Beacons of Light

THOUGHTFUL REFLECTIONS FROM
BYU ECONOMICS DEPARTMENT
STUDENTS, FACULTY, AND ALUMNI

BYU
150

For BYU's 150th Anniversary, we invited faculty, students, and alumni of the BYU Economics Department to reflect on how their experiences with the BYU Economics Department have helped them experience light, share light, and go forth to serve as beacons of light to the world.

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Katherine Stevens Andersen, B.S. 2021

After graduation, I worked as a data engineer until I had my first baby, and now I am a stay-at-home mother. Though I didn't directly use economics in my job as a data engineer, I used many skills/knowledge that I picked up through the Economics major, including: programming, data cleaning, data structures, understanding of multivariate regressions/statistics, understanding the difference between prediction and inference problems and how to know which type of question your data/model setup can answer, general problem-solving skills.

Though all these professional skills were useful to me, the greater impact by far was all of the contributions Economics principles made to my understanding of the world, and of optimal decision making, and so on. I've never been too into finance or money-related stuff, so I did not anticipate becoming an Econ major (I switched from Pre-Animation). But in Econ 110, I fell in love with concepts like diminishing marginal returns, comparative advantage, opportunity cost, sunk costs, incentives, and so on--principles that have applications in every aspect of our lives--from actual consumer decisions to practical life decisions such as choice of major or study habits, to optimization of our spiritual progress. Any time there's scarcity of our resources and a question of optimization; there's an opportunity to apply Economics principles. And since we live in a world of scarcity, that opportunity is absolutely everywhere. I think understanding these principles has helped me to be a better person, a better family member, and a better member of society.

I think every so often about a lecture in my Econ and Law class where Dr. Kearl was talking about the optimal amount of crime. And how the phrase sounds odd at first (isn't the optimal amount of crime 0?), but once you factor in the costs (ie: law-enforcement costs the taxpayer, and there's diminishing marginal returns on increased law enforcement in terms of decreasing crime), it becomes clear that the optimal amount of crime is non-0. For

example, at the point where you are spending a ridiculous additional amount of money to catch a few more jaywalkers, most people would probably agree that the money would be better used elsewhere. It struck me as a profound lesson spiritually, as well. I had been used to thinking that the optimal amount of sin is 0, and so it is, in the long run, when we have eternity to work on ourselves. But in the short run, our time and emotional energy is limited, and maximizing our spirituality is not our only priority. Beyond the fact that we hit a brick-wall at 24-hours-a-day and 100% of our emotional and mental energy, it doesn't even make sense to allocate that entire amount of emotional/mental/time resources to our spirituality--we also need to sleep and hold jobs and spend time with our families. In a sense, we must accept the fact that the short-run optimal amount of sin (or at the very least, doing-less-spiritually-than-you-could-have) is non-0. There's also a trade-off happening between different spiritual attributes as well, and so similarly, sometimes you must accept not being able to focus on one spiritual area in order to better focus on another spiritual area for now. This concept has been very freeing and productive for me spiritually.

As a TA, it was incredibly rewarding to be able to help other people in their learning journey. There was something so beautiful and gratifying about the process of digging into their confusion, trying lots of different methods to explain the concept, gradually zeroing in on the source of the misunderstanding, and being able to see the light of understanding dawn in their faces. I loved being able to help, and being in that position for them helped me to better cope with the times when I am the one struggling (which is most of the time). Since I had a clear understanding of the concept in my own mind, I had no doubt that they could understand it too, it was just a matter of time, and of finding the right way to explain it so that they would understand. If they were struggling, I never once thought "oh, they're just too stupid to understand," I only thought, "hmm, I must not be understanding their confusion right, I need to ask more questions" or "I need to try a different way

of explaining it." This experience of being on the teaching side has boosted my confidence when I'm struggling, not only with academic concepts, but with spiritual growth as well. When I struggle, I tend to panic and feel deficient and worry that the struggle reflects poorly on me as a person. But seeing things from the other side taught me that the issue is not that I am stupid or bad, it just needs more time, and other ways of approaching the problem.

I also loved all the spiritual thoughts from my Economics professors. Dr. vom Lehn did one at the start of every class. The thoughts were brief but meaningful, and I still think about a few of them from time to time. I remember them with as much fondness as the lectures themselves. I know the idea of nostalgia/fondness for Economics lectures probably sounds odd, but I really do feel that way, and I loved the spiritual thoughts too. There was just something so inspiring about hearing these thoughts from someone so impressive academically, a beautiful example of the spiritual and the academic being united in the same mind. It's something I'd love to be able to emulate.

Thomas Arnett, B.S. 2009

When I returned from my mission, I felt a deep desire to pursue work that would help me better understand people, systems, and institutions—so that I could contribute to improving society and making a meaningful difference in people's lives. However, I wasn't sure how to translate those aspirations into a career. I explored several different majors, searching for the right fit, until I took Econ 110 as part of a business minor requirement. Up to that point, I had assumed that economics was primarily about financial markets and government policy. But Professor Kearl completely reshaped my perspective, showing how economics offers powerful theories and models for understanding a wide range of human behavior and societal phenomena. That course opened my eyes to a framework for making sense of the world, and it ultimately led me to switch my major to economics. Since graduating

from BYU, I've dedicated my career to the field of K–12 education. I now work at the Clayton Christensen Institute, a think tank where I use models and theories—many of which build on what I learned in my undergraduate studies—to analyze the systemic barriers that prevent the transformation of education. My work focuses on understanding how we can create a more effective and equitable education system that better serves the diverse needs of students and families across the U.S. and beyond. Looking back, my economics education was foundational in shaping the way I think, problem-solve, and approach complex societal challenges. The mindsets, frameworks, and analytical skills I developed in the BYU Economics Department continue to be central to my work every day.

