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“**DR. LESLIE** carries herself in such a way that she creates an environment of peace and calm. While this may sound somewhat intense, I looked forward to my 8am class with her. I felt at peace and capable of taking on the day after leaving because of the attentive and ‘unmoved’ presence she had every morning. I look up to her in many ways and am grateful to have been a student of hers.”

“**DR. WILSON** is a gifted macroeconomist and a very caring man. He gives students the opportunity to learn in class and makes sure that he sees each individual student to try to help them where they are. He expects us to truly learn the material and not just regurgitate answers, which leads to difficult assignments and tests, but he is a very effective instructor and willing to help students at any point. I did terrible on my first exam and he took the time to reach out to me individually to see how he could help and it meant the world to me. Dr. Wilson is one of the most Christlike teachers I have had at BYU.”

“**PROFESSOR EIDE** was so kind and always made sure that his students were assisted. Anytime I asked for help he was there to assist me.”

“One of the finest teachers BYU has to offer. I have rarely had such a talented instructor as **PROFESSOR MCMURRAY**. He specifically structures his lessons to teach concepts that consistently build on each other until the final section where he pulls it all together. Awesome teacher.”

“**PROFESSOR SHOWALTER** is a great professor. He really cares about his students and what he is teaching. You can really tell that he genuinely cares for his students, which is super nice. I also think that he does a good job of teaching difficult concepts and bringing everything together.”

“**PROFESSOR SIMS** is a really engaging, animated professor and makes classes interesting and exciting. He brings in really good real life examples to help me grasp the concepts and help apply them to the real life.”

“I was, and I am, far from the best in econometrics; as in most of the economics I study, I managed a mediocre outcome. But I had lots of fun in the class and this was the first (and last) econometrics class that I truly enjoyed. Dr. Pope is a great teacher and a very successful and welcoming mentor, and if I had the opportunity, I would definitely take classes from him in the future. He has been one of my favorite economics professors thus far in the major, and I will always remember this class and what I learned from it. Thank you **DR. POPE**.”
LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

IN RECENT MONTHS, Brigham Young University has increased its focus on aligning all its activities with the university’s mission statement. As this emphasis has been communicated, I’ve thought more regularly regarding whether and how the activities of the Economics Department “assist individuals in their quest for perfection and eternal life.” This goal includes, but is not limited to, the religious instruction of our students and the pursuit of “the full realization of human potential.” Thus, the department is charged to holistically enlarge the capacity and faith of all of our students. While the department is still seeking to reach its full potential in achieving the university’s mission, there are many ways in which it is already succeeding.

As department chair, I read all comments from the student evaluations of faculty. As a consequence, I have the opportunity to observe how department faculty are universally supportive of the university’s mission to increase student faith. The faculty help achieve this mission in a variety of ways. Some faculty begin class with prayer or share regular spiritual thoughts. Others seamlessly incorporate gospel instruction into their discussion of economic principles. Many faculty demonstrate the gospel ideals of charity, compassion, and faith with clarity and sincerity as they interact with students. As I finished reading the evaluations, I felt both humbled and inspired by the efforts of my colleagues.

These efforts to build student faith have not come at the expense of excellence in teaching or in the pursuit of innovative research, which also forms part of the university’s mission statement. Department faculty have diligently worked both to improve the curriculum of their classes and deliver the material in a clear and engaging fashion. Faculty have also published groundbreaking work in the very best journals in our discipline. These efforts have combined to provide our students with opportunities at excellent companies, government agencies, and graduate schools.

While I am deeply proud of our students, alumni, and faculty, I recognize that the department can and will grow to better achieve the goals of a Brigham Young University education. I hope you will support us in these efforts as we look forward to seeing the fruits of continued growth and progress.

Sincerely,

Lars J. Lefgren
Brigham Young University’s first black student, Norman Wilson, completed his studies in 1938 and graduated with the class of 1939 with a masters degree in agricultural economics.
Many BYU historians had believed the first African American student was Darius Gray, who attended Brigham Young University from 1965 to 1966. That changed when recent BYU history graduate, Grace Soelberg, uncovered evidence of an earlier African American student at the university. I felt privileged to interview Grace about her discovery and its value to the university and the BYU Economics Department.

While working at the Hinckley Center in the summer of 2022, Grace was intrigued by the yearbooks from 1911 to 1985 that were brought in from the library to be placed in the reading room of the Alumni Center. As she looked through them, Grace noted a person of color among the other students in the 1938 yearbook. Initially, she thought the yearbook had been printed incorrectly. Surprized that the first student of color may have attended the university earlier than previously believed, Grace reached out to several professors in the History Department about her findings. With the help of BYU archivist, Cory Nimer, and after more research, it was confirmed that Norman Wilson was the first black student to attend BYU. Finding new information about the history of black heritage at BYU was rewarding to Grace, and her research is a significant discovery for the Economics Department.

“It was very inspiring to uncover the history that related to me and my experience in BYU.”

- GRACE SOELBERG
Norman Wilson was born on January 27, 1913, in Louisiana and grew up on a farm where his parents grew cotton and vegetables and raised livestock. He was the oldest of ten (possibly eleven) siblings and the only son born to his parents, which put great responsibility on him growing up. Norman’s parents were very dedicated to his education and anxious for him to succeed financially and break their family’s cycle of poverty. After she was taught to read by Booker T. Washington, Norman’s cousin, Allenia, taught Norman and his family how to read. Grace shared in her research that Norman’s son, Norman Wilson Jr., and granddaughter, Heidi Matthews, confirmed he became a prolific reader from a young age and was gifted with a good memory. Additionally, they remember him as a very talented scholar.

Grace learned that Norman’s mother, Mrs. Flavia Wilson, taught him practical algebra in the running of their farm and home even though she had not had any formal schooling. She could also make calculations in her head, demonstrating her intelligence. His father, Mr. Leon P. Wilson, could likewise do complex mathematical computations regarding the family’s crops. Both parents passed their knowledge to their son. With the help of his parents, who made great sacrifices, Norman was able to attend school as a child. Furthermore, his parents saved money for him to attend college when he came of age.

He began his educational journey at Wilson Settlement School at the age of five. At seventeen, Wilson graduated from Coleman College (a high school), after which he attended Leland College, the small HBCU college (Historically Black College or University) in Baker, Louisiana, for one year. Later, he transferred to Morehouse in Atlanta, Georgia, and obtained his bachelor’s degree. While looking for employment after graduation, Norman moved back to New Orleans, Louisiana, where there were more opportunities to find work. He secured employment at various restaurants and docks, which paid his living expenses. While in New Orleans, in 1937, he met and married the love of his life, Ernestine Darby.

As a young man, Norman enjoyed boxing and loved listening to matches on the radio. During one of the broadcasts, the presenter listed the scores of various college football games during the intermission, including the score for BYU. It was Norman’s first time hearing about BYU, and he felt inspired to learn more about it. He sent a letter to the university asking about the admission process and was told that he needed to apply in person. The decision of his acceptance to the university would be made afterward. This application was a leap of faith, as it would require him to move across the country.
In the summer of 1937, leaving Ernestine in New Orleans, Norman began his trip to Brigham Young University. It was approximately a two-week journey, requiring particular need for awareness to avoid dangerous areas, where he feared being lynched. At some point in his journey northwest, Wilson caught a train that took him to Provo.

As he got off the train at night in Provo, a police officer approached him, questioning why he was there. According to census data, there were only a dozen black people in the entire county and none at all in Provo at the time. Therefore, it was odd for a person of color to walk the streets. During the conversation with the officer, Norman explained he was there to apply to BYU, which didn’t seem convincing to the policeman. The officer warned Norman that because of his skin color, he would not find a place to rent and could not sleep on the streets. Instead, as a service, the officer offered to let Norman sleep at the jailhouse that night. After spending the night there, Norman left to visit the Maeser Building, the BYU administrative building at that time. He met with BYU President Franklin S. Harris and, at the end of the meeting, Norman was admitted as a master’s students at BYU and offered a scholarship.

The BYU administration arranged for Norman to stay at the Hotel “Roberts” on University Avenue, located near what is now the Provo City Center Temple. The hotel had a workspace in the back of the building, which was converted into a room for Norman’s lodging in exchange for his helping the owners on the weekends. Norman was fondly remembered by the hotel workers as a gentleman who was always very helpful. The accommodation was a blessing, as Norman didn’t know where else he could lodge safely during his time at BYU.

Franklin S. Harris was President of BYU from July 1921 until June 1945. Due to his support, the BYU community was open to students of color. A few years later, he was instrumental in helping Japanese American students who had been incarcerated during the Second World War attend BYU. While President Harris showed compassion and love to students like Norman, it is believed that Norman still experienced difficulties within the BYU community because of his skin color.

