2026 Economics Student Research Fair
Undergraduate Research Abstracts

Department of Economics

Sherry Cai **Poster Location: U1**

Title: Tick Size, Liquidity, and Order Flow Informativeness: Evidence from the SEC's Tick Size Pilot Program

This paper uses the SEC's Tick Size Pilot Program and a difference-in-differences design to study how wider tick sizes affect liquidity and order flow informativeness. Treated stocks saw ~119% wider quoted spreads, yet order flow informativeness remained unchanged. The wider tick raised trading costs mechanically, not by altering information transmission.

Ananya Dondapati **Poster Location: U2**

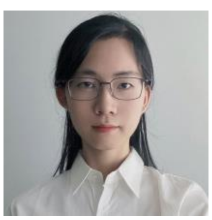
Title: The Effect of SB202 on Voting Access in Georgia

This study uses a difference-in-differences design with county-level EAVS panel data (2004–2024) to estimate the effect of Georgia's SB202 on voting infrastructure. Georgia counties experienced approximately 4-6 fewer precincts relative to comparison states after SB202, with rural counties bearing disproportionately larger per-capita losses, suggesting the law widened geographic disparities in voter access.

Grant Huddleston **Poster Location: U3**

Title: The Effect of Contingent Value Rights on Drug Approval in Biopharma M&A

Contingent value rights (CVRs) in biopharmaceutical M&A are used to bridge valuation disagreements rather than align incentives. Using data from 313 transactions, regression models find that CVRs are associated with 13% to 19% lower drug approval when compared with non-CVR deals, indicating their use is concentrated in higher-risk assets.



Yifeng Jin **Poster Location: U4**

Title: Bitcoin Volatility Spillovers: A Network Analysis of Crypto and Macro-Financial Interconnectedness

This research used a variance decomposition method with LASSO-VAR to calculate the spillover index, which reflects the connectedness, in a network of Bitcoin and various cryptocurrencies, financial market indicators, and macroeconomic indicators. Our analysis reveals a surge in connectedness during global crisis and a separation between financial and cryptocurrencies markets.

Katherine Kennedy **Poster Location: U5**

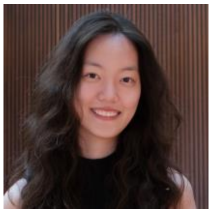
Title: Modeling the Public Health Consequences of Raw-Milk Deregulation: Causal Evidence from Staggered Policy Adoption, 1998-2023

Using novel legal and health data, I found that expanding legal access to raw milk increases illness, outbreaks, and hospitalizations. While values appear small, they translate into meaningful event counts and yield sizable economic costs, highlighting public health risks arising from greater consumer access to unpasteurized dairy products.

Dylan LaBorwit **Poster Location: U6**

Title: Modeling Volatility in Prediction Markets with Jump-Diffusion Processes

We extend prediction-market volatility modeling by adding jump-diffusion shocks. We derive a generalized volatility expression and its closed-form Gaussian approximation, which depends only on price and time to expiration. We empirically validate that the closed-form expression approximates our general form and characterizes volatility well across a diverse set of markets.



Chenyang (Lucy) Liu **Poster Location: U7**

Title: Beyond the Entrepreneur: Household Welfare Effects of Capital Grants in Post-Conflict Iraq

This thesis estimates the household welfare effects of a one-time $2,000 capital grant for entrepreneurs in post-conflict Iraq using data from a randomized controlled trial. Grant assignment produces no detectable effects on children's education, health, or child labor, but significantly increases women's perceived voice in household decisions.

Liam Martnishn **Poster Location: U8**

Title: The Business Legitimacy Paradox of Counterfeiting: Examining Revenue and Retribution in the U.S. Pharmaceutical and Electronic Sectors, 2000-2015

Examining U.S. counterfeiting (2000–2015), this research identifies a "business legitimacy paradox": business registration increases illicit revenue generation on the scheme-level but also decreases the probability of receiving a monetary fine on the offender-level. Judicial sentencing during this period penalized explicit criminal acts rather than the utilization of business legitimacy.

Sushmita Rajan **Poster Location: U9**

Title: From Crib To Classroom: Evidence from California's 2004 Paid Family Leave Policy

This study examines California's Paid Family Leave (CA-PFL) impact on fourth-grade NAEP math and reading scores (2003–2022) using a difference-in-differences approach. Results show no significant math gains but reading improvements, especially for Hispanic and disadvantaged students, highlighting early parental leave's potential to enhance literacy at an early age.

