



# Economic Update

## Spring 2024

The WMU Department of Economics Annual Newsletter

## Dr. Isabel Ruiz Receives 2023 Economics Alumni Achievement Award

**Dr. Isabel Ruiz** was the recipient of the 2023 Department of Economics Alumni Achievement Award. Each year, the department's faculty nominates a distinguished alumnus for the annual award, acknowledging their notable contributions to academia and the community. The College of Arts and Sciences hosted a ceremony and brunch at Miller Auditorium on campus, welcoming honorees from each college department.



Dr. Isabel Ruiz

Ruiz (MA '02, Ph.D. '06) is an Associate Professor of Political Economy at the University of Oxford. She is a Fellow in Economics at Harris Manchester College, where she is also a Tutorial Fellow and an Adjunct Faculty member at the Blavatnik School of Government. Ruiz is the Associate Editor for the Oxford Review of Economic Policy (OXREP) and the co-convenor of the Economics of Forced Migration Project (Econ-forced). Before her current position, Ruiz was Associate Professor of Political Economy and Director of Studies in Economics in Continuing Education at the University of Oxford and Assistant Professor in Economics at Sam Houston State University.



Dr. Ruiz and Dean Carla Koretsky

Ruiz, who wrote her dissertation under the direction of Dr. Susan Pozo, has research interests in labor, economic development, and the political economy. Her most recent work draws from these three areas and focuses particularly on the economics of migration, with an emphasis on forced migration. As co-convenor of Econ-forced, Ruiz and her colleagues provide quantitative evidence on the impacts of displacement on host communities, the displaced, and the communities of origin. She is currently working on a research project using conjoint survey experiments to increase understanding of the factors that affect individual attitudes and policy preferences towards migration in the context of south-south migration and in the UK. Ruiz is a Fellow at the International Migration Institute (IMI) at the Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research and a Global Labor Organization (GLO) Fellow. She is also an affiliate (and part of the management board) of the Latin American Centre at Oxford.

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# Chair's Welcome 2024

It's May in Kalamazoo as I am writing this annual message to you. It is my first message to you, having taken over as department chairperson in July 2023. First and foremost, I want to thank Wei-Chiao for his outstanding leadership over the past 4 years in this role. Clearly, there was no way to anticipate the tremendous challenges he would face during his tenure as chair. There are countless examples of his leadership and dedication to the department. I know that Wei-Chiao worked tirelessly behind the scenes to best position the department to succeed in the face of COVID-19 and the WMU enrollment decline. Wei-Chiao is currently enjoying his well-deserved sabbatical.

For those of you who do not know me, a bit about myself. I arrived at WMU in 2000 after spending a year at IUPUI. I earned my BA from St. Norbert College in 1994, and earned my MA (1995) and PhD (2001) from Indiana University. At WMU, I have taught a wide variety of courses at the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral levels. My research focuses on foreign direct investment, with particular emphasis on the role that banking and investor financial frictions play in foreign affiliate ownership structure, joint venture partnerships, and geographic location choice. Prior to becoming chair, I served as the department's undergraduate director and advisor for 5 years. On the personal side, I am married to Marie and have two great kids. I am a huge soccer fan (especially of the German club Holstein Kiel), and my wife and I are slowly pursuing our goal of visiting every presidential burial site.

Now, about the department and WMU. Like many universities, WMU is facing enrollment challenges. As you may know, WMU spring semester undergraduate enrollment has declined from approximately 17,000 in 2015 to nearly 12,500 this spring. Enrollment in the College of Arts and Sciences and the Haworth College of Business, the primary sources of our undergraduate student population, is down 36% and 23%, respectively. So, while the number of undergraduate economics majors across our three programs (BA, BS, BBA) is down a bit this spring, the good news is that the decline is far less than college and university enrollment. However, fewer students on campus, combined with significant pedagogical changes to programs in other colleges, have led to significant decreases in credit hours taught by our department. Fewer credit hours taught reduces contact with students and decreases the opportunity to develop students' understanding of our topics, appreciation for the importance of economics in our daily lives, and recognition of the numerous job and career opportunities that await someone with economics training. In addition, only a very small number of students enter WMU as declared economics majors. Increasingly, economics has become a 'discovery major' – our majors are students who have switched to us, or have added economics as a second major, only after taking one of our courses. The same is true for our minors.

