

The Stockbridge Dispatch

Fall 2023

Department of Resource Economics Newsletter

WHAT'S INSIDE

- 2 Undergraduate News
- 5 Graduate News
- 7 Faculty and Staff News
- 11 Alumni News
- 14 Guest Editorial

The Department of Resource Economics is proud to award Bachelor of Science degrees to 112 graduating students! This hard-working group includes 10 resource economics majors, 92 managerial economics majors, and 10 minors. ResEcon faculty and staff wish them all good luck (even though we are confident that their skills, knowledge, and dedication will carry them in their future careers)!



Letter from Department Chair John Spraggon

Fall 2022–Spring 2023 was an impressive year for ResEc! Dr. Debi Mohapatra's paper "Welfare Effects of Trade Associations: The Case of the Chilean Salmon Export Industry" was awarded the Robert F. Lanzillotti Prize for best paper in antitrust economics at the International Industrial Organization Conference. Graduate student Dhiroj Koirala won the Northeastern Agricultural and Resource Economics Inaugural Outstanding Poster Award for his poster "Energy Poverty and Household Well-Being: Panel Data Evidence from Nepal." Ruth Glickman DeLisle won the Nicola Mare Usher SBS Outstanding Advising Award. Three of our graduate students completed their degrees and have accepted job offers: Emma Grazier at Industrial Economics as an associate in quantitative energy policy, Augusto Espin Tobar at UBS Financial Services as a research equity associate and Ming Ge as a post-doctoral researcher at the University of Florida. We also had an impressive number of our faculty publishing important papers with both high academic impact and broader public impact as well, including papers in the *Journal of Health Economics*, *American Economic Journal*, and the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

This past year also brought some major changes to the department! We welcomed two new faculty members: Drs. Tina Andarge (University of Maryland, College Park), and Brandyn Churchill (Vanderbilt University.) We also welcomed Nancy Robinson as the new office administrator, Srabana Gupta as lecturer, and Kellie Nicholas as our new scheduling officer. Kellie also brings expertise in marketing which has been hugely valuable. On a sadder note, we said goodbye to Sophie Williamson, our former scheduling officer, who has moved into the journalism department as their department administrator. We also said goodbye to two of our faculty members, Vini Singh and Matt Woerman, who are off to positions at Carnegie Mellon University, and Colorado State University respectively.

The Department of Resource Economics continues to do great things. We have excellent undergraduate students engaged with internships, studying abroad, and getting great jobs. We have award-winning staff and faculty doing impactful, cutting-edge work.

"We look forward to the Department of Resource Economics continuing to grow and becoming one of the top places for applied economics research in the nation!"



Colby Gray and John Spraggon with undergraduate speaker Mahek Ghelani



Resource Economics Hosts Women in Economics Events

Women in Economics (WIE) is a joint effort between the Resource Economics Department and the Economics Department to empower women+ in the field through scholarship, networking, and opportunity.

In the fall, WIE hosted a large-scale networking event at the Old Chapel, with alumni from the Donahue Institute, Deloitte, IBM, Causewave Community Partners, Analog Devices, Ampion, Inc., and The Mentor Network. Eight alums, new and old, hosted tables, and in speed-networking fashion, ~40 undergraduate students rotated amongst them, getting to meet alumni in several different industries and applying their Economics backgrounds in different ways. There was resoundingly positive feedback for this event, and many connections were made between alumni and current students!

The students who attended were clearly engaged, and the small group conversations before and after were lively, vulnerable, and authentic.

The spring event featured Resource Economics' own Assistant Professor of Health Economics Manasvini Singh who presented on "Women in Economics: Fixing the Leaky Pipeline," a talk that examined data about why there are so few women in economics, how they "leak" out of the pipeline along the way, and evaluating evidence-based strategies on how this can be fixed. Professor Singh's presentation was rich with relevant data, and blended this evidence alongside tales of her own personal trajectory in the field. She provided several proven "low hanging fruit" solutions that allow for big change with little cost/effort, and broke down convoluted charts to make them understandable to everyone in attendance. The students who attended were clearly engaged, and the small group conversations before and after were lively, vulnerable, and authentic.

Undergraduate News

Departmental Senior Send-Off



In mid-May, students graduating in 2023 were joined by their departmental faculty and staff for a party celebrating the culmination of their time here at UMass in Resource Economics. Students snacked on pastries, received their graduation pins, and shared with each other what's next on their respective journeys. It was also a time of reflection and gratitude: students shared memories on a board of favorite departmental experiences, and there was an opportunity to take and write "thank you" notes to someone who helped them along their journey, which many of our seniors took advantage of.

We wish much luck to the class of 2023 — keep in touch!



Undergraduate Awards



Undergraduate Awards Resource Economics

Rising Researcher Award: Kaleigh Hill

Field Scholar Award: Jordan Story

Helen Knowlton Scholarship:

Christiana Brand; Kelly McMahan; Luke O'Brien

Marjorie Merchant Scholarship: Sam Curnyn; An Nguyen

Oreana Merriam Scholarship: Nicole Ojugbana

Helen Whittier Scholarship: Kehinde Adelu; Akanksha Sharma

Faculty Award for Academic Excellence:

Anthony Papageorgiou; Ariel Waldman

Outstanding Leadership and Service Award: Hannah Guerin

Academic Achievement Award: Patrick O'Connor

Nominated

21st Century Leadership Award: Ariel Waldman

Senior Leader: Alex Smith

Undergraduate Speakers

Sam Curnyn

Mahek Ghelani

More information about our undergraduate program can be found at umass.edu/resec/undergraduate-program.