Norman’s academic studies reflected the experiences of the community he grew up in. As a senior, he wrote his graduate thesis, titled “Opportunities of the American Negro for Land Settlement” outlining why African Americans hadn’t had the same opportunities as white Americans for land ownership after the Civil War and into the 20th Century. When Norman completed his studies in 1938 and graduated with the class of 1939, an article was written in the university’s newspaper about him, celebrating that he was the first black student to graduate from the university. However, this information was later lost with time. Grace theorizes that the reason for this is that after Norman got his degree, he never came back to BYU and never converted to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

BYU was much smaller and a more intimate experience for students in the 1930s. It may have felt more like a high school with only a few hundred students. Student clubs were welcomed and encouraged on campus. At BYU, Norman joined the International Relations Club, which was formed as a debate team, and included other non-Caucasian students. Norman was also involved in boxing and there are records of his participation in a boxing match in Springville.

Norman did not get a chance to return to his family during his time at BYU, leaving his wife Ernestine in New Orleans after only a month of marriage. Fortunately, Ernestine came to visit him in Provo during the last month of his schooling and helped him type his thesis. After graduation, they returned to Louisiana together to begin a new journey.

“Norman knew what the power of education could do for him and saw it lift himself out of poverty and knew how it could help other black people as well.”

– GRACE SOELBERG
Originally, agricultural economics was included in the BYU Economics Department. This combination lasted from 1935 to 1955. During this period, the curriculum encompassed a range of courses such as marketing, farm management, finance, and economic history, reflecting the close connection between economics and the agricultural sector.

Soon after graduating with his master’s degree in agricultural economics, Norman received a teaching job at a public school in Missouri. There he and his wife welcomed two children into their family: a boy, Norman Wilson Jr., and a girl, Neva Matthews. After teaching for five years, Norman got a job at Livingston College, a HBCU in Salisbury, North Carolina, where he taught for thirteen years. The couple was blessed with another daughter, Nell Bowie, during that time.

From 1944 to 1946, Norman took advanced studies in economics at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and in 1960, while teaching at Livingston College, earned his PhD in economics from the University of Missouri. He then moved back home to New Orleans and became one of the fifteen founding faculty members of the Southern University at New Orleans (SUNO), where he founded the Business Economics Department. Norman’s posterity continued the Wilson family tradition of education. Each of his children attended this university founded by their father. Norman’s granddaughter, Heidi Matthews, graduated from law school at SUNO as well.

Only a few of Norman’s publications were saved. In 1983 he retired in New Orleans, where several records were kept in his house and were destroyed by Hurricane Katrina after his passing. A few publications and photographs are still available because family members took them out of New Orleans. The L. Tom Perry Special Collection found in Harold B. Lee Library holds one of Norman’s publications, a small book titled “Mathematics.” The first pages contain photographs of his parents, who taught him the basics of mathematics at home.

The BYU Library held an exhibit on Norman Wilson in the spring of 2023. The three-case display contained one section on Norman’s early family life, including his studies at Morehouse College, with the second case displaying his time at BYU. The third showcased information about his career and retirement. A few photographs of Norman at Morehouse College were on display. Norman’s “Mathematics” publication donated by the family members, a portrait of him and his wife, a photograph of his home in New Orleans, Norman’s employee ID card from the time he worked at the Southern University in New Orleans, and the program from his funeral services were also available for public view. These items remain in BYU Library Special Collections and can be viewed by appointment and special request.

On the left: Norman Wilson’s house in New Orleans.

On the right: Norman’s photograph from the “Mathematics” publication.

On the left: Norman Wilson’s house in New Orleans.

On the right: Norman’s photograph from the “Mathematics” publication.
Norman was very active in African American social life in New Orleans. He was a member of the Zulu Club, a social group. As a couple, Norman and his wife Ernestine were very giving. They made care packages for the people in the community during summer. When the grocery stores had case lot sales, they bought extra to give to the community. Norman was very involved in academia and had a policy never to give a failing mark to a student. He tried not only to help them succeed in his class but to grow individually. Grace explains, “Norman knew what the power of education could do for him and how he saw it lift himself out of poverty and knew how it could help other black people as well.” Therefore, Norman ensured that his sisters could get an education by sending money to cover their educational needs.

Norman Wilson’s incredible story of hard work, dedication, and educational commitment is truly inspiring. In spite of obstacles he faced, Norman continued to move forward toward his goal of providing an education for himself and others. Despite the difficulties Norman experienced because of his skin color, he chose not to be offended and he followed his dream of making education available to all, and it became much more than he envisioned. Norman’s legacy had a long-lasting impact on his family, SUNO staff, and many others whose lives he touched.

2. Photographs of Norman’s parents, pg. 4. “Mathematics” publication. Courtesy, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602
3. Photograph of Norman’s wife, pg. 4. Courtesy, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602
4. Norman’s house in New Orleans, pg. 6. Courtesy, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602
5. Norman’s Wilson’s portrait, pg. 6. “Mathematics” publication. Courtesy, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602
6. Photographs of BYU’s activities in 1938, p. 7. Courtesy, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602
Department faculty member, Brigham Frandsen, experienced a once in a lifetime opportunity this past December when he was invited to attend the Nobel Prize ceremony by his mentor, advisor, and colleague, Joshua Angrist. An economist and professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Angrist won the Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economics Sciences in memory of Alfred Nobel (referred to as Nobel Prize in Economics) alongside two other men, David Card and Guido Imbens, in October 2021.

Angrist’s work involves introducing methods that allow researchers to draw causal conclusions from observational data. Frandsen’s expertise is also in this field, and the two were working on a paper and book together at the time Angrist received the award.

The Nobel Prize ceremony was canceled in 2021 due to COVID-19, and to still celebrate those who were given the prestigious award during that time, the decision was made to combine it with the 2022 ceremony.

Winners are typically allowed to invite 8-12 guests to accompany them to Stockholm, Sweden, for a week of festivities celebrating the winners’ scientific advancements. Swedish citizens are heavily involved in the event and often host Nobel Prize watch parties. The Swedish royal family is also involved in hosting and participating in the events, with people speculating on the dress the princess will wear to the prize ceremony, as well as which performers will be at the event. “The whole country is excited about science,” Frandsen notes, emphasizing how important an event the Nobel ceremony is.

The week-long festivities begin with each winner delivering a lecture at the Nobel Prize Museum, summarizing their personal accomplishments and advancements in science. The following day includes a concert in the Stockholm Concert Hall, featuring opera singers and the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra. The third day involves the prizes and a ceremony, where all winners sit on stage, alongside the royals. This event is strictly white tie, with waistcoats and full white lapels and bow ties for men and floor length gowns for women. Each winner’s name is announced, and their works are summarized to the audience. The King of Sweden then stands up and awards them their medals. The winners bow to the king, the Swedish Academy of Sciences (SAOS), and the audience. This is followed by an orchestral fanfare.

After the ceremony, all winners and their invitees attend a banquet at City Hall, which features a gourmet five-course meal. Entertainment is provided between each course, with music and winners giving talks during the dinner.

During his time in Stockholm, Angrist enjoyed time with his family and friends, participating in activities like ice skating. Frandsen said, “[Josh Angrist] works really hard. He can be really intense sometimes with his work, and it was neat to see him being able to enjoy the recognition of contributing a lifetime to science.”

The Nobel Prize Ceremony takes place every December 10th at the Stockholm Concert Hall, Sweden.
Nobel Prize winners are chosen by various committees depending on the specific category of the prize. The six Nobel Prize categories are: Physics, Chemistry, Medicine or Physiology, Literature, Peace, and Economic Sciences.

The Swedish Academy of Sciences is responsible for selecting the Nobel Laureates in Physics, Chemistry, and Economic Sciences. This Academy consists of prominent scientists who are experts in their respective fields. Each year, the Academy members evaluate the nominations received for the Nobel Prize in their respective categories and select the most deserving candidates based on their contributions to their field of study.

The process of nomination for the Nobel Prize begins in September, when individuals who are eligible to make nominations are invited to submit their recommendations to the respective committees.

The process of selection involves a thorough review of the nominees' work, including their research papers, publications, and any other relevant contributions to their field. The Academy members and other committees then engage in a series of discussions and deliberations to decide on the most exemplary candidate for the prize in each category.

Once the selection is made, the Academy announces the Nobel Laureate for the year, and the prize is awarded at a formal ceremony held in Stockholm, Sweden, on December 10th, the anniversary of Alfred Nobel's death.

Brigham Frandsen with his colleagues at the Nobel Prize Ceremony in Sweden. From left to right: Alberto Abadie, Brigham Frandsen, Joshua Angrist, Steven Pischke

Sweden’s Central Bank (Sveriges Riksbank) established the Prize in Economic Sciences in memory of Alfred Nobel, founder of the Nobel Prize, in 1968. The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences is responsible for the selection of the economic sciences laureates from among the candidates recommended by the Economic Sciences Prize Committee. The name of the economic sciences laureate is engraved on the edge of the medal for economic sciences.
The pandemic highlighted some advantages and disadvantages of online education. In recent work with Valerie Michelman (Brown) and Seth Zimmerman (Yale), we show that the social returns to attending college can be just as important as the academic returns. We gathered historical data on nearly all students who attended Harvard in the early 1900s and used the Family Tree at familysearch.org to link them to census records when they were living with their parents and to census records later in life where we can observe their income as an adult. We find that students who participated in elite social clubs earned 32% more as adults than otherwise similar students. This increase in earnings is much larger than what we see when comparing students with high or low GPAs.