Of course, alternatively, this speaks highly of the quality education our students receive from our faculty. It is clear that once students take an economics course, we do a good job promoting the discipline and the career opportunities that await our students. Undergraduate student recruitment and retention are two of my primary goals as chair. New course devel-

# Department of Economics

opment, including the “Introduction to Game Theory and Experimental Economics” course starting in fall 2024, is part of this agenda. So, too, will be the hopeful restart of the department’s economic student organization and Omicron Delta Epsilon honor society chapter. An expansion of our undergraduate scholarship offerings has been identified as a source of student recruitment and retention, including offerings for incoming students.

While our PhD program remains on hiatus, we did have several students complete the program and receive their doctoral degrees in the past year. At the MA level, we have witnessed continued growth in the quality of students we attract. Their post-graduation placements in academic programs or jobs continue to impress. It is clear that we are preparing our students for future success. Yet, we continue to review the program and make the necessary changes that will allow us to attract and prepare our excellent students for a bright future in their chosen career paths.

In addition, the Werner Sichel Lecture Seminar Series will return in the 2024-2025 academic year. Led by Dr. Susan Pozo, the series will be entitled “The Refugee Crisis.” This will be a great series – of course, more information will be available closer to the start of the series this fall.

Finally, as I navigate my new role, I intend to increase communication with you. Michael Tovias, our new office administrator, and I are updating our department’s website as well as increasing the frequency of posts to our LinkedIn and Facebook pages. We will be including you in our reminders of department research seminars, future Sichel Series dates, and other events we hold. While smaller in number than perhaps you remember, the department strives to be an active, engaged faculty that you can be proud of.

I have learned a lot in my 10 months as chair. However, one thing that I knew already is that, despite the challenges we face, some things will not change: the department's steadfast dedication to pioneering economics research, our unwavering enthusiasm for instilling a love of economics in our students, and our steadfast commitment to empowering them for enduringly successful careers. The state of the department is strong. Your partnership plays a crucial role in helping us achieve these goals and means more to us than you know. Your generosity enhances our programs and allows us to make our undergraduate and graduate degrees affordable for more students. Let me use this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude on behalf of my colleagues and students for all your support over these years.

I look forward to keeping in touch with you. We’d love to hear the news about your life and career and, of course, your thoughts and advice about the department's course. Please take this opportunity to read about the great things happening in the WMU Department of Economics, and please consider how you can help contribute to its outstanding future.

Best regards,

*Michael Ryan*

# New Faculty Join Us

## Two new faculty join us for the 2023-24 academic year

### Dr. Rodrigo Aranda

**Dr. Rodrigo Aranda** (PhD 2019, Tulane), our newest Assistant Professor, comes to us after post-docs at the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies (Georgia State) and the USC Minority Aging Health Economics Research Center. Rodrigo is an applied microeconomist specializing in health economics. His research focuses on the effects that public policies, high-profile events, and a changing environment have on individual behaviors. Recent papers have examined the effects of youth sports participation on later-in-life health outcomes, the effect of indirect exposure to high-profile acts of violence on physical activity, and the effect of cigarette taxes on birth outcomes. Rodrigo will teach various microeconomics-related courses at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

For more information on Rodrigo, please check out his personal page at [raranda.com](http://raranda.com).



### Dr. José Sánchez-Fung



**Dr. José Sánchez-Fung** (PhD 2002, University of Kent (UK)) will serve as an Adjunct Professor of Economics while maintaining his role as the Dominican Republic's ambassador and permanent representative to the World Trade Organization (WTO) and to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Ambassador Sánchez-Fung is currently serving as the chairperson of the WTO's Committee on Budget, Finance and Administration, chairperson of the Working Party on the Accession of Equatorial Guinea to the WTO, coordinator of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Group at UNCTAD, and vice-president in UNCTAD's Trade and Development Board.

Before his current role, José was ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary and head of the diplomatic mission of the Dominican Republic to Switzerland. He has served as an economist for the Central Bank of the Dominican Republic and has been a visiting researcher at Columbia University's ILAS-School of International and Public Affairs, Fudan University in Shanghai, Georgetown University's CLAS-Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, and the University of Oxford's St Antony's College.