Kaleigh Hill Recognized as UMass Amherst Rising Researcher

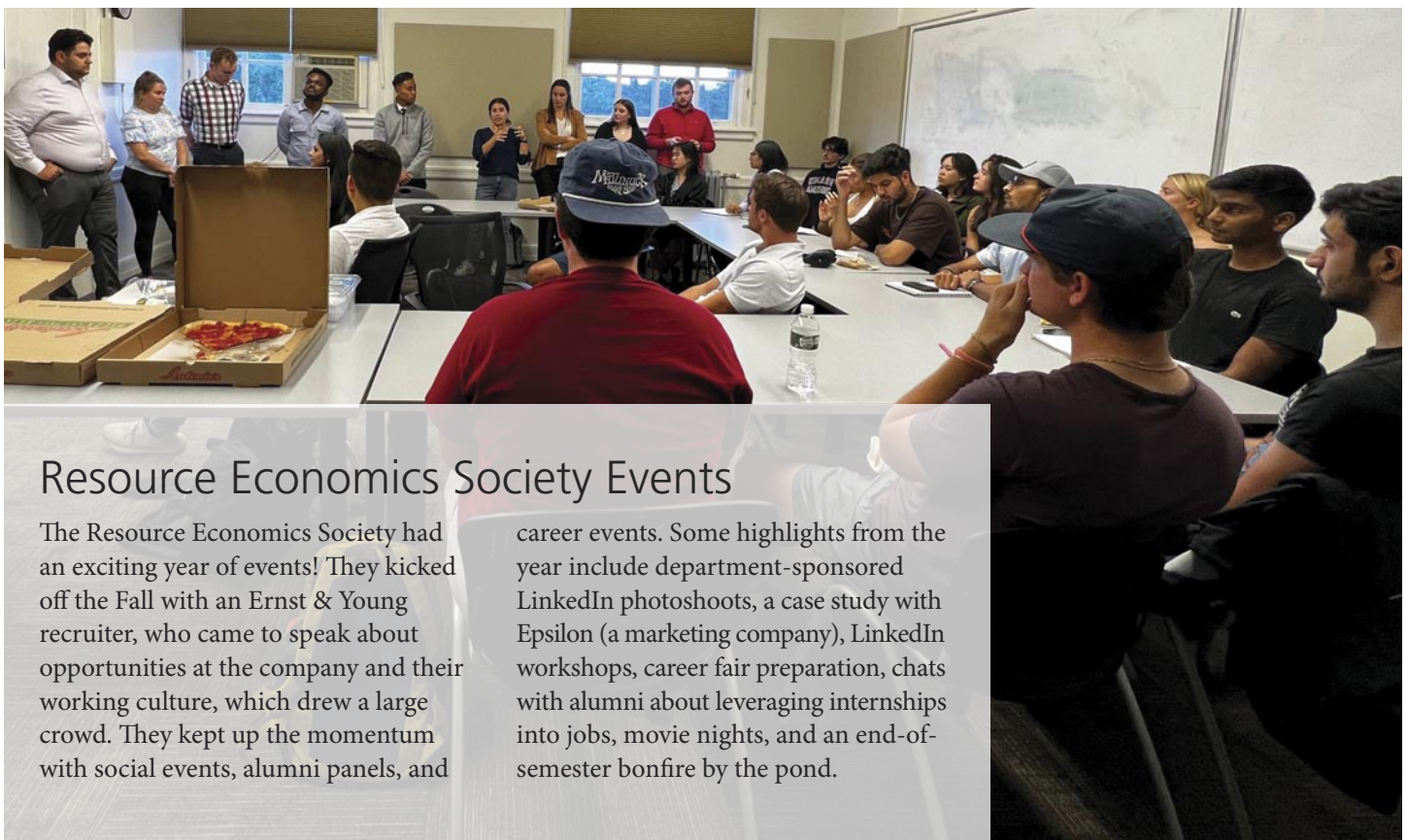
Kaleigh Hill (BS Resource Economics '23) was awarded the UMass Amherst Rising Researcher award. This award recognizes undergraduate students who excel in research, challenge their intellect, and exercise exceptional creativity. Kaleigh's research on renewable energy won her this recognition. Kaleigh has studied the drivers of and barriers to residential solar adoption, the impacts of net metering policies on households in Massachusetts, and the costs and benefits of a proposed solar farm in Amherst, Massachusetts. For her honors thesis, Kaleigh examined whether household income is correlated with participation in energy efficiency retrofit programs in Holyoke, Massachusetts. When asked what drew her to this field of study, Kaleigh said "As a lifelong nature enthusiast, I have always aspired to a career in working to improve sustainability and the health of the natural environment."