Social Returns to Attending College

Joseph Price

This project is part of a larger effort in the Record Linking Lab (rll.byu.edu) to link together the human family into a single interconnected network. Currently our focus is on people who lived in the US between 1850 and 1940, but we are starting to branch out to countries all over the world. The lab employs 60 BYU students as research assistants. We combine machine learning, economics, and family history in order to extract data from historical images and link this data with other sources.

Note: This research was published as “Century-Old Harvard Records Show How Social Connections Help the Elite” in Yale Insights in June 2021.

DACA, Mobility Investments, and Economic Outcomes of Immigrants and Natives

Riley Wilson

In this study, coauthored with undergraduate student, Jimena Villanueva Kiser, we explore the effects of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) on the mobility investments and economic outcomes of immigrants, as well as its impact on the labor market outcomes of US-born workers. Mobility investments, such as geographic and job mobility, can improve economic outcomes by enabling individuals to move to communities and labor markets that better match their skills or preferences, and find better-suited jobs. The risk of deportation discourages undocumented immigrants from making such investments. When undocumented immigrants gain legal status, this resolves uncertainty and could potentially encourage them to make human capital investments, like where they live and what types of work they engage in. However, increased labor force attachment among immigrants could come at the cost of employment or earnings among native workers. We test both of these hypotheses. We find that DACA increased the mobility of young immigrants, leading them to high-paying labor markets and better occupations. We also show that the gains of immigrants did not negatively affect the employment rates of US-born workers, and, perhaps, led to increased wage earnings for them, suggesting that immigrant workers complement native workers.

For this analysis, we use DACA as a natural experiment to measure the impact of immigrant legalization on mobility investments and labor market outcomes. To be eligible for DACA, an individual must have arrived in the US before age 16, before 2006, and must have been under the age of 31 when the policy was put into place, on June 15, 2012. Using these constraints, we compare outcomes for Hispanic, foreign-born children who meet all of the criteria, to similar Hispanic, foreign-born children who meet all of the criteria, but arrived after their 16th birthday. By following these two similar groups over time we can estimate how the policy affected actions of those that were eligible relative to those that were just barely ineligible. When examining potential spillovers on native workers’ outcomes, we exploit variation in the share of the population that gains eligibility through DACA that arises from pre-existing immigrant networks and natural disaster shocks that pushed people to move from Mexico to the United States. Through these two identification strategies we find that providing legal status to unauthorized immigrants increases their willingness to engage in costly investments, leading to increased individual productivity and potential positive spillovers on aggregate productivity. We also find that immigrant legalization generates broader local labor market benefits, as US-born workers do not see dis-employment, but experience modest increases in wage earnings. These findings suggest that the DACA program has positive externalities that affect both immigrants and US-born workers.
When asked how she promotes curiosity and learning among her students, Dr. Emily Leslie notes that, “In my experience, the students are already curious and excited to learn, especially if they can see how what they’re studying relates to the world outside the classroom. One of my goals for improvement as a teacher is to show them how economics helps us make sense of the world.” As Dr. Leslie seeks to help her students see the practical impact of economics, she utilizes a technique called active learning to directly involve her students within classroom learning. “It’s also intuitive! Everyone who’s ever been a student knows that it feels totally different to listen to a class-length monologue vs. frequently having the ball put in your court to use new information to do practice problems or answer questions,” Dr. Leslie remarks. Active learning methods seek to involve students who are engaging with the course material. Dr. Leslie uses a deck of cards with students’ names as a way to cold call on them throughout lectures. “[I] found that it encouraged a much broader set of students to participate, normalized not knowing all the answers, and helped me have a better read of how the class was doing with the material,” Dr. Leslie notes. She clarifies that if a student wants to, he may opt out of the deck, but that very few do and most students enjoy it overall.

A former student notes “It was so evident that she really cared about the students and just wanted us to understand and feel comfortable engaging with class concepts.” This same student would go on to become one of Dr. Leslie’s TAs. “I was a brand-new econ major and one of the only women in my class, and the fact that she reached out to me made me feel like I was valued and could succeed in the econ program.” Dr. Leslie’s clear appreciation and encouraging nature has created an environment for her students to succeed both in class and within the world itself; and yet she is still humble about her achievements. “I still have a lot of room for improvement, but it’s always my goal to create as many opportunities as possible for students to dive in with the material during class time,” she says. An amazing educator and strong mentor, it’s no wonder that students thrive under Dr. Leslie’s guidance.

When asked how he fosters a love for learning and curiosity among his students, Dr. Christian vom Lehn responded, “I wanted to be in a profession where I would keep learning and could indulge my curiosity and so I hope to bring that to students in all my interactions with them.” As he seeks to lead by example, Dr. vom Lehn uses a number of strategies to help his students as an educator and mentor. He emphasizes that the best teaching occurs when there is a strong relationship between a teacher and students, and how important it is to bring a positive and enthusiastic energy into class every day. Dr. vom Lehn notes the significance of making sure he provides accessibility outside of class as well, creating time for mentorship. A past student notes, “From post-graduate plans to learning more about the world of economists, he made time to answer questions, give a listening ear, and offer a Snickers for the road. Even nowadays, I still feel comfortable stopping by to ask questions or just say hi.”

Dr. vom Lehn uses a teaching philosophy that emphasizes the importance of using rigorous and challenging material to maximize student learning. “I further believe that students learn the most when they are challenged to work hard to meet a high bar of excellence. A key part of being intellectually challenging is helping students to develop critical and analytical skills and not simply an ability to recite a large volume of facts or solve problems algorithmically,” Dr. vom Lehn explains. As an educator at a religious university, he notes that a core part of curriculum should be learning the truths of the gospel as they pair with academic material. Dr. vom Lehn recalls how much he enjoyed the parallels between economic theory and gospel principles during his undergraduate experience. “As a result, I make those parallels explicit now as a BYU faculty member, by beginning each class period with a collection of scriptures or quotes on gospel topics that directly relate to the economic concepts being presented in class.” From his strong beliefs in his students’ abilities to his connection-based teaching, Dr. vom Lehn strives to inspire students to be curious learners each day. “Plus,” a former student notes, “he has a candy jar.”
KRITI AGARWAL is a successful global supply chain manager with over 23 years of experience in the global semiconductor industry. She is also founder and dance instructor at Kriti Dance, a Bollywood dance academy and performing arts company in Chandler, AZ. In each of these roles, she finds empowerment from her BYU economics degree, stating, “It helped me look at opportunity costs both at a personal and professional level. There are many demands on my time. Hence, I have to constantly make decisions, whether they are at a macro or micro economic level, on how and where to spend my time for the biggest ROI.” She shares her journey and lessons learned with students and alumni to help inspire them to pursue their goals.

Kriti initially chose to major in economics at BYU because she was intrigued by the program brochure and because it required the fewest credits to graduate. Through the course of her studies, she gained more than just academic knowledge but an “attitude of commitment to meeting deadlines no matter how tough life gets.” She remarks, “As I propelled into my career, BYU helped me build character.”

After graduation, Kriti started her career as a business analyst in a dotcom IT consulting company. Unfortunately, the company failed and two years later she found herself at the University of Phoenix, working in enrollment, financial aid, and IT project management. Five years later, she transitioned to Prudential Financial. However, with a three-hour daily commute and a toddler, this proved exhausting and prompted her to look for a job closer to home. This is when she found her current role at Intel, where she’s been for the past 17 years.

Kriti has experienced numerous highlights throughout her career, including traveling globally to Ireland, Germany, Malaysia, and India to facilitate meetings, negotiating multi-million-dollar contracts, being a panel speaker at a conference with over 150 suppliers, and successfully persuading Intel to invest in her PhD program for supply chain management. Along the way, she also founded her successful Bollywood dance studio.

Asked when she feels most successful, Kriti says it’s “when my activities at work have contributed to positive outcomes on projects or when I’ve mentored someone who has risen up their career ladder.” She is likewise passionate in advocating for mothers to not put their professional careers on hold after their children are born. Kriti shares that “children mimic successful, happy, strong mothers and I believe that mothers need to be financially independent. It does not mean sacrificing or deprioritizing family time... It means complementing family with independence.” Along these lines, she has mentored numerous mothers entering the workforce or seeking to balance their full-time job demands with family responsibilities. When asked for advice for current or future economics students, Kriti recommends thinking outside the box professionally after graduating with an economics degree. She declares, “Your economic degree is valuable and worth it. Be courageous, resilient, and grateful.”
MARK BIGELOW is a professional basketball player turned entrepreneur who lives in Eagle, Idaho with his wife, Terra Bigelow, and their five children.