For more on Dr. Sánchez-Fung's career, check out [orcid.org/0000-0001-5532-107X](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5532-107X).

## Retiring after 33 years at WMU

While we welcome two new faculty, we also say “Happy Retirement” to **Dr. Don Meyer** who retired effective May 1, 2024.

Don, who retired with emeritus status, arrived at WMU in 1991 from Louisiana Tech. In his 33 years here, Don faithfully served the department in various capacities, including 7 years as department chair. Don taught many undergraduate and graduate courses over the years and was instrumental in creating our very popular undergraduate health economics course. Don’s research on risk, insurance, and health economics was widely published in journals such as the *Journal of Political Economy*, the *Journal of Risk and Uncertainty*, *The Geneva Papers on Risk and Insurance Theory*, the *Journal of Monetary Economics*, and *Economic Inquiry*.

Don looks forward to starting a new chapter in his life that will include grandchildren and new (and old) friends and activities nearer the lakeshore. We look forward to seeing him around the department when the occasions arise and wish him well in his retirement.



## Dr. Susan Pozo wins ASHE Academic Achievement Award

ASHE (American Society of Hispanic Economists) awarded its 2023 Academic Achievement Award to **Dr. Susan Pozo** at the 2024 American Economic Association meetings in San Antonio, TX. The biennial award recognizes Susan’s extensive publications on topics such as immigration policy, undocumented migration, the determinants and economic impacts of worker’s remittances, the returns to international human capital, and international finance. In addition to her many refereed journal and book chapters, Susan has contributed to ASHE’s Hispanic Economic Outlook and the AEA’s Committee on the Status of Minority Groups in the Economics Profession’s The Minority Report. The department congratulates Susan on this outstanding honor.



## Faculty on Sabbatical

**Dr. Wei-Chiao Huang** is taking a well-deserved post-chair yearlong sabbatical at National Chung Cheng University (Taiwan). While there, he is helping develop several dual degree programs. He is also actively researching and teaching there as well.

**Dr. James Hueng** is also in Taiwan this spring, visiting the Taiwan Study Center at National Chengchi University. He is participating in a project analyzing the impacts of low fertility on the Taiwanese economy and society while also working on a project using business surveys and financial conditions to nowcast Taiwanese recessions.

**Dr. Jean Kimmel** spent the fall 2023 semester on sabbatical, working with her co-researcher, Dr. Rachel Connelly (Bowdoin College). Her research focused on updating their 2010 book, *The Time Use of Mothers in the United States in the Beginning of the 21st Century*. The update will include important analysis of the potentially long-lasting effects of the 2007-2009 Great Recession and the COVID-19 pandemic, which first impacted the U.S. in March 2020.

# Faculty Research

## Recent publications (with department co-authors where noted)

### **Aranda, Rodrigo**

"Spells of Subsidized Childcare Arrangements and Subsidy Non-Use," *Children and Youth Services Review*.

"Developing New Scales of Personal Food Security," *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*.

### **Beasley, Jason**

"Changing Coasts Along Lake Michigan: Shoreline Management Impacts on the Inland Community," *Marine Resource Economics*.

### **Huang, Wei-Chiao**

"Comparative analysis on the performances of implementing compulsory and advocative policies in municipal solid waste classification," *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*.

"Mechanism and empirical evidence of excise tax affecting green development in China's provincial capitals—Mediating effect based on technological innovation" *Sustainability*.

"The effects of unexpected crude oil price shocks on Chinese stock markets" *Economic Change and Restructuring*.

"Assessing the implementation effect of Shanghai's compulsory municipal solid waste classification policy," *Journal of Material Cycles and Waste Management*.

"Study on the Coordination of New Urbanization and Water Ecological Civilization and Its Driving Factors: Evidence from the Yangtze River Economic Belt, China," *Land*.

### **Hueng, James**

"Puzzling Retrenchment of Banking Outflows: The Role of Information Asymmetry," *Research in International Business and Finance*.

"A Self-Selection Pricing Mechanism for Residential Electricity: Measures of Sustainability and Equity to Balance Market Mechanisms and Government Controls," *Journal of Policy Modeling*.

"Using a Price Floor on Carbon Allowances to Achieve Emission Reductions under Uncertainty," *Economic Analysis and Policy*.