My coursework in the Department of Resource Economics emphasized the importance of sound public policy to achieving environmental goals. The more I have learned about policy impacts and implementation, the more exciting I find this field. I love the challenge of balancing the needs of the economy with the needs of the environment and its inhabitants." After obtaining her undergraduate degree, Kaleigh worked for the office of Massachusetts State Senator Jamie Eldridge as an environmental policy intern. Kaleigh is now an environmental specialist at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Learn more about Kaleigh Hill's research here: www.umass.edu/gateway/article/advancing-renewable-energy-through-research.



"I love the challenge of balancing the needs of the economy with the needs of the environment and its inhabitants."



Resource Economics Society Events

The Resource Economics Society had an exciting year of events! They kicked off the Fall with an Ernst & Young recruiter, who came to speak about opportunities at the company and their working culture, which drew a large crowd. They kept up the momentum with social events, alumni panels, and

career events. Some highlights from the year include department-sponsored LinkedIn photoshoots, a case study with Epsilon (a marketing company), LinkedIn workshops, career fair preparation, chats with alumni about leveraging internships into jobs, movie nights, and an end-of-semester bonfire by the pond.



Ming Ge, Emma Grazier, Augusto Espin Tobar

Congratulations to our new PhD graduates! Ming Ge started as a postdoctoral researcher at the Food and Resource Economics Department at the University of Florida in Gainesville. Emma Grazier joined Industrial Economics as an associate in quantitative energy policy in Boston, Massachusetts. Augusto Espin Tobar joined UBS Financial Services as a research equity associate in New York City.

Graduate Students Presented at Several Conferences This Past Year

Xiaolin Zhou: “Market Power in Electricity Market: Evidence from Nuclear Refueling Outage,” Association of Environmental and Resource Economists summer conference, May 31–July 2, 2023, Portland, Maine

Jing Gan: “Reactions to FDA Sodium Reduction Guidance: Demand and Supply,” Agricultural and Applied Economics Association Annual Meeting, July 23–25, 2023, Washington, D.C.

Sparshi Srivastava: “Temperature, Mental Health, and Individual Crises: Evidence from the Crisis Text Line,” Association of Environmental and Resource Economists summer conference, May 31–July 2, 2023, Portland, Maine and American Society of Health Economists annual conference, June 11–14, 2023, St. Louis, Missouri

Gayan Udugama: “Learning about Flood Risk: Hurricane Sandy and NYC Flood Insurance Purchases,” Association of Environmental and Resource Economists summer conference, May 31–July 2, 2023, Portland, Maine

Prashikdivya Gajbhiye: “Groundwater Externality of Large-scale Surface Irrigation Project in India,” Association of Environmental and Resource Economists summer conference, May 31–July 2, 2023, Portland, Maine

Juliana Unda Segura: “Assessing the Impact of a Unit-based Pricing Program on Waste Generation in Massachusetts,” Northeastern Agricultural and Resource Economics Association annual meeting, June 11–13, 2023, Annapolis, Maryland. “Between Group Cooperation to Deter a Catastrophic Event,” New England Experimental Economics Workshop, June 15–16, 2023, Middlebury, Vermont

Awards

Dhroj Koirala, a PhD candidate in resource economics, has won the Northeastern Agricultural and Resource Economics Association’s (NAREA) 2023 Outstanding Poster Award for “Energy Poverty and Household Well-being: Panel Data Evidence from Nepal.” “Koirala’s work is quite interesting and the poster is very well constructed,” notes the award committee.

More information about our graduate program can be found at umass.edu/resec/academics/graduate-program.



Graduate Students Honored with Teaching Awards

Jing Gan and **Gayan Udugama** were awarded the Vijay Bhagavan Teaching Assistant of Distinction Award in a ceremony held May 19, 2023. Bernie Morzuch, who retired in 2022 after more than 40 years as a professor in the department, returned to campus to talk about the history of the award and share fond memories of Vijay Bhagavan for whom the award is named after.

Jing joined the department as a PhD student in the Fall of 2018. He was recognized for his efforts in helping instructors in Resource Economics 452: Industrial Organization. Professors in the course noted Jing's proactive attitude, leadership, and dedication. Jing was also a crucial team player in transitioning to online learning during the pandemic.

Gayan also joined the department as a PhD student in Fall 2018. The professor who nominated him noted that Gayan is a caring and patient individual who takes time to address students' needs. He also goes the extra mile when it comes to grading, identifying the concepts that are not well understood and discussing these with professor and students.

Professors who supervised both Jing and Gayan emphasized the exemplary work of both graduate students, which is reflective of Vijay's actions as a teaching assistant when he was a graduate student in the department. This award is endowed through the generosity of Vijay's parents, Anuradha and V.S. (Manny) Bhagavan, in memory of their beloved son.

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Congratulations Dhiroj Koirala!

Dhiroj and his wife welcomed their first child, Adhrit Raj Koirala, last July. Your Resource Economics family wishes your new family the very best.

New Faculty and Staff



Tihitina (Tina) Andarge

The Department of Resource Economics welcomes new Environmental and Development Economics Professor Tihitina (Tina) Andarge. Tina grew up in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and northern Virginia. She received her BS from the University of Virginia, double majoring in environmental sciences and economics. She holds a PhD in agricultural and resource economics from the University of Maryland College Park.