After graduating from BYU with a degree in economics, Mark went on to play professional basketball in Europe for four years. He then returned to the States, earned his MBA from Gonzaga University, and worked for Morgan Stanley’s Fixed Income Desk in San Francisco for three years. While there, he realized his heart wasn’t in the financial industry; so he left, becoming an entrepreneur and opening two trampoline parks in the Northwestern US with his brother and brother-in-law. As he recalls, “I really did want to be an entrepreneur in some way, shape or form. That is when I took a leap and quit a very stable, good job to do something that many people would think was borderline insane and built trampoline parks.” The parks were sold for considerable profit within three years, providing enough capital to fund a commercial development project. As a result, Mark has been working exclusively in commercial development since 2016.

Though he enjoys the accomplishment of work, and the variety that comes with wearing multiple hats in a small development company, Mark feels most successful when spending time with his family. “While I do enjoy my work, my work is the avenue to grant me quality time in my family,” he declares. However, this doesn’t mean the path has been nothing but family picnics, as he also adds, “I’ve only advanced, [grown] or learned when I made myself uncomfortable. Comfort is tempting but it stops progress.” This includes following your heart and taking leaps of faith.

Mark believes taking that leap is a frightening but important part of finding one’s future. He explains, “What sticks out to me now is that it’s very hard to know what you want to do in your professional life when you first start out. However, as the years go by you begin to figure out your strengths and weaknesses and your likes and dislikes much more clearly. Once you realize those, then it just takes courage to follow your instincts and inspiration.”

For Mark, some of those “instincts” harken back to his days at BYU when he chose to study economics because he was interested in what drove the decisions of both consumers and producers. Though he’s travelled a path of varied experiences since that time, he feels the degree and knowledge gained continue to propel his career. He states, “The law of Supply and Demand is real. There are obviously many complicated, different ways to analyze markets but in the end, the basics I learned while studying economics at BYU about Supply and Demand continue to drive all of my business decisions.”

Mark’s advice to current or future economics students is to keep pushing forward, no matter what happens in their personal life or career and recognize that no task is too big or too small for their attention and effort. “Keep your shoulder to the wheel! When all is said and done, following the teachings of Christ will lead you down the path to peace and joy. To be certain, there will be rocky times but those will be but a moment in your journey!”
ADAM COLVIN’S career path has been anything but typical. From interning with U of U HealthCare to becoming a film, TV, and commercial actor, Adam has explored a variety of industries and positions. Today, he runs the Idaho division for Health First, a health tech company, while also dabbling in the startup world working with a food innovation company called Bobelo.

Adam’s career journey began in 2007 when he decided to try his hand at acting. After volunteering for roles on Craigslist, he landed a part on the set of BYU’s “Cosmo Back to the Future,” which sparked his interest in pursuing acting professionally. After graduating from BYU in the class of 2018, he continued to act in Utah and, briefly, in Los Angeles until the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Adam describes his early film projects as “special” and has even attempted to create a fantasy trailer he believes would have impressed J.R.R. Tolkien himself.

In addition to his work with Bobelo, Adam also works for Health First, where he started by working on what was meant to be a one-time project to help them expand into Idaho. He now leads the company’s growth within that state.

When asked about his passion in his career, Adam says “Relationships are everything and being kind to others. Sharing what you are excited about and finding ways to put a smile on someone’s face is awesome.”

Adam also believes thinking critically and working hard are key to success in any industry. “The ability to think critically is the key to success and problem solving,” he says. He credits his economics degree from BYU with teaching him these skills and helping him learn that hard problems take hard work.

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Adam additionally emphasizes the impact that the economics professors had on him as a student. “The conversations we had outside of class had a deep and meaningful impact in my life. Being at BYU where I could go to a professor as a trusted mentor, with my beliefs, was incredible,” he remarks.

Throughout his career, Adam has learned that uncertainty can lead to adventure and that it’s important to move in a direction that seems interesting. He encourages others to start moving towards their goals and to let opportunities and clarity come with time. “Life is beautiful, and fun, and super hard, and not every path has to look the same. God loves us and will guide us right where we are and as we are.”

In addition to his work with Bobelo, Adam also works for Health First, where he started by working on what was meant to be a one-time project to help them expand into Idaho. He now leads the company’s growth within that state.
DIANA MYERS BLACKHAM has had a career full of adventure and has a piece of advice for economics students: “Enjoy the journey.” From her time in the Air Force, to college days working as a summer river guide, to her present role as vice president of a designer clothing store, she has lived life well and employed her economics degree along the way.

Originally majoring in computer science, Diana switched to economics when it was time for her to leave the Air Force. She recalls she found economics difficult, but this motivated her to study harder to find out why it was a challenge and then overcome it. Now, she asserts, “If you want to learn how to make good choices, study economics.”

Indeed, making strong choices and meeting challenges head on is fundamental to Diana’s approach to life. As an early example of this, as related by Diana, comes from her time as a BYU student. “When a recruiter came to BYU back in 1985, I gave him a floppy drive with my resume on it. I told him that I was passionate about saving paper. I was hired, and one of my first assignments was eliminating paper in the programming department.”

Following graduation, Diana’s first job was as a programmer for Seafirst Bank in Seattle. Five years later she found herself working as a Systems Engineer & Consultant for a small startup company in Bothell, Washington. However, as technology from the company was bought out by increasingly larger and larger companies over the next decade, she soon found herself advising several Fortune 500 companies and traveling extensively for work, enjoying assignments in areas such as Cyprus, Madrid, and Hawaii.

In 1994, at the same time Diana was working as a systems engineer and consultant, she and her husband founded David Lawrence, a designer clothing store for men and women. Later, with the birth of her son in 2002, David Lawrence became her primary career focus, supplanting the technology profession in her life. “I was able to focus on my family in conjunction with business. Being with my family brings me the greatest joy,” she explains.

Diana has found her almost three decades as vice-president of David Lawrence very rewarding, due in part to the many hats she wears as a small business owner. She is responsible for financial reporting, budgets, buying functions, technology, operations, brand management, and HR. Meanwhile, competing with department stores, company stores, and e-commerce has kept her alert to ever-changing consumer needs and trends. However, there are other highlights too, including, “glamorous fashion shows, parties and buying appointments in the designer showrooms of New York, Milan, and Paris.”

Diana shares, “My experience as an Economics student at BYU set me up to have many careers. My understanding of economics has given me a foundational background allowing me to navigate within many industries.” The choice of career and adventure has been hers, and Diana has embraced it fully, with her economics degree providing valuable support along the way.
The BYU Economics Department is known for its excellent students, faculty, and staff as well as a modern and rigorous curriculum. This level of achievement, however, is a product of humble beginnings and the persistent investments of faculty, staff, and alumni. Established in 1921, the BYU Economics Department has grown, updated its curriculum, and physically relocated to meet the changing needs of its students and the university. In this article, we outline some of the key events and decisions that allowed the department to become what it is today.
1920s–40s

The Economics Department owes its establishment to three distinguished scholars: John C. Swensen, Elmer Miller, and A. Smith Pond. Beginning in 1895, the university offered a single economics course, focusing on political economy. The teaching responsibility of this course changed hands a few times before John C. Swensen took ownership. Under his guidance, the course underwent substantial revisions, including the incorporation of new textbooks and materials to enhance the learning experience. Partly as a result of this, in 1921, the Department of Economics was founded. Within the new Department of Economics, the original, solitary economics course grew into a comprehensive offering of ten courses, with Swenson teaching eight of them himself.

After playing an influential role in founding the department, Swensen took a leave of absence to pursue a master’s degree. In his place, Elmer Miller assumed responsibility for the department. During this period, the study of economics focused largely on how institutions, such as government and business, influenced the function and productivity of the economy. Within the discipline, however, economists were increasingly relying on theoretical models to explain economic phenomena. Miller played a crucial role in bridging the gap between these two approaches, which was instrumental in modernizing the curriculum. Together, Swenson and Miller expanded the number of courses offered from 10 to 26, which is comparable to the number of courses offered today. These efforts reflected their dedication to enhancing the educational opportunities available on campus.

In the midst of the Great Depression, A. Smith Pond joined the department. Smith Pond, the first member of the Economics Department to hold a PhD, contributed to the ongoing efforts to modernize the department and curriculum. He taught numerous lower and upper-division courses. He also sought to make the study of economics more accessible and understandable to introductory economics students who had no intent of pursuing the discipline as a major. As part of this effort, and with the support of economist Albert Hart of Columbia University, he authored the introductory textbook, Essential Economics. The text was well received at academic institutions across the country and deemed a “superior volume” of the time.

1950s–60s

Following World War II, college enrollments across the country surged as military veterans took advantage of the GI Bill. During this period, the BYU Economics Department likewise experienced significant growth in student enrollment, leading to the addition of new faculty members. It was at this time that Willard Doxey, Glen Nelson, Wayne Clark, and Larry Wimmer joined the faculty.