"The Real Consequences of Financial Stress: Evidence from China," *Journal of the Asia Pacific Economy*.

### **Kimmel, Jean**

"How do Moms and Dads Feel about Work and Family? Evidence on Subjective Well-Being from the American Time Use Survey," in *Mothers in the Labor Market* (Amsterdam: Springer Press)

### **Mukherjee, Debasri**

"Early warning signs: targeting neonatal and infant mortality using Machine Learning" (w/ **Dweepobotee Brahma** [PhD '19]), *Applied Economics*.

### **Neill, Jon**

"Using the value of a statistical life to measure the benefit from the Clean Air Act: comment," *Atlantic Economic Journal*.

### **Pozo, Susan**

"The Puzzle of Latin American Remittances during the Coronavirus Pandemic," *The Minority Report*.

"Twitter-Patter: How Social Media Drives Foot Traffic to Retail Stores" (w/ **Thomas Weinandy** [PhD '21] and **Michael Ryan**), *Journal of Marketing Analytics*.

"The Widespread Impacts of Remittance Flows" (w/ **Catalina Amuedo-Dorantes** [PhD '98]), *IZA World of Labor*.

### **Ryan, Michael**

"FDI, financial constraint, and partial ownership", *The World Economy*.

"Host country corruption and Japanese Outward Foreign Direct Investment: A sectoral and industry-level analysis" *Journal of Multinational Financial Management*.

"Twitter-Patter: How Social Media Drives Foot Traffic to Retail Stores" (w/ **Thomas Weinandy** [PhD '21] and **Susan Pozo**), *Journal of Marketing Analytics*.

"Third-Country Exchange Rate Effects on Foreign Direct Investment Flows: A GVAR Approach" (w/ **Todd Sarnstrom** [PhD '16]), *Review of International Economics*.

"Regional Healthcare Infrastructure Disparities and Foreign Direct Investment into Europe" (w/ **Juliane Sormain** [MA '21]), *Economics and Business Letters*.

## Recent presentations

### **Aranda, Rodrigo**

American Economic Association Annual Meeting, University of Southern California (USC-RCMAR), Annual Conference of the American Society of Health Economists, International Conference on Aging in the Americas, Southern Economic Association Annual Meeting

### **Beasley, Jason**

Western Economic Association Annual Meeting, Midwest Economic Association Annual Meeting

### **Huang, Wei-Chiao**

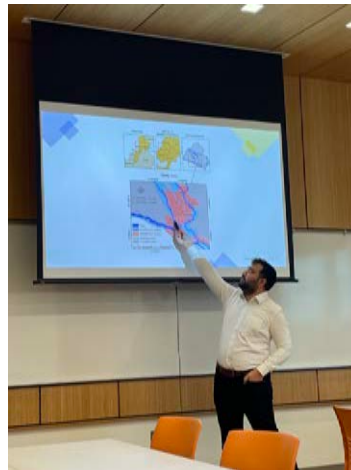
Harbin Engineering University

### **Hueng, James**

Zhongnan University of Economics and Law, Northwest University, Huaqiao University, Shaanxi Master of Business Administration Institute, Changan University, Changsha University of Science and Technology, Hunan Normal University

### **Pozo, Susan**

Inter-American Development Bank, Southern Economic Association



## Recent grants (with department co-authors where noted)

### **Aranda, Rodrigo**

NIA/NIH University of Southern California-Resource Center for Minority Aging Research (\$27,000)

### **Moser, Christine**

International Growth Center, \$35,000 grant with **Dr. Ana Lidia Gungulo** (PhD '23) to digitize agricultural research station data in Mozambique.

# Department Events

## Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis Women in Economics Symposium Watch Party

On April 4, 2024 the department hosted a watch party for the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis' 2024 Women in Economics Symposium to help celebrate the role that women have played in the economy and the economics profession—and that they will play going forward.

The agenda included panel discussions on "What you can do with a BA or MA in economics", "What you can do with a PhD in economics" and "Designing your career: finding your first job." We also heard from Federal Reserve Governor Adriana Kugler on the economy and what the future of economics will hold. We look forward to making this an annual event.