Tina currently teaches RES-ECON 102: Introduction to Resource Economics, and RES-ECON 472: Advanced Topics in Environment and Resource Economics. For her intro class, she hopes her students leave knowing how to approach real-world issues using analytical tools. For her upper-level course, she works towards helping her students feel confident in

their coding skills, differentiating causal impacts from non-causal impacts, and evaluating empirical research designs.

Tina's research examines issues in environmental and development economics with an emphasis on policy implementation. This interests her because "weak points in various aspects of environmental policy implementation can limit the extent to which a policy achieves its desired outcome." Examples include monitoring and enforcement, manipulable thresholds in

policy design, and environmental justice. Although the majority of her research is devoted to water pollution, conclusions have wider implications.

During her undergraduate career, Tina interned in Kigali, Rwanda, at the African Development Bank, which gave her skills that can't be taught in a class. She loves being able to teach students how to be independent thinkers, while providing them with analytical and quantitative tools they can use to understand the world. She finds it extremely rewarding to see her students grow over the course of a semester.

Tina believes the field of resource economics is important to learn because it "provides powerful analytical and quantitative tools that can be used to provide insight for the pressing issues facing society." She started in resource economics at UMass as a post-doctoral research associate in the summer of 2020 under the supervision of Professor David Keiser. From this experience, she realized how important the support from her colleagues within the Department of Resource Economics was and chose to remain in such a welcoming environment.

Outside of the classroom, Tina spends much of her time watching college basketball and following college basketball analytics. She enjoys traveling, music, dancing, kayaking, hiking, food, coffee, and jet skiing. Since moving to New England, she has also found immense joy in skiing. Welcome Tina!

Learn more about our faculty at umass.edu/resec/faculty.

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Brandyn Churchill

The Department of Resource Economics enthusiastically welcomes Professor Brandyn Churchill. Brandyn grew up in a small town in West Virginia, completed his BA at Washington and Lee University, earned his MA at San Diego State University, and his PhD in economics from Vanderbilt University. He loves teaching because of his passion for captivating an audience; the joy of watching students' critical thinking skills grow throughout

the term is equal to that of getting to know them all. His end goal as a professor is to simply help students become better thinkers.

Brandyn is currently teaching two sections of managerial economics (RES-ECON 428). He has extensive research experience in the field of health economics. His overall focus is examining "the roles of information and cost in shaping health care decisions," along with "exploring how

public policies and social comparisons affect self-image, attitudes toward beauty, and weight-related behaviors." Most, if not all, of his publications are in well-known journals such as the *Journal of Health Economics*, *American Journal of Health Economics*, *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, etc.

Brandyn encourages people to dive into the field of resource economics because it "offers a unified decision-making framework informed by theory that can be tested in data." These methods are useful in a wide range of situations, so anybody making a decision can gain from learning the tools needed for any type of analysis. Brandyn's passion for economics stems from a desire to be involved in public policy while wanting a "quantitatively rigorous major that would be marketable to employers."

Brandyn chose UMass because he loves the people who make up the resource economics department. He was also attracted to the growing health economics focus, which he aspires to help continue growing. UMass is also conveniently located near the Amtrak line, giving Brandyn more flexibility to visit his wife in Delaware!

Brandyn's genuine joy for research is captivating. When asked about hobbies outside of school, Brandyn responded with "honestly, research is my hobby. I cannot imagine doing anything else, and I never get bored with it. In many ways, I am lucky, because I get paid to do my hobby." Besides research, he enjoys lifting, running, and watching new theater shows.

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Meet our new Academic Programs Manager: Kellie Nicholas

The Department of Resource Economics is happy to introduce new Academic Programs Manager Kellie Nicholas. Kellie grew up in Turners Falls, Massachusetts, and is currently residing in Erving, Massachusetts. She holds a bachelor of arts in legal studies from Bay Path College and is actively working on a master's in marketing from Southern New Hampshire University. Before coming to UMass Amherst, she was an academic programs coordinator for LARP (Landscape Architecture & Regional Planning). Her interest in marketing began at LARP. Her job entailed looking at course enrollment numbers and attempting to determine why a course would have low attendance. Then, she began to consider "how we [can] get our programs and majors out there so that people know we exist."

Kellie appreciates the diversity of roles she takes on within the resource economics department. She schedules classes, works with the graduate programs division to support students as they pursue graduate degrees, and manages the department's marketing efforts. She's motivated by the variety of work with which she's engaged every day. As she put it, "one day it could be marketing, the next day scheduling, or connecting with grad students about their progress, or a combination of all three." Kellie is proud to be involved in the Amherst community. She grew up living in the area and would often come to campus with her father, who worked at UMass Amherst for over 40 years. She vividly remembers coming to "Bring Your Daughter to Work Day" at UMass when they used to hold



such events. She has appreciated the campus environment for as long as she can remember, especially because it's been a great place to work for her family and it provides so many opportunities.

Outside of school, Kellie spends her time taking care of her wonderful family. She has two kids and two dogs. When she is not attending sports events for her kids, she enjoys learning new things. Right now, she is working on learning graphic design for her marketing passions. The resource economics department is delighted to have Kellie!