Rees Atkins, B.S. 2016

Many in the economics department encouraged seeking truth, not being afraid of the truth, and putting the gospel of Jesus Christ first. For example, one professor (about a decade ago now) encouraged us at the end of a semester to weigh the evidence of the gospel being true, and to recognize that the burden of proof should be greater for those trying to disprove the gospel, given the enormous blessings of living it if it is true, similar to the government having an especially high burden to prove a crime given the great harm of convicting somebody who is innocent. Another piece of advice was to marry well, which I took, and I have felt encouraged that I can put family and God first while still having a joyful, interesting, and otherwise successful career. I am now looking to go back to school to learn more about economics, so this has been on my mind lately.

Rachel Bagnall, B.S. 2019

BYU economics exposed me to great ideas and empowered me with critical thinking skills. I was inspired to try to use my talents for good, try to make a difference, and serve others.

Spencer Bailey, Current Student, Exp. B.S. 2027

Studying economics under the professors and teachers here at BYU has been a source of light in my life. Each one of them has taken genuine interest in my goals and plans, and my current wellbeing as a student. As I have learned models and new ways to view the world, I have been inspired to be as caring and invested in the success of others as my professors have been with me.

Andrew Baxter, B.S. 2009

I came off my mission to Mexico passionate about helping solve problems in developing countries. I tried a few different degrees at BYU before finding economics and realizing that it had the tools to understand and find

sustainable solutions for people in these countries. My career has been focused on helping develop technology that benefits the environment, and I am not involved in non-profit work bringing economic development to countries around the world.

Billy Bayne, B.S. 2001

I loved my economic experience at BYU. Professor Kearl, Pope, Thurston and Eide were the most influential for me. I can remember talking about Guns and Butter and self-interest with a fellow student and roommate for several hours after a Kearl lecture. I really enjoyed my Macro classes from Professor Thurston. I loved a symposium that was put on by the econ department entitled the Economics of Beauty. I went to it with my girlfriend at the time who is now my wife and still occasionally have chats about it as we see the research presented in that symposium play out in the world. My econ degree was a great springboard into better thinking. It has been a while since I graduated but I use the "thinking" tool developed in those classes all the time in work and family. I'm actually surprised how often I hearken back to lectures and notes from classes in my everyday life. I am very grateful for those professors and the time they took to teach me.

James Behunin, B.A. 1983

My studies in economics provided a great foundation for my career in government. My interest in economics, with monetary policy in particular, led me to an internship with the US Senate Banking Committee where I helped staff prepare for a report to the committee by Federal Reserve Chairman Paul Volker. Beyond being a historic event, the experience with the US Senate led me to a career working for the Utah State Legislature. On many occasions my understanding of basic economics informed my recommendations to the legislature, such as the notion that water use in the state would be more efficient if it were subjected to market forces, i.e. people should pay for what they use. Similarly, my foundation in economics led me to recommend to the

legislature that Utah's state parks become profit centers in which a portion of the proceeds from the park be used to pay for further enhancements that could in turn generate an increased visitation. Before I made that recommendation, the parks were operated as cost centers in which the Department of Natural Resources just covered the cost of operations, with no thought about investing in activities that could enhance the visitor experience and drive further volume. So those are just a couple of examples of how my study of economics helped me craft good public policy.

Diana Myers Blackham, B.A. 1986

The instructors and professors for my BYU economics classes back in the early 80's were probably very proficient in their understanding of economics, but at the time, it didn't take much to impress me knowledge wise. What did impress me was their encouragement, compassion, understanding, kindness, approachability and patience. The economics degree served as a temporal vehicle, but emulating their behavior serves as an eternal one.

Matthew Bloomfield, B.A. 2016

I have a specific memory that really impacted me.

I was taking a statistics class from Joey McMurray, and we were talking about probability. All of a sudden, he just kind of stopped and started talking about what things in life we can predict with a probability of one (perfectly), and then what types of things we can know with a probability of one. Dr McMurray began to share about his testimony and his understanding of the nature of God, and how he didn't feel he was at a probability of one when it came to that, but that he was approaching it.

It was one of the most impactful things that happened to me at BYU as I considered my own testimony and where I wanted to be and felt ok that I too didn't know it with a probability of one but was on the right path.

I've reflected upon that and felt its comfort countless times throughout my life.

Jeffrey Bohn, B.A. 1990

As I look back to my time studying economics at a BYU, I am struck by how much one professor can profoundly influence a former student's life. I am one of those former students. Professor C. Arden Pope's guidance to me as a developing researcher continues to pay dividends in my work. I don't recall how it happened, but I became Dr. Pope's research assistant early in my economics study at BYU. He had just finished seminal research focused on the impact of Geneva Steel's mid-1980s shutdown on local incidence of respiratory illness. He had shown in a definitive way how increases in local respiratory illness can be attributed primarily to the steel mill's air pollution (by comparing data at times when the mill operated versus when it was shut down.)

I entered Dr. Pope's office for the first time with a fuzzy notion of how to do research and graduated with a solid set of research skills in statistics and econometrics that have served me well through a master's degree and Ph.D. (UC Berkeley, Quantitative Finance). This interaction paid off early with my honors thesis supporting Dr. Pope's research. Later, my research career, which spans academia and financial institutions' research groups, benefited (and continues to benefit) greatly from the solid foundation of skills I learned from Arden. What is almost more important than these skills, I learned integrity from the way he lived. He (and to some extent I—though not as crazy as what he endured) were targeted by supporters of Geneva Steel and their public-relations firm after clean air groups started promoting the research. Despite egregious behavior on the part of executives at Geneva Steel, some Utah politicians, and even a few BYU administrators, Arden never lost his cool (that I saw), stuck to his research conclusions without backing down, and maintained research integrity throughout some difficult times.