 BYU Economics Department Chairs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
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<tr>
<td>1921–1926</td>
<td>John C. Swensen</td>
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<tr>
<td>1927–1928</td>
<td>Harris Val Hoyt</td>
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<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>John C. Swensen</td>
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<tr>
<td>1930–1935</td>
<td>Elmer Miller</td>
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<tr>
<td>1935–1951</td>
<td>A. Smith Pond</td>
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<td>1952–1955</td>
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The BYU Economics Department has been housed in: North Building, Brimhall Building, Jesse Knight Building, Knight-Mangum Hall, Kimball Tower, Faculty Office Building, Crabtree Building, and West View Building.
department. All would serve with distinction; each taking a turn as department chair. Additionally, and to more effectively align curricula with the needs of the growing student population, this time period saw the Department of Agricultural Economics split off from the Economics Department (in 1955). As part of this reorganization, the Economics Department joined the Business School, which was then housed in the Jesse Knight Building.

Though a period of substantial growth for the department and university, the 1950s and 60s were also a time of notable stress. It was an ongoing challenge to secure adequate financial resources to meet the needs of the rapidly growing department. More significantly, however, this period was a time of societal fear and upheaval within the United States.

As the Cold War reached its peak, there was concern within the Church and the university regarding the potential threat of communist indoctrination. President Wilkinson viewed the social sciences, in particular, as a potential haven for socialist thought and teaching. To combat this perceived ideological threat, President Wilkinson privately interviewed faculty members to ensure they taught free market principles, controlled the selection of textbooks used in department classes, and monitored what was taught in class. For some faculty members, this created a nerve-wracking environment and, partnered with overall funding challenges, played a roll in six department faculty members choosing to leave BYU in 1963 for other opportunities and careers. This mass exit of faculty represented a significant challenge to the progress of the department. It also diminished the reputation of the department externally.
After facing the struggles of the 1950s and 60s, the BYU Economics Department was ready to grow and flourish academically under the university administrations of Presidents Dallin H. Oaks and Jeffrey R. Holland. This era saw substantial pedagogical changes to the department, multiple physical relocations, and the arrival of notable faculty members who contributed significantly to the department's academic reputation. Among these were Clayne L. Pope, James McDonald, and J.R. Kearl.

Moving into the 1970s, the Economics Department remained a part of the Business School. However, within the Economics Department itself, tensions were growing between two ideological factions present among the faculty. One believed the department should focus on the vocational needs of students preparing for careers in business. The other believed the department should be more academically focused, seeking to bring students as close to the frontier of economic thought as possible. This tension eventually proved insurmountable, and the department split. The portion of the department which was more vocationally focused remained in the Business School and became the Department of Managerial Economics. The more academically focused faction retained the designation of Department of Economics and left the Business School to join the College of Social Sciences which, in 1981, would become the College of Family, Home, and Social Sciences.

As part of these organizational changes, the Economics Department relocated to the Knight Mangum Hall (1977). The department then briefly moved to the Spencer W. Kimball Tower (1981) and then, in 1983, to the Faculty Office Building (FOB); or as James McDonald called it, the Friendliest of Buildings.

The FOB was built on the remains of the press box from the original Cougar Stadium, constructed in 1929. After demolition of the stadium in 1972, following construction of what is known today as LaVell Edwards Stadium, the press box was all that was left, with a restroom on each side. These structural artifacts were deemed useful, and the decision was made to incorporate them into the construction of the new Faculty Office Building. Over time, the FOB transformed into a hub of research rooms catering to various disciplines. Professors from fields such as psychol-
The 1970s–90s were marked by a surge in research, as well as community involvement. Faculty, including David Spencer, Dean Dutton, Dick Butler, Farrell Jensen, James McDonald, J.R. Kearl, Michael Ransom, Rulon Pope, and Val Lambson, published in top economics journals. Additionally, working in conjunction with Nobel Prize winner, Robert Fogel, faculty members Clayne L. Pope and Larry T. Wimmer explored key questions in economic history including measuring and explaining health, mortality, and wealth in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Of particular note, in 1988, Arden Pope began a project that, though initiated as simply helping a student with a research topic, would result in a huge discovery, change U.S. federal regulations, and pave the way for climate researchers. It also generated intense controversy into the 1990s. Pope had suggested to a student in one of his classes that she do research on the impact of Geneva Steel, a local mill that had closed for a year and then reopened, on the health of individuals living near it. The student later dropped Pope’s class without completing the assignment but, as an avid researcher who loved a good natural experiment, Pope decided to pursue the project himself. His research discovered the pollution generated by the steel mill created significant health problems within the community. This was evidenced by the fact that when the mill closed for a solitary year, the number of hospital visits for pediatric respiratory issues was reduced by more than 50% relative to the prior years.

The publication of this groundbreaking research generated both shock and opposition nationwide. A slander campaign against Pope followed, with negative coverage printed in newspaper articles and critical letters sent to the university. The mill was a large employer in Utah County and, while Pope intended solely to point out pollution effects, his publication was interpreted as a direct attack on the mill itself. Persevering and working with a group of world-class environmental researchers, Pope demonstrated that pollution not only increased hospital admissions for respiratory problems but also had potentially fatal effects. Eventually, after years of legal battles, Pope’s research was recognized for its compelling validity and became influential in the establishment of EPA clean air standards.

2000s–2020s

When the Economics Department left the Business School, it established a cutting-edge curriculum with intensive statistics and econometrics training. As a prominent econometrician, James McDonald was at the forefront of these efforts. Computers were also becoming both cheaper and more powerful at the same time. The scope and importance of the internet dramatically increased and companies and government agencies began collecting and analyzing data at unprecedented scales. In response, economics as a discipline was also becoming more empirically focused. Meanwhile, in computer science, researchers were developing new methods of forecasting and classification using enormous data sets and machine learning. These methods assumed increasing importance as companies...
leveraged their massive datasets to target advertisement, make product recommendations, and make forecasts more effectively. In conjunction with these changes, department graduates were increasingly being hired into positions where they were expected to effectively analyze data using sophisticated tools. Consequently, to meet these needs and expectations, the department engaged in a series of updates to its curriculum.

In 2007, the department began offering what is now ECON 398, Applied Econometrics. Then, in 2015, what is now ECON 484, Machine Learning, was also added. These courses took BYU economics students to the frontier of undergraduate economic education, covering key methods in causal inference, including topics such as difference-in-differences, regression discontinuity designs, and instrumental variables, as well as data science methods including random forest, factor analysis, and LASSO.

During this period, the department also began a proactive endeavor to increase representation of women in the major. The department hired its first female permanent faculty members, Olga Stoddard and Emily Leslie, in 2012 and 2019 respectively. These faculty hires, combined with increased support for the Women in Economics Student Association, coincided with substantial increases in female enrollment within the major. Expanding from 51 female majors in 2010 to 111 in 2023, female students are increasingly well-represented as research and teaching assistants in the department and fill leadership positions in the Economics Students Association. Today, female students comprise 22% of declared economics majors and the push to make economics a welcome major for women continues.

In addition to these curricular changes and diversity initiatives, the 2000s-2020s time period also saw further physical relocation of the Economics Department. In 2018, during a round of pick-up basketball over lunch, a member of the economics faculty learned that the FOB was slated to be demolished and replaced. This was distressing to members of the faculty who felt at home in the FOB, their tattered building with substandard heating and air-conditioning. The new building would not only be a change, but bring loss of sole ownership as the new building was to be shared with the Statistics Department and the Maxwell Institute.

The FOB was demolished in 2019 and the Economics Department temporarily moved to the Crabtree Building while construction of a new building was underway. Then, in 2020, the West View Building was unveiled. Directly south of the Tanner Building, the West View Building stands two stories tall, with a remarkable view of the valley and Utah Lake. Notably, the heating and air-conditioning systems work much better than in the old FOB. This modern facility represents a fresh chapter in the department’s growth into the new decade. With two computer labs, several RA and TA labs, and spacious offices and conference rooms for the faculty, the West View Building provides the perfect setting for the department to continue to grow.
The BYU Economics Department currently hosts 22 full-time faculty members and 3 adjunct faculty, teaching a robust curriculum of 30 courses. Additionally, the department employs 112 students in various office positions, such as research assistants, teaching assistants, graders, and specialists. With 483 economics majors and 32 minors, the department takes pride in its many notable students, who actively participate and showcase their knowledge at conferences and events across campus each year. The department also boasts thousands of remarkable alumni scattered across the globe, who make significant contributions in their respective fields, further enhancing the reputation and influence of the BYU Economics Department.

The Economics Department is currently located in the West View Building, built on the same site as the FOB, with construction completed in 2020.