## Spring Graduation Reception and End-of-the-Year Party



The department held a reception for our spring 2024 graduates on Wednesday, April 17 in the College of Arts and Sciences Humanities Center. At the party, we honored nearly 20 undergraduate and graduate students who were graduating this semester. Each received a gift bag full of department swag. In addition, PhD candidate Muhammad Ishtiaq was honored as the department's 2024 Graduate College Research and Creative Scholar Award winner.



It was a great time, and we look forward to making this an annual event. Our goal is also to enlarge the event by increasing the number of scholarships and awards we provide — not just to soon-to-be graduates, but rather to a wider group of undergraduate and graduate students in our courses and degrees. Please consider how you may be able to help us properly acknowledge our current students and attract future students to our programs.



# New Learning Opportunities

## Increasing experience-driven learning opportunities

The department strives to stay current in its course offerings. The 2017 addition of Exploring Economic Data (ECON 3390) and the creation of the BS in Economics degree (2018) were direct responses to the needs of our students to be better prepared to handle the data and technological requirements that they face in their academic studies and chosen professions. Now, we have responded to the call by WMU to increase experiential learning opportunities for our students.

Here are some of the ways the department is working to allow students to put theory into practice:

### New Service Learning Course

The course will accompany the Sichel Series with topics covered adjusting based on the series. Students will be required to do readings, complete homework, and take exams, with the amount of traditional classroom work adjusted depending on service-learning hours performed in the community. For example, students this year will work with local non-profits active with the Kalamazoo-area refugee population to better understand the economic hardships often faced by this population.

### Data-Driven Analytics Course

Our data-driven analytics courses (Exploring Economic Data, Econometrics) emphasize real-world experience exploring datasets such as the Upjohn Institute's "Kalamazoo Promise" data, and the Federal Reserve's data covering Michigan and Kalamazoo, as well as data on income, unemployment, inflation, health, education, environment, and consumer sentiment from around the globe. Students learn techniques of causal regression, hypothesis testing, predictions, and study peculiarities of economic data. Using real-world data, they apply these

tools to model and interpret economic phenomena. It provides a background to further explore the world of "Artificial Intelligence for Social Good."

### Environmental Economics meets Kalamazoo City Government

Students in this course read the Kalamazoo Sustainability Plan, which addresses the issues the city faces as it works toward reducing its environmental burden and improving resident well-being through long-term sustainability plans. Students write a policy paper on one of the plan's goals, with the purpose of presenting these papers to the City of Kalamazoo Sustainability Planner. In addition, work is in progress to more formally allow students to engage with the Michigan Climate Action Network on clean energy solutions for the state.

### Proposed Internship Course

Increasingly, our students are looking to acquire practical skills that incorporate their classroom knowledge. We wish to provide students the opportunity to earn credit while doing so.

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## New Game Theory/Experimental Economics Course

The department will offer ECON 2040 – Introduction to Game Theory and Experimental Economics starting in the fall 2024 semester. Topics covered in the course serve as a foundation for behavioral economic analysis, a fast-growing field within economics. The course is designed to give students an introduction to these topics and help develop an important set of skills coveted by employers in a variety of business and academic fields.



# Award Winning Undergraduate Students

## 2024 Presidential Scholar

Our 2024 Presidential Scholar Award winner was **Chloe Wieber** from Plainwell, MI. Chloe received her BA in Economics, with minors in Data Analysis and Spanish. As our Presidential Scholar, Chloe also received the department's Werner Sichel Undergraduate award from the department faculty. In earning this award, Chloe said "I am honored to receive the Presidential Scholar Award and I extend heartfelt appreciation and gratitude to the esteemed faculty whose expertise and support have not only enriched my academic experience but have also aided in fostering my passion for economics. I currently plan to pursue a master's degree in economics and contribute to impactful work within the realm of economic analysis in my future career."



## Economics Students Win Other Presidential Scholar Awards

Two economics students won prestigious Presidential Scholar Awards this spring. **Cece Chapleau** (BA '24) won the Political Science Presidential Scholar Award, and **Shanice Tan** (BBA '24) won the Presidential Scholar Award for Business Information Systems. Congrats to both on their outstanding achievements! Their dedication and hard work have truly paid off, setting a remarkable example on how economics students showcase their academic excellence in a

## William L. Monroe Award



The William Monroe Scholarship recognizes students who demonstrate outstanding promise in their program. This year's winner, nominated by the department faculty, was **Seezan Poudel** from Nepal. Upon winning this award, Seezan said "I am thrilled to win the award. I've always been fascinated by economics and its impact on societies. That's why I ended up studying it – I wanted to understand how the economic gears turn. Growing up in a country with immense potential yet facing economic challenges, I aspire to advocate for the full embrace of a market economy in Nepal, believing it to be a catalyst for sustainable growth and prosperity.. I landed at Western Michigan University thanks to a random decision to follow a friend of mine, but I'm grateful for the experiences it's brought me."