Elena Sabin **Poster Location: U10**

Title: The Long Road to School: Chinese Investments and Educational Outcomes Among BRI-Participating Countries

Using a staggered difference-in-differences design across 205 countries (2000–2023), this study examines China's Belt and Road Initiative's effect on educational enrollment. BRI participation increases female primary enrollment globally, but reduces secondary enrollment in Sub-Saharan Africa. Transport and energy investments drive secondary gains, while education-labeled investments show no significant effect.

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Graduate Research Abstracts

Johar Cassa **Poster Location: G1**

Title: Short-run Effects of School Infrastructure in a Developing Country: Evidence of the Millennium Schools in Ecuador

Little is known about the effects of school consolidation in developing countries, especially for marginalized students. I study the short-run educational effects of Ecuador’s Millennium School program using a staggered-in-differences approach. I find that treated parishes experienced a significant reduction in dropout with heterogeneous effects across rural and urban areas.

Mohammad Fidakar **Poster Location: G2**

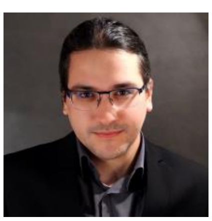
Title: Testing Threshold Criteria for Return Migration After Forced Displacement

Traditional migration models fail to explain why forcibly displaced people don't return even when economic conditions improve. This paper develops and formally tests a threshold model of return migration, showing that for Venezuelan refugees in Colombia, regime change and livelihood stability are non-negotiable preconditions — not tradeable factors — before any push-pull comparison begins.

Juhee Kim **Poster Location: G3**

Title: The Macroeconomic Transmission of Goods and Services Shocks

This paper studies how sectoral shocks propagate to the aggregate economy using a factor-augmented VAR. Services shocks generate more persistent inflation and broader cross-sector spillovers than goods shocks, accounting for a large share of aggregate inflation fluctuations despite lower volatility, highlighting their central role for inflation dynamics and monetary policy.



Guram Lobzhanidze **Poster Location: G4**

Title: Comparative Bayesian Persuasion

I study a communication problem where an agent recommends one of two projects to a decision maker, who has an outside option. The agent ex ante commits to an information transmission structure. I find that for certain asymmetric joint distributions of payoffs, the agent may optimally commit to recommending an inferior project.

Rachel McGhee **Poster Location: G5**

Title: The Housing Market Effects of Data Center Entry: Evidence from Georgia

This project examines how data center entry affects nearby home prices in Georgia. To address selection concerns, I compare locations with proposed projects that were canceled to similar locations where projects proceeded. Georgia’s 2025 statewide political and regulatory shift generated useful within-state variation for identifying the housing market effects of entry.

Niall Peat **Poster Location: G6**

Title: Multiple-Product Firms in Federal Procurement

I investigate the reasons for multiple-product firms in the US Federal Government procurement market. Utilizing rich contract-level data on the universe of procurement contracts in the U.S. I show that a model of firm selection on productivity can jointly explain the productivity premium and wider product scope of firms that deliver cost-plus contracts.

Cristhian Rosales-Castillo **Poster Location: G7**

Title: Reinforcement Learning for Estimating DSGE Models

This paper applies the reinforcement-learning Metropolis-Hastings (RLMH) algorithm proposed by Wang et al. (2025) in the computational statistics literature to DSGE estimation. In a canonical RBC model, RLMH delivers large efficiency gains over random-walk Metropolis-Hastings, increasing effective sample sizes and reducing autocorrelation while preserving posterior accuracy for policy-relevant macroeconomic inference.

Sarah Smyly **Poster Location: G8**

Title: Salary History Bans and Incentives for On-the-Job Human Capital Investment

Salary history bans remove prior compensation as a productivity signal, potentially weakening workers' incentives for elective human capital investment. Survey evidence shows workers more satisfied with their pay invest more in skill development. A signaling model predicts these workers reduce investment under bans. An experimental game will test this prediction.

Jillian Wilkins **Poster Location: G9**

Title: Hospital Responses to Provider Taxes

This paper analyzes how hospitals respond to the introduction of a hospital provider tax, a financial obligation with meaningful financial consequences. I find that the introduction of a hospital provider tax meaningfully increases both hospital expenses and net patient revenue by hospitals now seeing a greater share of Medicaid patients.