Notable Alums

Clayton Christensen graduated in 1975 with a summa cum laude distinction in economics. After completing his undergraduate degree, he studied applied econometrics at Queen's College in England. Upon returning to the US, Christensen enrolled at Harvard University, where he obtained his MBA in 1979. In 1992, after career in business, he earned his Doctor of Business Administration also from Harvard. He subsequently joined the faculty at Harvard and became a full professor in 1998. Christensen's contributions to academia have been recognized through numerous accolades, including five honorary doctorates. Christensen was a prolific writer. He authored nine best-selling books and published over 100 articles. His book “The Innovator's Dilemma” garnered widespread acclaim, winning the Global Business Book Award as the best business book of the year in 1997. Outside of his professional achievements, Christensen resided in Massachusetts with his wife until his passing in 2021.

Whitney K. Newey completed his undergraduate studies at BYU in 1978, earning a BA in economics. Continuing his academic pursuits, Newey went on to receive his PhD from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 1983. Following the completion of his doctoral studies, he began his career as an assistant professor at Princeton University, where he taught from 1983 to 1990. Newey was promoted to the position of associate professor in 1988. In 1990, he returned to MIT as a professor in the Department of Economics and has remained there ever since. Throughout his career, Newey has made significant contributions to the field of econometrics. Notably, he served as the chair of the Economics Department from 2011 to 2016, showcasing his leadership and dedication to advancing the department’s academic mission. Outside of his professional accomplishments, Newey resides in Massachusetts with his wife and is a proud parent of five children.

Melinda Wheelwright Brown graduated from BYU in 1992, earning a BS in economics. Interestingly, Brown has also made notable contributions in the field of literature. She authored the book, “Eve and Adam: Discovering the Beautiful Balance,” which was published in 2020. The book focuses on high-lighting the importance of Eve and Adam’s mission together as equals, emphasizing the beauty and significance of their balanced interdependence. Beyond her literary pursuits, Brown is actively involved in nonprofit work, including her collaboration with organizations such as the Elizabeth Smart Foundation and Fight the New Drug. She also runs an Instagram account called “Brave like Eve” (@brave.like.eve) with her daughters. Through this platform, they share inspiration and insights about being women in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Brown is married and has four children and three grandchildren.
The BYU College of Family, Home, and Social Sciences sends surveys to all graduating econ students every year. Out of 149 graduates between September 2022 and August 2023, we collected 65 survey responses. Those survey responses are reflected in this compilation of statistics.

**STUDENT EXPERIENCES**

18.5% plan to attend graduate school after graduation

**COMPANIES**

- Brigham Young University
- BYU Pathway
- Cougar Consulting
- Cornerstone Research
- Cordova Analytics
- Clearstone Associates
- Citizens of Decency
- Cicero
- CHOICE Humanitarian
- Caprock Wealth
- Summit Capital
- Boston Consulting Group
- Blue Cross of Idaho
- BlocPower
- Bain & Co.
- Yoodlize
- Maverik
- Bank of America
- Weave
- Tessel Supply
- Social Venture Academy
- Vermilion Rock Advisors
- Utah Down Syndrom Foundation
- Western Governors University
- Social Venture Academy
- SkillStruck
- Skep Foundation
- Seek2Work
- Sapa Investment Group
- Deloitte
- Clear Stone Associates

**GRAD SCHOOL**

18.5% plan to attend graduate school after graduation

- BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
- BIOLOGY
- EDUCATION
- LAW
- ECONOMICS
- MARKETING
- PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

programs of interest
78.5% plan to work full time

63.5% have accepted job offers

COMPANIES

WKS Restaurant Group
Qualtrics
Scalar
Cornerstone Research
Pax Momentum
Jerran Software Solutions
Merrill Financial
PACS, Inc.
Oliver Wyman
AutoFarm Price Ford
J.P. Morgan Private Bank
Deloitte
Chick-fil-A
KeyBank
Charles River Associates
IBM
Bryce & Company
Bain & Co.
BKD, LLP
Blue Cross of Idaho
AutoFarm Price Ford
Amazon
Boston Consulting Group
Cicero
Academy Mortgage Corp
Blue Raven
Collective Health
GroqGrow, Inc
InfoTrax Systems
CapRock Wealth Advisement
Fidelity Investments
Prism Care
Solcius, LLC
Relay
Nexio
Morgan Stanley
Graphite Systems
Crumble
Connor Consulting
Compass Lexecon
Target Optical
ZAGG
Let’s Grow!

By Scott Bradford

Three Kinds of Growth
We live in a world of growth. I marvel at, and would like to discuss, three types: modern economic growth, the latter-day growth of God’s Kingdom, and personal spiritual growth.

For almost all of human history, world real average income per person grew slowly. 200 years ago, it was only about twice its 1 AD level and only about three times higher than in mankind’s earliest days. Over the past 200 years, though, real income per person has expanded 15 times! Even the slowest growing region, sub-Saharan Africa, has quintupled its real income per person. While too many people suffer from economic insecurity, modern economic growth has led to longer, healthier, more comfortable lives, with more free time, for billions of God’s children. When did this growth start? Angus Maddison and other leading scholars point to the year 1820 (1999 January 11. “Poor Until 1820”. Wall Street Journal). Multiple modern Apostles have taught that this confluence with the Restoration is no coincidence. For instance, Joseph Fielding Smith said (1926 October):

[...]

So, the Restoration has energized modern economic growth. The latter, in turn, has enabled the growth of God’s kingdom by supporting liberty, creating the resources needed to spread the gospel, and allowing for a larger population. These two types of interdependent world-changing growth have also enabled greater personal spiritual growth. Economic growth has shielded billions of people from subsistence living and thus given them time to spend on spiritual growth. And the Church has given millions of people tools that foster spiritual growth, such as covenants and ordinances, inspired teachings, temples, Sunday meetings, and callings and other service opportunities. We, blessed with time and tools, can choose to grow. As former Primary General President Dwan J. Young said (1982 April): “[G]rowth is ... the divine challenge given to each soul as it enters mortality. ... [W]e can use this time on earth to bring optimum growth and development because we have the power to make choices.”

Constrained Choice and Spiritual Growth

Static Analysis
The choice to grow is constrained, since we have limited time. So, let’s use choice theory to analyze the optimum growth mentioned by Sister Young! Figure 1 illustrates allocating limited time across two activities: “investing in spiritual growth” ($x$) and “doing other good works” ($y$). The budget constraint captures the number of hours available for these two activities, denoted $T$ and the indifference curves (ICs) capture the payoffs. We maximize spiritual utility by choosing wisely, as shown.

Goods and Bads
Sometimes “bads” tempt us by appearing good. Now, let $y$ be something that seems good at the time but actually harms us. When we think that something bad is good, we choose the interior solution, as in Figure 1. But when one of the goods is actually bad, the ICs slope up, as shown in Figure 2. This is because, if we get more of the good ($x$), we need more of the bad ($y$) to put us back to the same
level of well-being. In this case, we maximize spiritual welfare by going to the corner (symbolic of going to the Chief Cornerstone) and eschewing bad choices. Perhaps we can adapt a primary song to this situation: “If you chance to meet a bad, do not let it stay. Quickly flip your IC map and send that bad away.”

Dynamic Analysis

From a dynamic perspective, choosing to boost spiritual growth now is an investment that brings future rewards. Figure 3 illustrates. The horizontal axis shows the amount of good works one does this time period, while the vertical axis shows next period’s works.

The Production Possibilities Frontier (PPF) shows the trade-off between those two endeavors, and the ICs capture their overall spiritual welfare. If we neglect building spiritual strength and burn ourselves out on good works now, we sit at point E, with no energy left for good works later. On the other hand, as we invest in spiritual growth—so-called saw sharpening—we reduce good works now but enable them later. The optimum occurs where an IC is tangent to the PPF, as shown. The distance between E and the amount of today’s good works shows current investment in spiritual growth, which then yields power to do good works later. (James Cardon discussed spiritual investments in last year’s Spiritual Insights article.)

Our Efforts and Christ’s Power Create Spiritual Growth until the Perfect Day

Although spiritual growth requires us to choose well, we need Christ’s power, too. Bishop Gérald Caussé said (2020 April): “Through His Atonement, Jesus Christ … provides enabling power through which His disciples may ‘put off the natural man’, progress ‘line upon line’, and increase in holiness so that one day they might become perfect beings in the image of Christ, qualified to live again with God and inherit all the blessings of the kingdom of heaven.”

Alma 32:28-41 illuminates this process. As we plant the word in our hearts, and do not cast it out, the Lord’s power infuses us, and our testimonies grow and “expand our minds”. As we further nourish our testimonies with great care, faith, diligence, and patience, they become trees of everlasting life.

Section 50:24 describes spiritual growth this way: “[H]e that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light growtheth brighter and brighter until the perfect day.” Mosiah 5:2 indicates that we can progress to where we have “no more disposition to do evil”. To me, this is the perfect day. Alexander B. Morrison taught that service helps propel us toward that day (1999 October): “[W]hen we … care for and serve others, … overcome selfishness with love, … place the welfare of others above our own, … [and] bear each other’s burdens, … then we … draw from His power and become more and more like Him, growing ‘brighter and brighter’, if we persist, ‘until the perfect day’.”