## Phi Beta Kappa membership

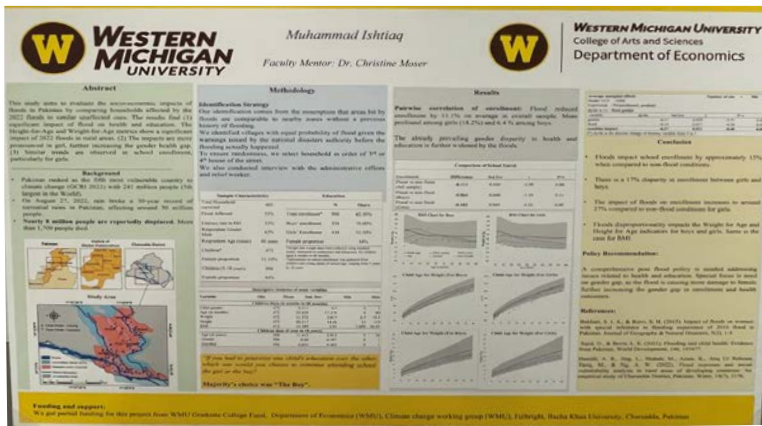
A congratulations to those economics students inducted into Phi Beta Kappa, the nation's oldest and most respected undergraduate honors society. In 2023, the following students were inducted: **Ephraim Bahre, Cecelia Chapleau, Thomas Johnson,** and **Chloe Wieber**. Our 2024 inductee was **Seezan Poudel**.

## Graduate Students Win WMU Graduate College Research Awards

PhD candidates **Muhammad Ishtiaq** and **Boxia Xu** were named Runners Up in the WMU Graduate College's 17th Annual Research, Innovation, and Creative Scholarship Graduate Poster Day in April 2024. Muhammad's research was entitled "Impact of Floods on Rural Communities in Pakistan: Evidence from a Field Survey." Boxia presented her research "The Impact of Rural-Urban Migration on the Pension System in China."

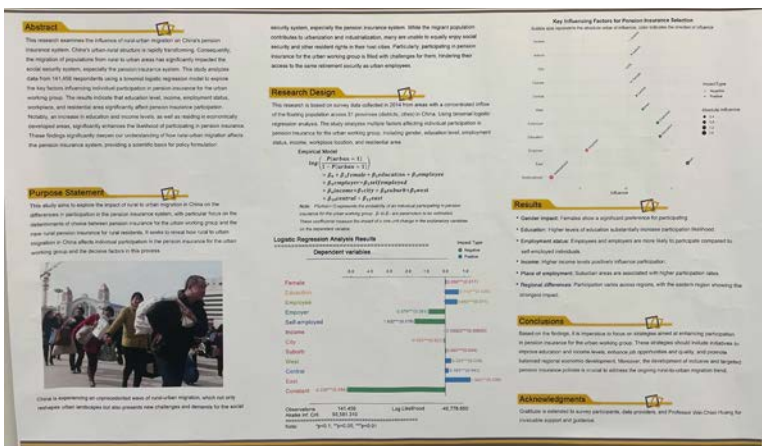
### Impact of Floods on rural Communities in Pakistan: Evidence from a Field Survey

Author: Muhammad Ishtiaq



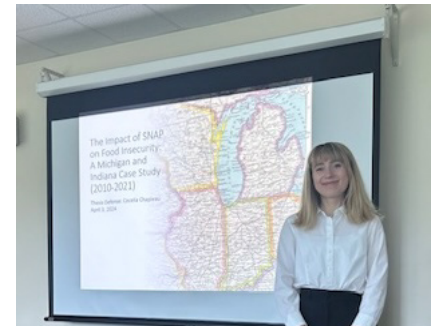
### The Impact of Rural-Urban Migration on the Pension System in China

Author: Boxia Xu



## Two Lee Honors College Graduates Show Off Their Research

Two of our outstanding economics majors successfully defended their Lee Honors College theses this spring.