Selected Faculty Publications AY 2022–23

Baragwanath, K., Bayi, E., and **Shinde, N.** "Collective property rights lead to secondary forest growth in the Brazilian Amazon." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 120(22), e2221346120, 2023.

Bauner, C., and **Lavoie, N.** "Competing with fad products: erroneous health beliefs and market outcomes." *European Review of Agricultural Economics*, 50(3), 879–917, 2023.

Bauner, C., and **Lavoie, N.** "The costs of eating gluten-free." *Applied Economics Letters*, 1–5, 2022.

Candelo, N., **de Oliveira, A.C.M.**, and Eckel, C. "Trust among the poor: African Americans trust their neighbors, but are less trusting of public officials." *Public Choice*, 1–26, 2022.

Carpenter, C. S., **Churchill, B. F.**, and Marcus, M. "Bad lighting: Effects of youth indoor tanning prohibitions." *Journal of Health Economics*, 88, 102738, 2023.

Cason, Tim, **Stranlund, J. K.**, and de Vries, F. "Investment Incentives in Tradeable Pollution Markets with Price Controls." *Journal of the Association of Environmental and Resource Economists* 10(2), 2023.

Chan, N.W., and Globus-Harris, I. "On consumer incentives for energy-efficient durables." *Journal of Environmental Economics and Management*, 119: 102813, 2023.

Christensen, P., **Keiser, D. A.**, and Lade, G. E. "Economic effects of environmental crises: Evidence from Flint, Michigan." *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*, 15(1), 196–232, 2023.

Churchill, B. F., Dickinson, A., Mackay, T., and Sabia, J. J. "The effect of e-verify laws on crime." *ILR Review*, 75(5), 1294–1320, 2022.

Crago, C. L., Grazier, E., and Breger, and D. "Income and racial disparities in financial returns from solar PV deployment." *Energy Economics*, 106409, 2022.

Fitzsimmons, J.A., Lass, D., Minifie, K., and Kinchla, A. "Financial Feasibility of Selling Frozen Produce in Local and Regional Markets." *Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems*. 1–16, 2023.

Gao, X. S., Harrison, G. W., and Tchernis, R. "Behavioral welfare economics and risk preferences: A Bayesian approach." *Experimental Economics*, 26(2), 273–303, 2023.

Hargrave, J. R., Harper, R. W., Butler, B. J., and **Mullins, J. T.** "Municipal Forest Program Management in the United States of America: A Systematic Review." *Forests*, 14(1), 35, 2022.

Huff, E.S., **de Oliveira, A.C.M.**, Markowitz, E., Guckian, M., and Lomonoco, L. "Family forest owner perceptions of wildfire and invasive pest risk: the role of psychological distance." *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*. 83: 103417, 2022.

Koh, J., and **Rojas, C.** "Multi-Unit Ownership and Market Power: A Study of the Texas Hotel Industry." *Managerial and Decision Economics*, 43, 8, 4087–105, 2022.

Quezada, F., and **Chan, N.W.** "A framework for estimating the impact of monitoring and enforcement on (unobserved) illicit extraction." *Environmental and Resource Economics*, 84:627–647, 2023.

Rezvani, E., **Rojas, C.** "Firm Responsiveness to Consumers' Reviews: The Effect on Online Reputation." *Journal of Economics and Management Strategy*, 31, 4, 898–922, 2022.

Skidmore, M., **Andarge, T.**, and Foltz, J. "Effectiveness of Local Regulations on Nonpoint Source Pollution: Evidence from Wisconsin Dairy Farms." *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 2023.

Vossler, C. A., Dolph, C. L., Finlay, J. C., **Keiser, D. A.**, Kling, C. L., and Phaneuf, D. J. "Valuing improvements in the ecological integrity of local and regional waters using the biological condition gradient." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 120(18), e2120251119, 2023.

Wang, L. X. "Global drug diffusion and innovation with the medicines patent pool." *Journal of Health Economics*, 85, 102671, 2022.

Woerman, M. "Linking carbon markets with different initial conditions." *Journal of Environmental Economics and Management*, 119, 102820, 2023.

Faculty Research Highlights and Staff Awards

Lucy Xiaolu Wang wins 2023 IHEA Adam Wagstaff Prize

Resource Economics Assistant Professor Lucy Xiaolu Wang won the 2023 IHEA Adam Wagstaff Prize for her paper “Procurement Institutions and Essential Drug Supply in Low- and Middle-Income Countries.” The Adam Wagstaff Prize is awarded to the best IHEA Congress paper on the economics of healthcare financing or delivery in a low- or middle-income country(ies) that is written and presented by a researcher from a low- or middle-income country (LMIC). This prestigious prize is awarded to honor Adam’s lifelong commitment to research that analyzes, promotes and monitors health system efficiency and equity in LMICs and improves the health of the world’s poorest.

Luke Bloomfield and Lucy Xiaolu Wang receive Mutual Mentoring Micro Grants

Luke Bloomfield and Lucy Xiaolu Wang are recipients of 2022–2023 Mutual Mentoring Micro Grants. Offered by the Office of Faculty Development (OFD), the mutual mentoring micro grants provide funding to University faculty and librarians for the purpose of developing and deepening their mentoring supports, encouraging them to develop strong professional networks and grow as researchers, teachers, and leaders in their fields. OFD mutual mentoring micro grants provide up to \$1,500 for one year to individual faculty members.