Arden also taught me to stay true to one's vision even when it seems unconventional and too different from the status quo. His work in epidemiology seemed a strange path for an economist when I worked with

him as a student. Today, this cross-disciplinary work not only doesn't draw much criticism, but it is also praised for avoiding research echo-chamber stagnation. This type of research now has numerous important implications for economics (e.g., for a negative externalities project I am about to start). I was once on the typical tenure-track academic path; however, I eventually determined that for empirical researchers (like me) a hybridized career track where I sometimes work in industry-- supervising research teams and institutes (my most recent large-scale project was setting up and managing a research institute at a Swiss Reinsurer in Zürich, Switzerland)—and I sometimes work in academia—teaching seminars, serving as a director at university-affiliated research institutes, and managing cross academic-industry research teams—created more opportunities for me. During my graduate program, I was told that one had to choose between academia and industry. My advisor at the time further emphasized that tenure-track academia is the best choice for someone with my profile. The world has changed. (To start, data for empirical work is much more plentiful in the context of industry research projects.) Staying true to my own vision-- as I remembered Arden's focus on his path-- has served me well.

One's career takes interesting twists and turns—and sometimes we encounter synchronicity. This reflection highlights one of those turns. Because of recent work I am doing in the area of energy economics (I currently work as a senior advisor to energy investors and insurers), I am back to looking at air pollution (among other energy production negative externalities) more than 35 years later. This research is just beginning and strangely, I received an e-mail from BYU's Economics Department (as I am launching a new project related to the research referenced in this reflection) asking to submit reflections on my time at BYU. From Arden and other Economics Faculty (Farrell Jensen, Jim McDonald, and Rulon Pope to name a few more excellent mentors), I learned a range of robust research skills. I have been lucky to build on this foundation (also shout out to the Honors Program, which made the general education

classes more useful than they would have been otherwise) as my research efforts are threaded with economics, statistics, game theory, and ecology. As I have built (and continue to build) on what I learned from Arden and other quality BYU economists, I have published, taught, and monetized research projects that use my training in areas that range across risk modeling, machine learning, and environmental economics in a way that makes the world cleaner, healthier, resilient, and more productive. Arden and his colleagues instilled in me the importance of leaving the world a better place regardless of the difficulties that may arise when data and inferences don't match what you, funders, or other activists want. As I reflect on my time at BYU-- working with Arden, learning economics (and quite a bit of math), and learning how to do quality research, I realize how much an effective mentor's influence has benefited me over the arc of my career. I am hopeful my colleagues, clients, employees, and students can say the same of me. Arden's influence will span generations.

Mark Boud, B.A. 1985

I remember my time studying Economics at BYU with great fondness. I realize that Professor Jim Kearl's Econ 101 class is considered a Hiss and a Byword by some, but I couldn't get enough of it. Comparative advantages associated with Crusoe's and Friday's trade of coconuts and fish had me hooked (excuse the pun). I ended up working in the Econ Lab and as Professor Kearl's assistant for two years, helping to pay for my last 2 years of college.

From BYU, I was hired by a small real estate consultancy that specialized in economic analysis as it applies to real estate development. I turned that experience into my own company, **Real Estate Economics**, which I led from 1995 to 2015, after which I successfully sold REE to a national competitor (Hanley Wood) headquartered in Washington, DC. I served as Hanley Wood's Chief Economist for 5 years and thoroughly enjoyed it. Easing into retirement, I now continue to consult with a handful of long-term clients.

I'm deeply grateful for my experience at BYU. My education in economics helped me to think analytically, to work out difficult problems and issues, and to enjoy the journey. My professors were true mentors – not only in economics but also in life. Knowledge is Light, and I'm grateful for the light given to me during my experience within BYU's Economics Department.

Scott Bradford, B.A. 1987, Faculty

My economics colleagues stand as beacons of light, to campus and the world. A brief submission like this cannot capture all that light. I illustrate by highlighting one or two rays for each.

Matt Butler

He is an unsung beacon with a pleasant personality who uses his intellectual skills to minimize risk and harm to missionaries around the world.

James Cardon

He quietly lives a life of light, which includes showing concern for others. Among faculty, he has shown an unmatched interest in my welfare. Recently, he spent a lot of time with me sharing his insights as I was trying to figure which new health plan would work best for my wife and me. In meetings, he is delightfully efficient, imparting great wisdom per word spoken.

Scott Condie

He has endured challenges with grace and hope, emerging with even greater strength. His example has inspired more optimism in me. He asks penetrating questions that enlighten us all.

Tanner Eastmond

He spreads Christlike good cheer, even when trying to set up to teach his next class. Last fall, he taught in the same room in the time slot after mine and welcomed with grace my annoying conversation as I was leaving, even though he had to focus on his upcoming task.

Eric Eide

He has a unique combination of wisdom, smarts, openness, and humility. He has a gift for sharing struggles in ways that enlighten and uplift. He is an exemplary colleague who succeeds while handling challenges with emotional resilience and spiritual calm.

Brigham Frandsen

He generously shares his brilliant econometrics light. In addition to co-authoring and thereby boosting his colleagues' work quality, he enhances other research without official credit or fanfare. I once had an econometrics question on a paper I was writing with others, and he with gladness took the time to help me see how to proceed.

JR Kearl

He has visibility with 110 and the Jerusalem Center, but he also works behind the scenes to strengthen BYU with informal conversations and personal meetings. He has great wisdom: when he speaks, we listen. He has navigated family health challenges with grace.

Lars Lefgren

He has a bright mind that can illuminate how to improve research in all areas of economics. His department chairmanship and church service also light the way in the administrative and spiritual realms.

Emily Leslie

In her relatively short time here, she has perhaps done more to build collegiality than anyone else. She has hosted faculty gatherings at her home and organized department temple trips.

Joey McMurray

He combines top-notch intelligence with refined humility. He has produced research of the highest quality and yet seeks to learn from others. His research success likely stems from his learning so well from others.

Rich Patterson

He naturally spreads happiness with his positive personality. He connects easily with all kinds of people and thus enlightens the department and the university.

Brennan Platt

He takes an active interest in enhancing our department. He contributes excellent ideas in research and administrative discussions. His theory skills have boosted many colleagues' research and broadened human understanding.

Arden Pope

His openness spreads his bright inner light. He freely shares thoughts that illuminate how to succeed in research, teaching, and life. He enthusiastically embraces working with, and teaching, others.

