spring 2024

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Dear colleagues, students, alumni, and friends:

Spring brings new energy every year. But nothing parallels the energy our faculty and students bring to our classrooms and our research. We feel privileged to be part of a strong and ambitious department that deeply cares about its mission.

In this spring issue of our newsletter, we feature Professor [Richard Van Weelden's](#) research on political polarization. We also spotlight Teaching Professor [Svitlana Maksymenko](#), who directs Pitt's Study Abroad Program in Czech Republic and Poland. Emeritus Professor [Jack Ochs](#) tells us about his lifelong learning endeavors.

Current students featured in this issue include PhD students and 2024 Mellon Fellowship winners [Jun Hyun Ji](#), [Garrett Kohno](#) and [Yu Qiu](#), as well as 2023 Mellon Fellowship winner [Paige Montrose](#); MQE student [Irving Hu](#), our first student in our joint degree with the Master of Public Administration program; and our undergraduate Federal Reserve Bank Challenge Group, who got to meet Federal Reserve Governor Jerome Powell in Washington, D.C. in February!

Among our alumni, this issue presents PhD alum [Utku Unver](#), professor of economics at Boston College, whose recent market design work on a liver exchange program in Turkey has saved many lives; MQE alum [Joseph Karbowski](#), a data scientist at PNC Bank; [Ram Mahalingam](#) (Bachelor of Arts in economics and history, A&S '11), a technology senior manager at Accenture; and [Justin Meservie](#) (Bachelor of Arts in economics and political science, A&S '05), a senior manager at Monitor Deloitte.

In December, the department received a very generous gift with the establishment of the Ravi N. and Shashi R. Rahangdale Endowed Student Impact Fund in Economics. This fund will support a wide range of initiatives and programs that will directly impact the training and experiences of our undergraduate and graduate students. We are extremely grateful and very much looking forward to welcoming Ravi, Sashi, and Sandeep Rahangdale to our department this spring. We will report on this visit in our fall issue.

To close this issue of our newsletter, we report on the 2024 McKay Lecture, delivered

by [John A. List](#), Kenneth C. Griffin Distinguished Service Professor of Economics, on “Leveraging Private Sector Data to Help Inform Major Social Challenges.” We also highlight the makeover of our world-class Pittsburgh Experimental Economics Laboratory ([PEEL](#)). Our fall issue will report on three other very exciting late-spring events: our first-ever PhD alumni conference, our annual internal Pittsburgh Medley conference, and the 2024 Behavioral Economics Design Initiative ([BEDI](#)) conference.

I invite you to enjoy the spring issue of our newsletter!

With my very best wishes for a wonderful summer,

Marla Ripoll
Chair, Department of Economics
University of Pittsburgh

FACULTY NEWS



Get to Know Professor Richard Van Weelden's Research

Professor Van Weelden's research is in applied microeconomic theory and political economy, studying electoral competition, cheap talk communication, delegation, bargaining, and how electoral accountability disciplines and distorts the behavior of policymakers.

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Svitlana Maksymenko's Economics Study Abroad Program in Central Europe

Where can Pitt Economics students plunge into an ancient silver mine in the morning, and toast their adventures with a delicious ice cream while chatting with the mayor of the UNESCO World Heritage town in the afternoon? It's Pitt's Comparative Economics of Central Europe Summer Abroad Program!

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A Lifetime of Learning for Professor Emeritus Jack Ochs

Professor Emeritus Jack Ochs reflects on his decades in the department, his greatest successes, his strongest memories, and his latest activities to stay engaged and connected.

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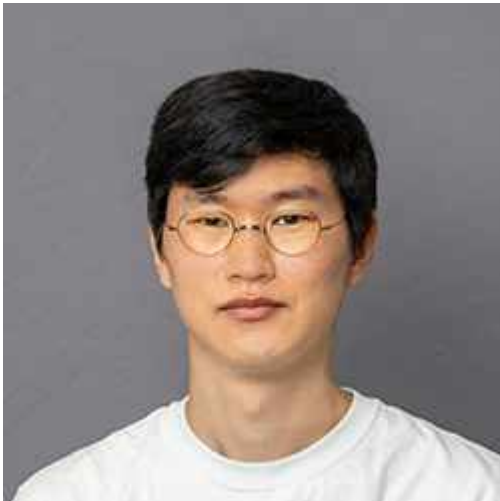
STUDENT NEWS



New Federal Reserve Challenge Group Meets with Fed Chair Jerome Powell

Several Pitt Economics students attended an event at the Federal Reserve Board in Washington, D.C. in February and placed among the semifinalists of their region. The five Student Officers of this Pitt group shared their testimonials with us and how the group has been an enriching experience for each of them.

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Mellon Fellow Jun Hyun Ji on Behavior and Preferences

What does it mean to have a taste for preferences? Jun Hyun Ji, recipient of a Mellon Fellowship for 2024-2025, explores preference(s) in his second-year paper and investigates the behavior influenced by higher-order preferences.

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Introducing Mellon Fellow Garrett Kohno

Garrett Kohno, recipient of a Mellon Fellowship for 2024-2025, discusses his research at the intersection of behavioral and experimental economics, exploring the ways in which beliefs influence individual decision-making.

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Mellon Fellow Paige Montrose on Inequality and Policy

Paige Montrose, recipient of a Mellon Fellowship for 2023-2024, discusses her research interests in gender and racial inequality, specifically understanding how disenfranchised groups were affected by and themselves affected policy change.

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Mellon Fellow Yu Qiu on the Political Economy of Policy Making

Yu Qiu, a recipient of a 2024-2025 Mellon Fellowship, has a research agenda that attempts to understand the political economy of policy making and its implication for people's behaviors.

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Irving Hu: MQE, joint degree, and beyond

Irving Hu is the first joint degree student in the Master of Quantitative Economics (MQE) program and the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs (GSPIA) Master of Public Administration program.

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ALUMNI NEWS



Joesph Karbowski Transitions from Academia to Industry by way of MQE degree

Joe had a full career prior to coming to MQE working as faculty in higher education before transitioning to data analytics at PNC Bank. He discusses how the MQE program helped him gain the necessary skills to make a career change that he enjoys professionally.

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Meet Economics Alum, Justin Meservie

Justin has had a full career working in various roles with the U.S. government before moving to the private sector and working at Deloitte Consulting. He shares his interesting background and career transition and even some tips shared with economics majors.

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Meet 2011 Economics Alum: Ramakrishnan "Ram" Mahalingam

Ram was super involved as an undergraduate in economics at Pitt. He currently works at Accenture in New York City. He is also a frequent speaker to undergraduate economics majors taking Econ 900, where he talks about consulting as a profession. Ram discusses how his degree prepared him for his amazing career.

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PhD Alumni Spotlight Shines on Utku Unver

Utku Unver has enjoyed a successful and acclaimed academic career since earning his PhD here in 2000. He is currently a professor at Boston College, and he talked with us about his research, his advice for the next generation of scholars, and his lasting impressions of Pitt.

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SPRING EVENTS AND UPDATES



John List Continues the Tradition of the McKay Lecture in March 2024

The department welcomed author and University of Chicago economist John List for the annual McKay Lecture on March 29, titled “Leveraging Private Sector Data to Help Inform Major Social Challenges.”

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Renovations Enhance Pittsburgh Experimental Economics Laboratory

The acclaimed Pittsburgh Experimental Economics Laboratory in Posvar Hall got a makeover over the past year, both inside and out.

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