Luke Bloomfield, senior lecturer and junior year writing instructor, will use his funds to deepen understanding of the potential impacts of AI language modeling technology on education. Lucy Xiaolu Wang, assistant professor, will use her funds for international travel to work in-person with research collaborators and expand professional mentoring networks.

Ruth Glickman DeLisle wins SBS Outstanding Advising Award

Senior Academic Advisor Ruth Glickman DeLisle was among this year’s SBS Outstanding Advising Award winners. Colleagues and students of Ruth Glickman DeLisle nominated her in recognition of her exceptional work as an academic advisor and beyond. After staffing changes left the advising team short-staffed, DeLisle stepped up to the plate, taking on various roles and responsibilities required to meet the department’s needs. Her colleagues describe her as flexible and supportive, always willing to share her knowledge and experience with those around her. One student notes, “On behalf of all the students she helps, we are very thankful for her help and hard work, and it does not go unnoticed.” DeLisle’s outstanding work as an advisor has positively impacted countless students, and she truly deserves this award.

Christoph Bauner and Rong Rong named 2023–2024 ISSR Scholars

Assistant Professor Christoph Bauner and Associate Professor Rong Rong were named ISSR Scholars. Professor Bauner’s project is titled “Poverty and Inflation — Differential Effects Across Package Sizes” while Professor Rong’s project is titled “Promote Grassroots Green Energy with Behavioral Interventions: A Randomized Controlled Trial.” The program aims to support professors in developing a strong research grant proposal. In addition to attending in-depth sessions on grant writing and receiving valuable peer feedback on their proposals, ISSR Scholars are also given unique opportunities to consult with nationally

recognized experts. All faculty benefit from intensive support from ISSR’s research methodology and grant support professionals and from the interdisciplinary communication and learning that occurs under the program. The time, resources and relationships available to ISSR Scholars has had a demonstrated impact on promising faculty careers, allowing scholars to develop a successful large grant proposal by the end of their scholar year — and raise more than \$38 million in research funding since 2012.

Debi Prasad Mohapatra’s paper wins Robert F. Lanzillotti Prize

A paper co-authored by Debi Prasad Mohapatra, assistant professor, has been awarded the Robert F. Lanzillotti Prize for best paper in antitrust economics at the International Industrial Organization Conference. The paper, “Welfare Effects of Trade Associations: The Case of the Chilean Salmon Export Industry,” examines the welfare consequences of a trade association in an exporting country on consumers in destination countries. Mohapatra collaborated on the paper with Manuel Estay, who earned a doctorate in resource economics from UMass Amherst in 2021 and is now an assistant professor at the University of Concepción in Chile, and Thomas Eisenberg of the University of Delaware.

The winning paper was selected by a committee of experts from the relevant papers accepted for presentation at the conference. The prize was awarded at the 21st Annual International Industrial Organization Conference April 21–23 in Washington, D.C.

Where Are They Now?



Outside my office in New York City

Ajay Dawani

Ajay Dawani graduated *summa cum laude* from UMass Amherst in 2022 as a resource economics major. Born and raised in Karachi, Pakistan, Ajay originally started his undergraduate career as an economics major but decided to switch to resource economics because of its “extensive application to the real world and focus on data and empirical analysis.” He also completed an information technology minor, which enhanced his quantitative and technical skills. He was a student speaker at the UMass Class of 2022 SBS Senior Celebration ceremony, a recipient of the Gerald F. Scanlon Student Employee of the Year Award, a recipient of the LeBovidge Undergraduate Research Award and the Economics Undergraduate Research Fellowship, and an assistant coordinator at the United Nations Global Sustainable Solutions Winter School.

Since graduating, Ajay has been employed by Deloitte as a strategy analyst in New York City. He presently works in the mergers and acquisitions sector and is a member of the consulting practice. He says the work is fast paced with a steep learning curve, keeping things riveting on a daily basis. He loves the field of consulting because “there is potential to make a tangible impact by helping solve complex business challenges and the opportunity to work in a diverse set of industries is extremely valuable.” After a few years of consulting experience, Ajay intends to pursue an MBA degree.

Reflecting on his time at UMass, Ajay fondly remembers the resource economics department faculty, staff, and advisors. Every member of the department is, in his words, “phenomenal.” He also found the Resource Economics Society events to be immensely helpful in his post-

graduation path, teaching him how to network in business and market himself. His professors and mentors encouraged him to work toward his immediate objectives. In addition to enhancing his work ethic and quality, the institution’s rigorous coursework requirements also made his job applications more persuasive and successful. Managerial Economics (428) and Computing Foundations to Frontiers (112) were two of Ajay’s favorite classes. One of his favorite professors, Dr. Bernie Morzuch, taught RES-ECON 428. As a capstone course, it successfully “integrated the work of foundational economic theory and statistics classes and applied it to real-world data sets to derive effective business decisions.” The curriculum has a wide range of applications, and each student develops analytical abilities that are highly valued in today’s corporate environment. RES-ECON 112 is a course that focuses on database management systems, one of which being Excel — one of the most important database systems in use today. As a previous head TA for RES-ECON 112 for three years, Ajay believes this course focuses on developing team-oriented skills that are great for navigating the job market after college.