Jaren Pope

His good-natured warmth complements his keen mind. He conveys a genuine interest in others and really does want to know how you are doing when he asks. People look to him as a model of success in many realms: academic, athletic, spiritual, social.

Joe Price

He exemplifies how to combine high level research with student engagement. His discipline and commitment to doing good have spread light far and wide.

Josh Price

He uses his love of sports to strengthen our community. He organized an easy football fantasy league that even I could join, even though I, along with Josh, got eliminated first. 😊

Mark Showalter

He is the good sir. I can count on cheerful greetings from him whenever we meet. His conversations naturally shine light on the blessings of working at BYU, strengthening students, and expanding human knowledge.

Dave Sims

He has institutional wisdom. In his role as American Heritage director, he has his finger on BYU's pulse as he strives to channel resources toward student and faculty thriving. He has performed well a very difficult task: Chairing

American Heritage meetings in ways that get results, though such meetings involve a wide variety of faculty.

Olga Stoddard

She has emerged from the deep trial of widowhood with good cheer and hope. She emanates positivity and has a gift for creating connections with many different people. She is a pioneering woman who, despite fewer initial privileges than most, has forged a path for other women and has created an example of success for us all.

Christian vom Lehn

His incisive mind and a gospel-centered spirit allow him to direct robust energy and bright light toward learning and teaching. He thinks deeply and shares abundantly so that others can understand and see a better path.

Steve Waters

He shines light on life's bright and humorous aspects. His conversations evoke good cheer and collegial warmth.

Riley Wilson

He combines diligence, a knack for illuminating timely issues, and human warmth to expand our knowledge and strengthen our bonds as God's children.

Anthony Yim

He has enthusiasm for research and discipline that allows him to excel. He has handled with grace the stress caused by Chinese oppression of his Hong Kong home, shining light despite darkness.

Sterling Brennan, B.A. 1983

I transferred to BYU in 1981, starting as a junior. At the same time, I changed my major from biological science at a UC school to economics. It was an

exciting time to study economics: it was the day of supply side economics. I enjoyed my professors and fellow students. I had the privilege of taking a law and economics class at the law school, taught by Professor Jim Kearl. That class, as much as anything else, confirmed my desire to attend law school. I hoped to be able to use my economics training in the practice of law—and occasionally I do.

I have always been grateful for my BYU education.

Rick Bryson, B.A. 1981

I majored in economics at BYU by process of elimination. I changed majors every semester for seven semesters, the seventh being economics. I still graduated in four years since I previously had satisfied the mathematics prerequisites as a math, physics and electrical engineering major. After those three fields of study, I majored in English, psychology and political science. I joked that economics was the only major left I had not tried. It wasn't so much that I was indecisive as that I enjoyed each of these subjects. I relished the rigor, logic and exactness of my first three majors and the human exploration of the latter three.

Economics was the perfect mathematical social science hybrid. It involved both the most complex mathematics I had studied (in Professor McDonald's Advanced Microeconomics) and the most logical and interesting explanation of human behavior. It was analytically challenging and rewarding, particularly Professor Kearl's Law and Economics, even if I only pretended to understand some of it. And I especially enjoyed it as a way to view and understand the world and its machinations.

When I next went off to law school, I assumed I would never use my economics again. How wrong I was.

First, my study of economics prepared me well for law school and legal practice. Learning to think analytically and logically "like a lawyer" felt very

natural after delving into economics. Choice and consequence, cause and effect, freedom and regulation were common themes in both law and economics.

Second, my BYU economics background greatly helped me as I wrestled as a lawyer with complex issues of economic damages in commercial and intellectual property litigation. In most such cases, expert witness testimony is necessary to establish or attack the amount of economic damages. You typically live or die by what the expert witnesses testify to. In one case in which my corporate client was both suing and being sued, my expert accountant witness calculated my client's damages at ten million dollars. Using my economics training, I was able to persuade my expert witness that my client's damages were actually forty million dollars, a significant difference.

The third application of my economics training was even more direct. After practicing law for over thirty years, I finally scratched my teaching itch and began teaching law at the law school and undergraduate levels. Transitioning from practicing law to studying and teaching those foundational systems felt like the difference between a carpenter’s worthy craft of hammering nails versus an architect’s designing the grand structure to be built. I had enjoyed the former for over thirty years but now relished the latter.

I then was surprised when I received an offer to teach a university-level interdisciplinary economics course at an advanced charter high school. I was even more surprised when I accepted the offer, which I did out of a desire both to give back as well as to re-engage in the truths in which economics, another foundational system, had so enthralled me decades earlier.

As I dusted off my economic cobwebs, I was thrilled to rediscover economics’ big picture. The first words out of my mouth in the first class of each semester were: "If you could design the ultimate economic system, what would its guiding principles be? It does not need to be the economic system our

society currently operates under or anyone operates under. Write down its primary principles and governing rules." I asked a similar question on the first day of the other foundational systems courses I taught in law, government, and religion. We would spend the rest of the semester discussing that issue. It was fascinating to explore and open students' minds to the economic concepts of choice, opportunity cost, incentives, externalities and freedom and its ramifications.

My study of economics, which began by process of elimination, evolved by process of exploration of it as a foundational system. And I have savored it all.

Dan Burton, B.A. 1997

I feel grateful for the strong, quantitative, and strategically rigorous education I received at BYU in the Economics department. Requiring us as students to not only understand the high-level theory, but also the quantitative analysis

and proofs, from a micro-economic level to a macro-economic level and helping us develop the strategic skill to understand “why” markets respond the way they do, at a micro and at a macro level, was incredibly helpful preparation for the rest of my career experiences. It directly prepared me for my first job after graduation in strategy consulting at the Boston Consulting Group, where I was, multiple times, tasked with building economic models including supply curves at a company-specific, microeconomic level, and macro-economic industry models to help a healthcare client understand the impact of economic payment changes at the federal and private level.