**Cece Chapleau** (BA '24) wrote her thesis, "The Impact of SNAP on Food Insecurity: A Michigan and Indiana Case Study (2010-2021)" for Dr. Rodrigo Aranda.



**Chloe Wieber** (BA '24) researched "Formal Dollarization in Latin America" under the direction of Dr. Susan Pozo.

# Graduate Student News



*Anais Totobesola and Rosingh Amofa Adarkwa*

## Two students win Vinod Thomas Scholarships

MA students **Rosingh Amofa Adarkwa** and **Anais Totobesola** were awarded 2024 Vinod Thomas Scholarships. These awards are given to graduate students based on academic merit. On winning the award, Rosingh said, "I graduated from the University of Ghana with a bachelor's degree in economics and mathematics, and I would like to pursue a PhD in Economics after completing my master's program. The Vinod Thomas Scholarship will help me attain my long-term goal of entering into the field of academia." Anais added "As a devoted mother... hailing from Madagascar, I am deeply committed to specializing in development economics and contributing to societal advancement. This prestigious scholarship would not only ease the financial strain of tuition fees but also provide me with the resources to immerse myself fully in my studies and research."

## PhD student wins scholarship for work with Afghan Refugees in Kalamazoo

PhD candidate **Muhammad Ishtiaq** won the WMU Claude and Nancy Phillips International and Area Studies Scholarship for his work titled "Importance of Family: Post trauma economic and social life of Afghan Refugees." The scholarship money is being used to conduct a survey investigating the importance of family life for Afghan refugees in Kalamazoo and surrounding areas.

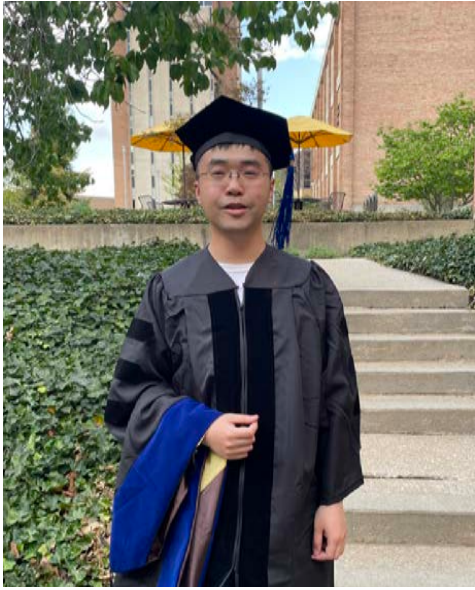
## Three students win Floyd Moore Awards

Three students were awarded Floyd Moore Awards. These awards are given to graduate students based on academic merit. Congratulations to **Richard Appiah**, **Gideon Gargar**, and **Esther Soyode**!

## Two students win Elias Harik Award

The Elias Harik Award is given twice a year to outstanding new graduate students. This year, the award winners are **Rosingh Amofa Adarkwa** and **Khumbo Samwili**. Congratulations to both of you on your excellent performance this year.

# Graduate Student News



*Lichun Cai*



*Mir Angkur and Peng Luo*

## PhD student success

In the past year we have had several PhD students complete their dissertations:

- **Mir Angkur**, who wrote for Dr. Susan Pozo, graduated in December 2023. He is now an Assistant Professor of Economics in the Dixie L. Leavitt School of Business at Southern Utah University.
- **Peng Luo**, who wrote for Dr. Wei-Chiao Huang, graduated in December 2023.
- **Lichun Cai**, who wrote for Dr. Wei-Chiao Huang, graduated in January 2024.

## MA students graduate

We had an excellent group of MA students graduate both in December 2023 and April 2024. Many of our students are headed to economics PhD programs, and our list of placements was again outstanding this year. This list includes Arizona State, Georgia State, Illinois-Chicago, Oklahoma State, Northern Illinois, and Notre Dame.

Good luck to our recent grads, and keep us updated on your successes.