Ajay was interested in economic and environmental research outside of the classroom as well, which led him to apply for a research assistantship under the direction of Dr. Marta Vicarelli. Their research concentrated on Massachusetts’s Community Choice Energy Aggregation (CCE) initiatives and emerging renewable energy trends.

Ajay advises students to take advantage of the wide variety of student groups that UMass has to offer. There are clubs for everything from consulting to sports. Students should look for groups and organizations that capture their interests and set aside time to participate in them.

Katherine Wood

Katherine Wood graduated in 2022 with a BS in resource economics. Born and raised in Marlborough, Massachusetts, Katherine followed her instincts and arrived at UMass Amherst and is glad to have gotten the opportunity to be a student in the resource economics department where she made “lifelong friends!”

After graduation, Katherine has found herself in the ideal situation. She is presently working as a data analyst within the luxury travel industry, her “dream job,” where she intends to stay for the foreseeable future. Right after graduating, Katherine decided to try something new and different while taking online master’s classes in econometrics at UMass; being a substitute teacher for elementary school students. She loves having the opportunity for variety in her work life and she especially loved teaching all ages because of the vast variety of personalities she got to meet. From this experience, she learned that “it’s okay to roam off your path in life to find a fulfilling adventure because when you return to your path

you’ll return with a whole new perspective and transferable skill set.” She believes the opportunity was one of the most important things she’s ever done in her life and recommends trying new things to those undergraduates who feel curious.

From her undergraduate experience, Katherine advises current students to make time in their schedule to seek extra help on homework before it’s due, because resource economics is challenging and rewarding. She describes the work as “numbers puzzles,” so it is very helpful to seek extra assistance when needed. Teachers are always willing to help! In her words, “if you wait to study or do your homework until the last minute you sacrifice lots of answers you could’ve potentially gotten right with just another day or two to have a quick email exchange or office visit, plus the earlier you clarify confusion points the further ahead you already are when it comes time to study.”

Katherine has dedicated time to travel since graduating, and she’s currently living in Portland, Oregon, where she enjoys

snowboarding and the outdoors. She plans to explore more of nature whenever the Pacific Northwest weather is good, including many more excursions through waterfalls, hot springs, deserts, beaches, and more.

Katherine strongly believes that UMass and the Department of Resource Economics helped her get to where she is today. Resource economics gave her the “analytical problem-solving data-driven skill set” that she uses in her job. UMass gave her wonderful lifetime friends and a college experience full of adventures she “fondly looks back on, from seeing students of mine as a TA excel (in learning Excel :)), to going on ski and board trips with hundreds of fellow students, to finding a “family” of five with whom she lived in her college house.

Katherine wants to end off by saying a big thank you to the whole UMass community, especially her professors for “helping her grow into an educated and independent adult” while encouraging her to cherish her experiences.



Snowboarding on Mount Hood, Oregon, me before going to the top!

Ezgi Cengiz

Program: PhD resource economics

Graduated: 2022

Role: Assistant Professor, North Carolina State University

How has your degree helped you with your work? I believe the RESEC community helped me to become a researcher and instructor while I was a PhD student there. This significantly helped with my transition to this new role.

Sam Cutler

Program: BS managerial economics

Graduated: 2021

Role: Internal Wholesaler, MFS Investment Management

How has your degree helped you with your work? The decision-making skills, collaborating skills, and creativity that I learned in my resource economics classes are a great contributor to my success. Learning how people base their investment decisions helps me understand the viewpoint of who I am trying to sell our products to.

Lynn M. Daft

Program: MS resource economics

Graduated: 1963

Role: Currently retired but was formerly the associate director of the Domestic Policy Council in the White House, vice president of Able, Daft, & Early, various other positions in the USDA, OMB, CBO, etc.

How has your degree helped you with your work? A good grounding in economic reasoning, the principles of analysis, and clear, cogent writing skills.

Briana Kane

Program: BS resource economics

Graduated: 2000

Role: Residential, Commercial & Industrial Program Manager, Cape Light Compact

How has your degree helped you with your work? My degree helped me by being able to analyze data to develop effective programs and help shape policy with a human and environmental focus.

Ben LaPoint

Program: BS managerial economics

Graduated: 2020

Role: Business Analyst, Brown Brothers Harriman

How has your degree helped you with your work? Analytical skills developed through coursework that promotes operations and info management, career development, business statistics, industrial organization, accounting, corporate management, and promotional strategy.

Lindsey McCauley

Program: BS resource economics

Graduated: 2018

Role: Secretariat Budget Director for Financial Analysis, Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services

How has your degree helped you with your work? I use the analytical skills I learned from ResEc daily!