This training also prepared me well for my graduate studies at Harvard Business School, particularly my first- and second-year strategy courses. In these classes, the thought-process-discipline to really, deeply understand the “why” behind drivers of differentiation and competitive advantage was fundamental to deepening my understanding of corporate strategy. Throughout my career experiences in large technology companies like HP and Micron, I repeatedly hearkened back to lessons from the economics department, including once again building supply and demand models to try to predict price fluctuations in the semiconductor DRAM and NAND markets at Micron. They have also informed all our strategic choices and development in these past 14 years at Health Catalyst, operating within a healthcare ecosystem with major economic model shifts, including payment structure changes and risk shifting. I’m very grateful for this solid foundational preparation that has helped me over the course of my 30-year full-time career.

I’m also grateful for the grounding in the gospel that pervaded my experience at BYU – the sense that all this learning and insight should be used to not only create wealth but also to improve the world, to relieve suffering, to make our life experiences better, healthier, happier. This sense of higher purpose has also foundationally shaped our focus at Health Catalyst on a mission-orientation – to enable measurable improvement in the healthcare

ecosystem, so that lives can be saved, injuries prevented, healing and greater health can occur, and increased happiness and wellbeing can be experienced throughout the world. This mission orientation brings much greater meaning and purpose to our work, and this desire to realize that mission has been directly influenced by that pervasive sense of mission that is a central part of the BYU experience. It is one of the reasons my wife Sarah and I are so grateful that each of our four children have had the blessing of attending BYU and being likewise impacted by this sense of higher purpose. Thank you to each professor, each administrator, who contributes to this wonderful environment!

Dick Butler, Emeritus Faculty

Having been on many faculties in many different states, one of the economics department's strengths has always been the embrace (and historically, BYU as an institution's embrace) of the fact that research, and the teaching of good research methods, is the essential part of the scholarly transmission process. Josh Wood, a recent hire in Church's Risk Management department where I serve, told me his 388 paper was one of the main components to his first hire.

Beyond that recognition, great individuals have lit up my career in the economics department. First, Diane--my girlfriend of 52 years--who will appropriately be recognized as a co-author on all my papers when priorities are set right on the other side of the veil. Second, great chairs that kept me from being fired (thanks, Larry and every chair subsequently), the department from being downgraded (thanks, Rulon and Clayne), and SAS still being accessible within the department walls (thanks, Lars). Third, competent and kind secretarial support that remains unraveled not only anywhere else on campus, but across all the campuses where I have worked. And lastly, inspirational colleagues who asked great questions, and prodded me in important ways (especially Jim M., Del G., and Val L.—I only regret not stealing

more from you than I did). Please forgive me, one and all, if ever I was too Chicago-y to you.

Seth Cannon, B.S. 2024

One of my favorite things about the BYU economics department has always been the professors' willingness to be teachers and mentors to their students. So many of my professors made me feel comfortable coming to ask them for help and advice, whether it was about the class material or general life questions. During my senior year, I was applying for econ PhD programs, and several professors spent hours helping me figure out where I should apply and eventually where I should attend. Even after I graduated, professors have been willing to take time out of their busy schedules to help me navigate decisions about graduate school.

One time I was especially grateful for the professors' kindness was during my junior year when I was hospitalized for over a week. While I still in the hospital, the economics professor I was TA'ing let me know he would be covering my office hours to help the students not fall behind, the economics professor I was an RA for was fine with me taking the rest of the semester off to recover, and the economics professor I was taking a class from offered to meet as soon as I got released. At that point, I thought I would need to withdraw from my classes that semester, but he listened to my fears and helped me work out a way to stay enrolled.

I imagine guiding a lost undergraduate might not carry the same prestige as devoting all your time to research, but the mentorship and care I experienced in the Economics Department made a profound difference in my life. Their willingness to serve—through both small and significant acts—illuminated my path, and I am deeply grateful to have had the opportunity to be a part of such a community.

Rob Carlson, B.A. 1978

When I read your email the first memory that came to mind was my Econ 110 professor, Dr. Kearl (I do not recall his first name; I took the class his first-year teaching at BYU). I found out later he taught us much more than was normal for beginning economics. It may have overwhelmed some students, but in me it ignited a fascination with economics and impelled me to change my major to economics. I later became a TA for the department and TA'ed for several 110 classes – I was amazed at how different they were from what Dr. Kearl taught us; frankly, I never would have majored in economics without his beginning economics-on-steroids class. In that class we covered the beginning economics material and some intermediate macro and micro materials (which I realized later when I took those classes and already had a good acquaintance with a significant portion of the materials).

I have never worked as an economist, but I have used the economic mindset learned at BYU throughout my career to see the macro and micro impacts of what was happening. It has been a great foundation in viewing and understanding the business world I worked in (primarily U.S. – Japanese related business) and its interactions with (and impacts from) the larger economy. Related to that, the training also equipped me to have intelligent conversations with people I interacted with as part of my work – and in business that is a large part of developing good working relationships.

Bryan Chambers, B.A. 1989

As a recently returned missionary sophomore in 1986, I decided to major in economics. I made that decision because at the time, an economics degree did not require as many economics credit hours as most other degree programs required of their program classes. I figured that would enable me the freedom to pursue a Spanish minor and take other elective classes. I had also heard that the economics majors were having success getting admitted

into some of the most competitive law schools in the country, and I thought I wanted to go to law school.

I had already taken the necessary calculus class before my mission when I was a freshman, so I would not need to take additional math. However, after my first economics class, I quickly learned how important calculus was for most of the economics classes that I took. My freshman pre-mission calculus class at the time seemed to be a review of the very good calculus class I took in high school, and I had spent two years on my mission not thinking about or applying calculus. Consequently, when my economics professors would spend an entire hour and fifteen-minute class working on some kind of derivation to prove some concept in economics, I struggled.