*2024 Spring MA graduates with Drs. Ryan and Moser*

# Alumni News and Notes

## Alumni News

**Dibekulu Birhan** (MA '23) is an AI Model Trainer - Economics Domain for the software company Outlier.

**Megersa Daska** (PhD '22) is a Financial Analyst in Asset Liability Management at Jackson National Life Insurance in Lansing, MI.

**Craig Doig** (BBA '21) is a Controlling Analyst for the German automotive company Benteler Group.

**Riley Lukomski** (BS '17) is the Economic Development Director at Southwest Michigan First.

**Muttolib Salako** (MA '23) is currently a PhD Student in Finance at the Haas School of Business, University of California, Berkeley.

**DJ Seaton** (MA '23) is an Aware WIOA Data Analyst with the State of Michigan in the Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity.

**Juliane Sormain** (BA '19, MA '21) is a Senior Associate at Berkeley Research Group (Tallahassee, FL).

**Ateeb Syed** (MA '16, PhD '20) is the Deputy Director (Senior Analyst – Economic Modeling) at the State Bank of Pakistan. In this role, he is responsible for generating quarterly projections for the main macroeconomic variables and the policy rate path for the monetary policy committee's decision in Pakistan.

**Vinod Thomas** (MA '71) recently published "Risk and Resilience in the Era of Climate Change" (2023, Palgrave Macmillan). Vinod, former Senior VP of Independent Evaluation at the World Bank and Director General of Independent Evaluation at the Asian Development Bank, is a board member of the International Evaluation Academy and a distinguished fellow at the Asian Institute of Management.

**Thomas Verville** (MA '20) is a third-year PhD candidate in the Department of Economics at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville.

**Jeremiah Vroman** (BA '23) is a student in Michigan State University's MS in Finance program.

**Jingwei Wang** (MA '22) is employed as a data governance assistant in the financial leasing company XingBang Financial Leasing Co.Ltd.

It would be great to hear from more of our alumni,  
regardless of degree earned or year of graduation.

Please let us know what you are doing at:  
[econ\\_info@wmich.edu](mailto:econ_info@wmich.edu).

# Supporting the Department

## Support the Department of Economics

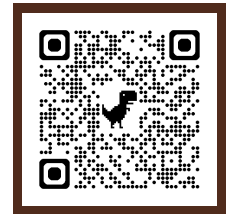
Your contributions continue to enhance the educational experience for both graduate and undergraduate students within the Economics Department. Thanks to your support, faculty and students can access financial assistance for travel to conduct research and present their findings at conferences. Additionally, we are able to offer scholarships and grants to current economics majors in recognition of their outstanding achievements.

Our department's top priorities include providing undergraduate student scholarships to alleviate tuition costs and attract more economics majors, including first year and transfer students. In addition, we would like to increase graduate student tuition support to enable them to focus on completing their studies.



*The newly renovated Dunbar Hall*

**To help the department achieve its goals, please contact me or visit the department giving page at <http://wmich.edu/economics/giving> or simply scan the QR code. Your support is greatly appreciated.**



### A Message from the Chief Development Officer

Thank you for considering a gift to the Department of Economics.

Your gift is an investment in our students today and a brighter, more empowered tomorrow for generations to come. With your support, we can provide our students with scholarships and experience-driven learning opportunities that spark generational change.

There are many ways to have enduring impact. Please contact me to explore ways for you to establish your WMU legacy.

### Elizabeth McCarthy

Chief Development Officer, College of Arts & Sciences  
University Advancement | 1903 W. Michigan Ave  
[Elizabeth.McCarthy@wmich.edu](mailto:Elizabeth.McCarthy@wmich.edu)  
269.387.4379 | [WMUalumni.org](http://WMUalumni.org)



**WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY**  
College of Arts and Sciences

# Contact us!

## Want to connect on social media? Better follow the department?

The department is working to expand its social media presence and better connect with you.

In addition to the department website ([wmich.edu/economics](http://wmich.edu/economics)) we have a department Facebook page and LinkedIn account. Please join/like/follow these sites for up-to-date department information. Moving forward, we plan on using these sites for Sichel and research seminar series information, alumni outreach, departmental news/awards, and for you to better contact us. While this newsletter is published only once a year, we can certainly stay in touch through our various social media sites.

A goal of mine this year is to improve our contact with you. To do so, we ask that you reach out with any new contact information that you may have.

### CONTACT THE ECONOMICS DEPARTMENT



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