Rodolfo Magno

Program: MS resource economics

Graduated: 2013

Role: PhD candidate in business administration (strategy and innovation) and college professor, Instituto Coppead – Federal University of Rio de Janeiro

How has your degree helped you with your work? The resource economics degree has been fundamental in shaping my career and passion for teaching. It marked the beginning of my journey as an educator, providing me with the first opportunity to teach and discover my true vocation. I am deeply grateful for the invaluable experiences gained in the Department of Resource Economics, where I had the privilege of learning from exceptional role models who inspired me in the art of teaching. Their guidance and mentorship have had a profound impact on my approach to education, inspiring me to become the best educator I can be. I owe a significant part of my growth and success in teaching to the supportive and nurturing environment of the resource economics department.

George Schlitz

Program: BS resource economics

Graduated: 1997

Role: Founder, Adaptivity

How has your degree helped you with your work? The ways of thinking I learned in my resource economics studies have been transferable to my work in the business world — where I and my colleagues have to find practical/viable solutions to complex organizational problems. For example, designing and implementing change programs that leverage economic and other benefit-based measures to effect change in systems that have significant disincentives to optimize holistic success.

Kurt Suhs

Program: BS resource economics

Graduated: 1986

Role: CEO, Concierge Cyber

How has your degree helped you with your work? Resource Economics provided me with the educational foundation of practical and applied problem solving skills.

Bob Wilber

Program: BS resource economics

Graduated: 1981

Role: Director of Conservation Services, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs

How has your degree helped you with your work? My resource economics degree has helped me immeasurably by enabling me to identify both causes and solutions to environmental issues that I encounter in the course of my work.

ChatGPT: One Semester Later *by Luke Bloomfield*

For the first time in the history of civilization, something other than a human can create human language.

By now, it is safe to say that most of us have read at least one or two articles about ChatGPT and have a basic understanding of it. For those who are still unsure what it is, GPT stands for “generative pre-trained transformer;” it is a program that has been trained on a massive amount of information to make accurate language predictions. The architecture of the program is a neural network — kind of a digital brain that is designed to perform a specific task — and the program is known as a Large Language Model (LLM), a technology that falls into the category of Artificial Intelligence.

Which is to say, the ChatGPT era is upon us. I cannot remember the last time I went a whole day without it coming up, whether in conversation, as a headline, or in idle thought, because it seems to be everywhere. It is even boring holes through my sleep! Recently, I dreamed that society concluded that ChatGPT was not necessary after all, and OpenAI, the company responsible for ChatGPT, decided to simply shut it down. When I awoke, I experienced that fleeting moment when the dream still seemed real. I was elated that we were going to return to a pre-ChatGPT normalcy, and ChatGPT would be relegated to the category of technology that did not work out, like those Google glasses.

Then reality returned, and as I drank my coffee, I mournfully read that in a poll fifty percent of AI engineers believe there is a ten percent chance that AI will eradicate all humans from earth.

Meanwhile, we must address the immediate concern of how ChatGPT is going to affect education. Indeed, it already is affecting education. Some teachers have banned its use. Some teachers have required its use. Some teachers, like yours truly, first banned it, then did a one-eighty halfway through the semester and allowed it, with provisions.

One thing is clear: Unlike the ChatGPT of my dream, this is not going away.

It is easy to jump down the rabbit hole of AI language models. One does not have to dig deep to find someone claiming it will solve all our problems, while someone else is claiming it will subjugate all our species, if it does not annihilate us all first. Barring either of those possibilities, the most likely scenario is one in which ChatGPT insinuates into our daily lives and

becomes indispensable to the performance of an increasing number of tasks that we once performed ourselves.

Now, ChatGPT, what do you have to say about that?

[*Cue robot voice*] ChatGPT: The paragraph you provided is a thoughtful reflection on the potential impact of AI language models like ChatGPT. It acknowledges the contrasting opinions that often surround new technologies, highlighting the extremes of optimism and pessimism that are often expressed. The statement

that “the most likely scenario is one in which ChatGPT insinuates into our daily lives and becomes indispensable” is a reasonable prediction, given the increasing prevalence of AI language models and the benefits they offer. However, it is important to remember that this integration should be done thoughtfully and with consideration for the potential ethical and social implications.

Thank you, ChatGPT, for this mindless response! As a humble writing instructor in the Department of Resource Economics at UMass Amherst, I might give the previous paragraph the following critique: grammatically competent, a bit hedgy, verging on sycophancy, lacking original thought.

If you, dear reader, like me, have consumed every article in the past year with “AI” or “ChatGPT” in the title, then you may have begun to suspect that we have plateaued in the way we talk about it. At present, public thought about LLMs has described a sigmoidal curve. In the first few months, it all came rushing out — plagiarizing enabler, educational tool, job-creator, job-stealer, great democratizer, democracy-underminer, world savior, existential threat to humanity — and now, we have reached the asymptote of the discourse. Nothing new, as far as I can tell, is being said of late, and I presume we will remain on this plateau until time reveals the true impact of the technology.

Meanwhile, I hope educators and researchers continue to track the impact in their own classes and studies. Long-term studies must be conducted to deeply understand how ChatGPT transforms the way our students learn. Our noble task for the moment, at the least, is to be vigilant, engaged, critical, reflective, and flexible. I will continue to closely observe the changes it is forcing on student learning, and I urge everyone to do the same.

Good luck!

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We would love to hear from you!

Contact resec@resecon.umass.edu with questions about this newsletter, alumni news, and general inquiries.

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