My choice of majors, however, helped me become a teaching assistant in the American Heritage Department. At the time, American Heritage teaching assistant positions were some of the most sought-after teaching assistant positions on campus. The interdisciplinary course combined American history, political science, and economics into a semester course. The Department received many applications from history and political science majors but not as many from economics majors. I think being an economics major likely helped my application stand out over the many other very qualified candidates they had to choose from. I ended up serving as an American Heritage TA for four semesters as an undergraduate student and then again for four semesters during my final two years at the J Reuben Clark Law School. Being involved as a teaching assistant in the American Heritage Department across eight semesters was one of the highlights of my education enabling me to not only become involved in teaching, but also to see how the course evolved during that time.

My economics degree and my experience as an American Heritage teaching assistant probably helped me to get into law school at BYU which led to my legal career first as a prosecutor and currently as a superior court judge. I often think about some of those days struggling with the math of many of the

economics classes I took. I realize that I probably would have needed more math to try to pursue any type of advanced degree in economics. I also realize that those struggles were not the only struggles I would ever have in my career or life. In my career, I have often had assignments that at first seemed as difficult as trying to follow some of those economics classes. The classes taught me that if I exerted myself and kept at it, I could succeed. Nearly 35 years after graduation, I would have a hard time today following any of the calculus of those economics classes, but I have found the concepts and analytical skills I learned getting my economics degree useful in my legal career and in trying to evaluate the world around me.

Jenny Charters, Current Student, Exp. B.S. 2025

My time at BYU has been a cherished experience that I will hold close to my heart for the rest of my life. Throughout my years here, the Economics Department has broadened my academic knowledge and changed the way I view the world. More than that, it's helped me discover who I am and who I want to become, filling my life with light and unforgettable memories.

At the beginning of my sophomore year, I started working in the Record Linking Lab as a research assistant for Dr. Joe Price. During this experience, I cultivated a love for family history work, confidence in my ability to collaborate with a team, and the skills necessary to collect and clean data for research publications. Above all, the Record Linking Lab introduced me to some of the most kind, driven, and hardworking individuals I had ever met. The light they brought into my life inspired me to set goals and seek knowledge.

In addition to my work as a research assistant, I also had the opportunity to serve in the Economics Student Association presidency. Planning events for students to connect with each other and faculty has been some of my most cherished memories at BYU. The light this department and university have

brought into my life inspires me to share it with others through ongoing service and charity.

McKenna Morgan Christensen, B.S. 2018

Personally, I think of my economics degree as having given me a set of tools to inform good policy to then make the world a better place (thereby sharing light, I suppose).

When I was partway through my degree, I told one of my fellow classmates that my goal after graduation was to “use economics to save the world”, which sounds ambitious or potentially delusional, depending on your perspective. But I was empowered by my courses and professors that I could truly use what I was learning to make the world a better place.

After graduating from BYU, I received a Master of Public Policy degree, which eventually led to my current employment in commercial tobacco control for the state of Utah. My work to prevent nicotine addiction and support cessation services with the aim of improving the health of Utahns is a major way that I use my experience from BYU Econ to serve.

Robert Christensen, B.S. 1968

I think the most significant experience I had relating to the BYU Economics Department was the class in Econometrics I took as a senior. The class was taught by Merrill Bateman, a new professor who had come to BYU from the Air Force Academy. The class ignited my interest in computers (punch cards in those days!) and gave me knowledge that helped me as I earned an MBA degree at the University of California, Berkeley. My interest in computers continued to aid me throughout an Air Force career and in civilian jobs later in life. As you know, Professor Bateman went on to serve as president of BYU, and later as the Provo Temple President where my wife and I were fortunate to be serving as ordinance workers.

James Clark, B.A. 1976

I remember well my time at BYU studying economics under Clayne Pope, Larry Wimmer and Wayne Clark. I was granted a tuition scholarship after my freshman year and the monies I earned working as a teaching assistant in the Economics Department for Professors Pope and Wimmer funded the remainder of my meager college expenses.

The main part of my career was working for the U.S. Congress for over twenty years, primarily as the Chief Tax Counsel for the Committee on Ways and Means. It was an interesting job at the heart of the tax policy world which allowed me to participate in Washington politics at a very high level. The training I received in economics, particularly "price theory," gave me the tools I needed to think logically about the myriad issues I faced in my job – things as basic as the incidence of a tax and the disruptive nature of tariffs.

During my tenure as the Chief Tax Counsel for the U.S. Congress, I developed and taught a course in Tax Policy at the Georgetown University Law Center. Again, my training in economics was fundamental since the core of that class was economics.

I retired from my employment with the U.S. Congress at age 52 and started a second career as a real estate investor. Again, my training in economics aided me greatly. The Economics of Real Estate class I took at BYU taught me how to value a real estate investment opportunity using several different approaches.

After graduating from BYU, I obtained a law degree from Oxford University. My decision to study at Oxford was spurred, in significant part, by Professor Wayne Clark. Afterward, I returned to my home state of Virginia where I completed a law degree at the University of Virginia, and somewhat later, an advanced degree in tax law from New York University. Despite all this education, my economics degree at BYU was the foundational part of my

education that made possible an interesting career in tax policy and real estate investing.

Adam Colvin, B.S. 2018

I loved my time in the BYU economics program. Not only did I cherish the time and things I learned in class, but there are several experiences out of class that made me appreciate how unique and valuable the BYU experience is.

After one particular conversation I had with Professor Platt, I walked away feeling so grateful that I was at a university where I could discuss personal and profound ideas, grounded in the truth of gospel. There were other conversations with other professors that meant so much, and I felt lucky to be somewhere where I could have a professor support me and wanting to make good choices around topics like morality, dating, finances, etc.

On a lighter note, I still remember the time I tried to set up Professor McMurray because he didn't have his ring that day cuz it was being resized. This led to a conversation on dating, and he gave me great advice on how to find someone to date.

Having common values with my professors also led to a lot of fun. When you speak a common language and have the same foundation, it opens doors for personal connection. Professor Waters teasing me on lots of things, Professor Cardon and I sharing a humorous moment when I made a highly inappropriate comment about the California milk cartels. I also loved how excited Professor Price would get hearing about the movie projects I was in. The list goes on, every Professor I had taught me something valuable.