Examples of Spiritual Growth

What does spiritual growth look like? Sometimes it includes casting off addictions. Benjamin M. Z. Tai (2020 April) told of a man who smoked heavily and had tried many times to quit. Eventually, he sought help from Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, and the missionaries. He committed to prayer, Book of Mormon study, and other spiritual practices. He overcame his addiction. Fifteen years later, he said, “I don’t remember when exactly I quit smoking, but as I tried hard every day to do the things I knew I needed to do to invite the Spirit of the Lord into my life and kept doing them, I was no longer attracted to cigarettes and have not been since.”

Gordon B. Hinckley (2002 April, “We Walk by Faith”) related the story of a man who, after opposing the Church, grew into a mighty disciple,
with the help of people who served him and of Church opportunities. “Let me tell you of a man I know. ... His wife felt there was something missing in their lives. [A] relative ... suggested that she call the missionaries. ... But the husband was rude to them and told them not to come again. Months passed. One day another missionary ... decided that he and his companion would try again. ...They knocked on the door; the man answered. Could they come in for a few minutes? they asked. He consented. The missionary said, in effect, ‘I wonder if you know how to pray.’ The man answered that he knew the Lord’s Prayer. The missionary said, ‘That is good, but let me tell you how to give a personal prayer.’ He went on to explain, ... It was a pleasant experience for the man. He had gleaned a little light and understanding, a touch of faith. He was ready to try another step. Line upon line, the missionaries patiently taught him. ... [His] faith grew into a dim light of understanding. Friends from his branch gathered around to reassure him and answer his questions. The men played tennis with him, and he and his family were invited to their homes for dinner. He was baptized, and that was a giant step of faith. The branch president asked him to be a Scoutmaster to four boys. That led to other responsibilities, and the light of faith strengthened ... with each new ... experience. That has continued. Today he stands as a capable and loved stake president, a leader of great wisdom and understanding, and, above all, a man of great faith.

I had the privilege of helping a man overcome serious sin and grow spiritually. His addiction seemed so severe that I wondered how he could return to the path of growth and joy. He had a beautiful family with several children, and I grieved at the thought of his sins harming them. I also had hope, though, as he humbled himself and talked openly with his bishop about his struggles. A stake membership council was called, and he willingly agreed to participate. I feared he would lose his membership, but Heavenly Father inspired a different decision, which best promoted the spiritual growth needed to restore him to full fellowship. With the help of priesthood blessings and counseling, he walked the difficult path back and became a leader in his ward and a faithful saint who leads his children by example.”

Neill F. Marriott, former Young Women General Presidency Counselor, shared a temple experience that led to spiritual growth (2014 October). “Some years ago our family encountered a major challenge. I went to the temple and there prayed earnestly for help. ... I received a clear impression of my weaknesses, and I was shocked. ... I saw a proud woman doing things her own way. ...I cried out in my heart to Heavenly Father and said, ‘I don’t want to be that woman, but how do I change?’ Through the pure spirit of revelation in the temple, I was taught of my utter need for a Redeemer. I turned immediately to the Savior Jesus Christ in my thoughts and felt my anguish melt away and a great hope spring up in my heart. ... It was clear to me that a self-absorbed natural woman ‘is an enemy to God’ and to people in her sphere of influence. In the temple that day I learned it was only through the Atonement of Jesus Christ that my prideful nature could change. ... I felt His love keenly, and I knew He would teach me ... and change me if I gave my heart to Him, holding back nothing. I still fight my weaknesses, but I trust in the divine help of the Atonement. This pure instruction came because I entered the holy temple, seeking relief and answers.”

**Purging and Progress**

Christ said (John 15:1-2): “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch ... that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.” The Godhead purge us of sin and promote our spiritual growth when we embrace repentance, as described by President Nelson (2019 April, “We Can Do Better and Be Better”): “Nothing is more liberating, more ennobling, or more crucial to our individual progression than ... a regular, daily focus on repentance. ... When we choose to repent, we ... allow the Savior to transform us into the best version of ourselves. We choose to grow spiritually and receive joy—the joy of redemption in Him.” In short, as President Nelson said in 2007 April: “Repentance is the Lord’s regimen for spiritual growth.” I think that the prophet’s call to repent daily does not include an expectation of progress every single day. I see his counsel as an invitation to partner with the Lord daily in this life of ups and downs.

Sometimes, the Godhead purge us of external damage inflicted by others or by disease. Such tribulations can be dark, deep, and seemingly endless, but Christ promises healing and a time of no more sorrow or pain (Revelation 21:4). Little Orphan Annie was right: “The sun'll come out tomorrow. Bet your bottom dollar that tomorrow there’ll be sun.” Our personal downturns end, just as all recessions and even the Great Depression ended. The Son of God will come—to us personally, through the Holy Ghost, and to the whole world at the Second Coming.

**Gratitude**

I thank the Lord for His growth gifts. I also love the thought of many BYU Economics alumni and students making great choices that boost their own spiritual growth and empower them to give unique and valuable contributions to modern economic growth, the growth of God’s kingdom, and the spiritual growth of others. I look forward to continuing this joyous journey with you all!
“One suggestion I have if the person wants to find a business-related major, I would apply to the Strategy minor. They have a bigger network and graduates from the program are always trying to hire people in the program. I would take 378, 388, 398, and 484 asap. Those are the classes that give you the more technical skills. I would also get into all the business clubs that you can, they send so many jobs in those e-mails and slack channels, so it is most definitely helpful.” – Jorge Zamudio

“Work together, take time on the concepts and homework, and really enjoy the process of learning.” – Josh Stoeltzing

“Tailor your 400 level classes to courses that you are highly interested in! No matter how difficult such classes may be or perceived by many, your enjoyment in the class will likely contribute to a greater learning experience and a higher grade!” – Dylan Sablan

“Experiential learning is priceless. Also, spending time with professors during their office hours is priceless. Also, the TAs will be your best friend and expedite the learning process significantly.” – Robert Rex

“Look for teaching assistant and research assistant positions early. You might not think you are qualified, but even as a freshman/sophomore, you can start getting good experience. This will in turn help you decide what to do for a career. I also advise meeting with a career advisor/academic advisor as soon as you can. I wish I had taken the career search more seriously at the beginning. Nobody will do it for you. You have to reach out.” – Jared Saxton

“Don’t count yourself out of applying for an internship even if you don’t perfectly fit the requirements listed. An economics degree will open many more doors than you think it will!” – Marissa Pinnock

“Go to the career fairs and networking events. I didn’t take them super seriously at first, but ended up landing an internship that turned into a full-time job after graduation from one of those events.” – Laura Dean

“Do not procrastinate looking for internships and full-time positions. Do what the students at the Marriott School do: join clubs, network, network, and network. Get certifications: SIE, Coding Certifications, etc. that make you stand out from the crowd. Pair your economics degree with a double major or minor in a subject that makes you WRITE. The econ program is great for quant but you need to be able to express those quant skills in a way that is fluid and comprehensible.” – Ethan Gillet
LIZZIE MUKAI is a senior majoring in economics and pursuing minors in Arabic and mathematics. Throughout the course of her BYU career in economics, she has worked as both a research assistant and a teaching assistant. She also participated in undergraduate economic research projects. Lizzie’s favorite courses so far have been Econ 380 (Intermediate Microeconomic Theory I) and Econ 398 (Applied Econometrics). In fact, Econ 380 is the course which convinced her to stick with economics in the beginning.

At this moment in time, Lizzie has no well-defined career plan but hopes to spend her professional life learning more about humans and their institutions, while helping people at the same time. To her, research seems like a good way to try both, and she’s open to seeing where life takes her. She’s also considering an Econ PhD in the future, as her involvement in research and the 500-level classes have influenced her strongly toward the PhD track.

Lizzie feels most successful when she realizes she can do or understand something that used to make no sense to her. She says, “The reminder that ignorance is actionable, that I am in fact capable of learning and improving my skills, is really empowering for me.” As for her passion for economics, it has evolved with time. Initially, she was interested in the idea of mathematically modeling behavior and wanted to be involved in a field that managed to do that. Now, her focus is on becoming better at research—using econometrics to understand how the world works.

In reflecting on how her economics degree has helped in her personal life, Lizzie says, “I appreciate how economics has helped shape the way I view people’s actions.” She explains that economic concepts and ideas from classes have helped her make sense of how people, including herself, respond to life’s challenges.

Overall, Lizzie’s academic journey in economics has been an exciting and rewarding experience, allowing her to learn and grow in many ways. Her passion for research and her drive to understand how the world works will undoubtedly take her far in her future endeavors.

RYAN WESLEY STRONG is a 2023 BYU graduate with a double major in mathematics and economics. His interest in economics came early and it was at just 16 years old that he decided to become an economist. As soon as he started college, he declared economics as his major.

When asked about his favorite and least favorite courses, Ryan says, “My favorite course so far has been Econ 398. I love the quasi-experimental methods.” As for the courses he found the most challenging, Econ 382 (Intermediate Microeconomic Theory II) was the most difficult, while Econ 398 (Applied Econometrics) was the easiest. He is passionate about econometrics, and his love for the subject is evident in his research and academic pursuits.