Alex Compton, B.A. 2013

One of the biggest contributions I gained from the BYU economics department was teaching me a new and different way of thinking. I learned

much about how the incentives that people perceive greatly impact their decisions.

Since graduating from BYU, I have gone on to become a surgeon. Certainly some, but not very many, follow a similar path. Coming in to medicine with an economics background has provided me a very unique mindset. This has served me well in my current position as one of our clinic leaders. I can approach truly difficult situations with a different background than any of my colleagues. Taking my background for granted, I often think that these ideas are self-evident. But then I will frequently hear "Oh, I had never thought of it like that." It's a completely different pathway that my brain can go down. And I owe it to the great teachings of the BYU econ professors such as Drs. Kearl, Pope^2, Lefgren, and Waters.

Randy Conover, B.S. 1994

My Economics degree was very influential in my life and the service to God and others.

1. Diversify, Diversify, Diversify

If I were to pick one principle that influenced me is the power of diversifying. I am a family physician. A profession with many skills and ability to adapt due to diverse abilities. I served in the Military as a Major in Army serving in Iraq as a Battalion Surgeon. I have a few companies. First, I lease commercial Real Estate and just began a Real Estate Company to Develop and manage properties as well with the help of my business partner. Second, I am an author of Children's books with the first books to be out this year 2025. Lastly, I am a consultant teaching Medical Students for the next generation of doctors.

2. Earning Interest Rates and living within your means

Basic financial rules have benefited both my family's life as well as those I've served. I have been a Bishop and currently serve in a Stake Presidency assisting Bishops as they help others become Self Reliant.

3. Investing for Retirement and life of service

I grew up poor financially and had very little knowledge of stock, bonds, mutual funds and how macroeconomics affects all these companies and markets. As I have gone through life, paying attention to politics and Fed Reserve has helped me make more sound and productive decisions. I invest in Mutual Funds mostly, but have a portfolio very diverse with land, assets and cash.

4. Economics degree from BYU

Spiritual growth never has to be sacrificed for providing for family and others. A matter of fact, only when we prioritize our discipleship will we have a better chance to see things as they really are, including our own weaknesses and strengths.

God bless BYU and our pursuit to be Christlike with all our heart, might, mind and strength,

Matthew Creer, B.A. 1994

When I enrolled at BYU, I initially chose engineering as my major. However, after a year, I realized it wasn't the right fit for me. I admired my uncle, who had graduated with a degree in Economics, and considered him both smart and cool.

I expressed my interest in switching to Economics to my dad, who wasn't initially thrilled and encouraged me to consider accounting instead. Luckily, I was able to pursue both, majoring in Economics and Accounting.

What I love about Economics is that it teaches you how to think critically, ask meaningful questions, and use theory and data to support your decisions. I've

heard that Economics is the study of how incentives affect people's decisions, and I strive to apply this understanding in my own life and interactions with others.

Economics is relevant to everything—business, relationships, and even religion. I'm very grateful for BYU's Economics program and the professors who had a profound impact on my education and life.

Kimball Crockett, B.S. 2021

BYU's Economics Department pushed me to think critically, analyze data, and apply real-world problem-solving—skills that have shaped my entire career. While working in venture capital during school, I was surrounded by brilliant investors who challenged me to level up. These mentors helped me see economic models in a whole new way. Suddenly, the unnecessarily long lists of test answers weren't just painful—they were a masterclass in attention to detail, precision, and decision-making under uncertainty. After graduating, I applied these principles to real-world challenges—helping fund projects like cold storage in Zambia, financial inclusion in India, and food processing advancements in the U.S., where tackling ambiguity led to innovative, sustainable solutions. Later, in medical device pricing strategy, I applied the same economic frameworks to develop global pricing models and revenue strategies, driving significant growth. Beyond academics, BYU gave me lifelong friends and mentors, reinforcing that success isn't just about knowing the right answer—it's about knowing how to think, adapt & iterate, and create lasting impact alongside incredible people.

Greg Davis, B.A. 1994

I graduated with a degree in Economics in 1994. Studying economics at BYU had a profound impact on my life and career. The classes and professors were instrumental in my development. Additionally, I made life-long friends in the program that were strengthened at graduate school and continue to

today and into the next generation as our children consider themselves cousins.

I will share two thoughts although I could share many more. It was my freshman year, and I signed up for Professor Kearl's Econ 110 class. I had not decided on my major yet. I had heard good things about Professor Kearl's class but was warned that it would be hard. And it was. But at the same time, I felt enlightened by the concepts of the basic economic theories taught so masterfully by Professor Kearl. I remember being confused and excited at the same time. I have a memory of Professor Kearl saying what a good trade we were getting with Japan since we gave them pieces of paper, and we got cars and stereos in return. The class would argue with Professor Kearl, but he was always correct in the end. I can remember refreshing the material with my study group as we prepared for the difficult exams. I loved the concepts, and this inspired me to choose Economics for my major.

After my mission, I decided to take a class on Financial Markets with Professor Jensen. It was deep math. We had to derive the formulas for Compound Annual Growth Rates, Internal Rates of Return, Black Scholes, etc. Now we just ask for Excel to calculate the figures, but he had us prove the formulas…by memory. It was also hard, but very thought-provoking. This class propelled me to start my career working in New York doing investment banking. This led to many other opportunities including receiving my MBA and continuing a career in finance. Professor Jensen's class had a huge impact on those decisions – and he wrote one of my letters of recommendation when I applied to business school.

I am grateful for the patience of the professors and the TA's as they explained these concepts to me again and again. I am very grateful for my decision to pursue a degree in Economics from BYU. I have reflected on that decision many times and I have recognized what a blessing it was to me.

Tanner Day, Current Student, Exp. B.S. 2026

I remember taking ECON 110, my first university economics course, and being blown away at the new way it allowed me to look at the world. I had always been interested in business and public policy, and I was hungry for the skills to better interpret what was going on in the world, as well as find a way to create value and bless the lives of others.