Ryan feels most successful when he receives his grades at the end of the semester, as they validate his hard work and dedication. The crowning moment of Ryan’s academic career thus far was being accepted into Cornell where, beginning the fall of 2023, he will pursue an economics PhD. “Becoming a professor is the long-term goal. I like teaching and research and so academia is the place to be,” Ryan says.

Ryan’s advice to current and future economics students is to make the most of their professors and TAs. “Go into office hours. There is nothing more important than talking to your professors and TAs for getting assistance,” he says. Ryan also emphasizes the impact of being involved in the major. “All my friends are economics majors (well, almost), and so it has helped me immensely. Office hours are honestly so much fun.” Ryan also tells current and future students “Leave your phone at home. You’ll be more productive that way.”

Overall, Ryan’s academic journey has been a rewarding one, and he is excited about his future as an economist. His passion for econometrics and dedication to teaching and research make him a promising candidate for a successful career in academia, and he can’t wait to take his next step in life at Cornell.
ELAINA YEAGER is a 2023 economics graduate from Brigham Young University. She double majored in economics and interdisciplinary humanities. Elaina is currently pursuing her passions and is excited to see what the future holds.

As a student at BYU, Elaina worked as a teaching assistant, primarily for classes within her two majors. In the TA role, she genuinely prized the opportunity to help her assigned students through the classes she was assigned to. Additionally, these TA experiences allowed her to keep the basics of these disciplines in her mind, which helped her to then build upon them and understand more complex concepts. She also served as president of the Women in Economics club her final year, supporting, encouraging, and mentoring many female students in the major.

While at BYU, Elaina loved all her economics electives, especially Econ 475 (Public Economics) and Econ 440 (Environmental Economics), which overlap with her abiding interest in the field of law. Elaina explained that these courses helped her gain a deeper understanding of subjects she was already passionate about in economics. She also particularly enjoyed Econ 398 (Applied Econometrics), and found it incredibly useful.

Outside the classroom, Elaina has found her economics degree to be helpful in her social life, too. “I consistently boast that the economics department is the best department on campus,” Elaina remarks. “We have great faculty and an equally great student body. Many of my closest friends at BYU have come from meeting other students in my economics classes. I love walking through the West View Building and just seeing who’s around in the labs and saying hi to everyone.”

Currently, Elaina is keeping an open mind about which specialization path she wants to pursue. “I would love to keep using my economics degree or my humanities degree in [a] law career with Law and Economics, Environmental Law, or Art Law, but I’m keeping an open mind about everything,” she says. Her love of economics, passion for law, and amazing academic performance promise to open many opportunities for her.

HANS PAULSEN HARRISON, a senior majoring in economics with a minor in Chinese, initially started his BYU career as an international relations major. However, after taking, and withdrawing from, PoliSci 200, he realized his passions lay elsewhere. Where though, he was unsure. Then, when Econ 110 sparked his interest, Hans decided to switch his major to economics. He says, “Economics has helped me better understand the world and how [I] and others interact with it.” He adds that it’s also allowed him to learn concepts that have helped him with internship placement and more.

As an economics student, Hans feels most successful when he creates a network of students to work with in class and when he’s able to achieve a good grade, even after failing the first midterm. Meanwhile, the highlights of Hans’ degree path to-date have been his interactions with professors and different students he’s met. “I make it a point to get to know my professors, and they get to know me through my humorous in-class remarks,” he says.

Hans’ passion is social relationships and he believes that economics has helped him understand such relationships more deeply. “The biggest thing I’m passionate about in economics is how it allows us to understand relationships. Relationships between humans, firms, and or governments.” This interest in relationships is not just academic. Hans believes that the best way to maximize utility is through “genuine connection with others.”

Hans has held multiple jobs/internships throughout his college career. This past summer he worked at JPMorgan Chase, and he hopes to find international business opportunities, specifically in East Asia and China. For the time being though, he works as COO of a food prep start-up called FoodX that he runs with some partners. Hans will soon begin working for the management consulting firm L.E.K.

When asked to give advice to current or future economics students, Hans advises them to “create a network of other students and get to know your professors.” He believes economics can help create a one-of-a-kind present and future if you let it. Hans also recommends listening to his podcast, “Humans with Hans,” where he has had several professors join him for interviews and discussions.

ELAINA YEAGER

HANS PAULSEN HARRISON
EXPLORING POSSIBILITIES THROUGH INTERNSHIPS

BY MATHEUS HENRIQUE ARAUJO DE MEDEIROS

Throughout my years at BYU, I have come to learn that internships are the main key to uncovering a world of possibilities during our college years. As an economics student, I have had the privilege of experiencing several internships that have left a big impact on my academic career and personal growth. Starting early on in college, these internships not only prepared me for the labor market but also played a crucial role in shaping my future.

My first internship was in my sophomore year. Although it was an unpaid opportunity, the experience I gained and the valuable additions to my resume proved to be a great foundation for future success. It helped me gain practical skills and a deeper understanding of the professional environment, making me a more prepared candidate for potential employers. I did not know yet, but this early preparation would pave the way for even greater opportunities. Paid internships followed, eventually leading me to the company I had always dreamed of interning for. Now, the possibility of starting my career there is within reach, and I couldn’t be more grateful.

One of the most significant advantages of internships lies in their ability to bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-life application. As an economics student, I find this practical experience is particularly valuable. Through internships, I have had the incredible opportunity to notice firsthand how economic theories translate into tangible outcomes that shape businesses and society. They are real! This journey has sharpened my critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills, which are all fundamental for success in the field of economics. Internships have truly been crucial in nurturing these essential abilities.

Internships go beyond just acquiring skills. They also offer a chance to build networks and develop effective communication abilities. Throughout my internships, I have had the privilege of connecting with professionals, mentors, and fellow interns, all of whom have played a vital role in establishing meaningful relationships within the labor market. These connections have not only provided invaluable guidance and mentorship but have also opened doors to potential future opportunities. Internships have also strengthened my interpersonal and communication skills by exposing me to individuals from diverse backgrounds. Learning to collaborate effectively and navigate professional settings with confidence has been one of the greatest lessons. These soft skills have been vital for building a successful career and are probably the most helpful ones to talk about during job interviews.

One of the biggest challenges that economics students face is choosing a career path from the multitude of possibilities our major offers. Internships have been an invaluable guiding light in this regard. By exploring internships across various sectors and industries, I’ve gained exposure to different career paths, allowing me to gain insights into their unique demands and rewards. These experiences have helped me uncover my strengths, passions, and areas of expertise; empowering me to make informed decisions about my future career trajectory. Internships have truly acted as a mentor, leading me toward a career path aligned with my aspirations.

Internships have a transformative power in our college experience. Every student should be engaged in looking for these professional opportunities. You do not need to feel 100% ready for the job, nor do you need to show expertise in the field. Start with a genuine willingness to learn, to contribute, and to do your best. Through internships, I’ve gained practical skills, witnessed the real-world application of economic theories, built networks, and discovered some of my weaknesses and strengths. For economics students, internships are not just opportunities, they are a game-changer. Start early! They offer a chance to bridge the gap between theory and practice, setting us on a path to success. I am incredibly grateful for the blessings that internships have brought into my life, and I encourage every student to look for these opportunities.

“I am incredibly grateful for the blessings that internships have brought into my life, and I encourage every student to look for these opportunities.”
ABBIGAIL WILLIS was chosen to represent the College of Family, Home, and Social Sciences as the BYU Economics valedictorian of the April 2023 graduation class. She was selected for this position based on GPA, professor recommendations, and overall excellence within the department.

Abby is the daughter of Grant and Jennifer Willis and the oldest of five children. Two of her brothers currently attend BYU. Abby was born in Orem, Utah, and grew up in Silver Spring, Maryland. She served a mission to Calgary, Canada from 2019-2020. Abby was a double major in economics and mathematics. As an undergraduate, she worked as a teaching assistant and research assistant for various professors in the Economics Department. Working as Dr. Denning’s lead RA for two years, she stood out for her skill at implementing required tasks. Abby was also very creative and worked hard to generate research ideas.

Abby chose economics because it allowed for human-centered analysis within a rigorous mathematical framework. Growing up, she always loved the humanities and history, but also appreciated the objectivity of mathematics. Economics has allowed her to combine both of these interests. The highlights of her coursework at BYU were writing her Econ 488 and Econ 588 papers, respectively, about the effects of expanding naloxone access on deaths from opioid overdose and about the effects of expanding paid family leave policies on mothers’ labor market outcomes. Abby loves that economics gives her opportunities to answer questions about the world. Writing these papers solidified her desire to go to graduate school. Her love for economics will continue to guide her academic pursuits as she attends UC Berkeley to pursue her PhD in economics.
“Economics is everywhere, and understanding economics can help you make better decisions and lead a happier life.”

- Tyler Cowen