I was struck by one of the most basic ideas of economic theory—that most people are similarly motivated, so differences in behavior typically come from differences in incentives. It ran very contrary to the somewhat prominent idea by many today that there are good people and bad people in the world, and in order to do any good you need to somehow defeat or get rid of the bad people. Instead, there are good and bad incentive structures, so we can create a lot of good by analyzing and correcting incentives structures that lead a lot of people to less than ideal outcomes.

Additionally, economics has given me the skills to solve complex problems in rational ways. I have developed strong analytical skills to get to the heart of a problem and frameworks with which I can go about finding innovative and simple solutions. My economics training has given me confidence that I can thrive in my future career and provide value for the organizations I will work for and the clients I will serve. I have also learned a great deal of intellectual humility, bringing curiosity and patience to every new problem.

The economics faculty, staff, and students have been some of the greatest beacons of light to me during my time at BYU. Seeing intelligent and accomplished people boldly proclaim the truth of the restored gospel has been a strengthening experience for me. I have loved the one-on-one interactions and the ability to connect with and learn from the people in and around the BYU Economics department.

I plan on using the skills and lessons I have learned from BYU economics to be a beacon of light to those around me in the future. I plan to live the gospel to

the best of my abilities, as well as improve the lives of others through my career and service in my community. I love the economics program at BYU, and I am so grateful for the beacon of light it has been to me during my time in college.

Christian Dees, B.A. 2007

I'm honored to reflect on how my time in the BYU Economics Department has shaped my personal and professional journey.

The education I received as an economics major at BYU was pivotal in preparing me for opportunities I couldn't have imagined at the time. The principles I learned in financial economics provided me with the tools to analyze and address complex challenges during my time at Fannie Mae and Lehman Brothers following the 2008 financial crisis. My BYU education was key to positioning me for those roles at such a critical juncture.

Later, I applied the behavioral economics principles I studied to excel in a career in change management, where understanding human decision-making and market dynamics allowed me to drive impactful organizational transformations. Those same skills positioned me well to pursue and complete an MBA, further broadening my ability to contribute to both business and community efforts.

Now, as a Director of Human Resources, I often draw on the blend of economic theory and practical application I gained at BYU. Having a strong understanding of market impacts and human behavior has been instrumental in developing people-focused strategies and navigating the ever-changing workforce landscape.

I'm grateful for the light and foundation the Economics Department provided, which has influenced my career and my ability to serve and contribute to others' success.

Jason Despain, B.S. 2012

As an attorney for an international peacekeeping mission, I rely daily on lessons learned in the BYU Economics Department. The lessons about logic are helpful, but more than anything, I rely on the light-filled lessons learned about friendship and teamwork. I'll explain.

Like many Econ students, I was a loner. I preferred the independence of individualism, and I rarely collaborated with others at school. Then, Nathan Law set me straight.

Nathan and I were not immediate friends. We first crossed paths as freshman in back-to-back world history classes. He sat directly in front of me. Other than proximity, we never interacted.

Next, Nathan and I were assigned adjoining classrooms in the Missionary Training Center. When we saw each other, we said, "Hey—you're that guy from history class." Again, other than proximity, we had no other interactions.

Then, two years later, Nathan and I took the same Russian history class at BYU. We said, "Hey—you're that guy from history class *and* the MTC." Still, we made no connection.

A few months later, I entered Lars Lefgren's Econ 380 class, and I searched for an empty seat with a buffer from its closest neighbor. I shouldn't have been surprised when I saw Nathan. He waved to me and placed his hand on the seat next to him. He jokingly said, "We're not doing this a fourth time. I think that we have to be friends."

That moment was a pivotal point in my life. Up to that point, I was guardedly independent, especially in the classroom. I didn't want to rely on others. Elder Hales' warning against "doing it alone" hadn't sunk in for me yet.

Individuals in difficulty often say: "I'll do it alone," "Leave me alone," "I don't need you," "I can take care of myself." When you attempt to live life's experiences alone, you are not being true to yourself, nor to your basic

mission in life. The disposition to ask assistance from others with confidence, and to grant it with kindness, should be part of our very nature.

Little did I know, ECON 380 was too difficult for me to handle alone. I was completely lost because I had not taken a calculus-based course since high school. Without Nathan's friendship, I would have drowned in my independence. With Nathan's help as my homework lifeline, I somehow survived.

Looking back, I can't imagine my BYU experience without Nathan's support. I credit this positive experience as a critical steppingstone that set me up for several future opportunities.

Back to the present day and my current professional assignment—

I work as an attorney for an international peacekeeping mission based in Egypt. We are authorized to monitor the Sinai Peninsula and employ best efforts to prevent any violation of the terms of the Egyptian Israeli Treaty of Peace.

No single person, group, or state can fulfill the mission without help, and fifteen different countries contribute military personnel to support the organization's efforts. Each day, I gratefully rely on a multinational cohort of colleagues to fulfill the mission that we cannot otherwise accomplish alone.

Thanks to the lessons learned about friendship and collaboration learned at BYU—both from Nathan Law and others—I am much better positioned to work together with others in our collective efforts to keep peace.

Maxwell Dunbar, Current Student, Exp. B.S. 2025

One of the decisions I am most grateful for was the decision to take Econ 110 a spring semester with Dr. Joe Price. At the time I wasn't sure what my major would be. I thought I enjoyed business and was taking the prerequisites (hence the Econ 110), but nothing felt quite right for me. When I sat in on Dr.

Price's lectures, this fire lit up inside of me. He would not only teach economic principles clearly, but he had research breaks where he shared compelling real-life applications of what we were learning, and he often tied it into the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The rigor that econ was offering me, and the possibilities in what could be uncovered brought such excitement to my life. I knew this was what I wanted to study.

I have now been research assistants for both Dr. Price and Dr. Riley Wilson. They both have taught me many things, but the most important would be the effect of taking the time to meet one on one. These are definitely busy individuals, but I am extremely grateful for the time they took to ask me if I had any questions, to take interest in my life, to give me many opportunities to stretch and to grow. There were times when I doubted my ability to succeed in the econ program. I felt overwhelmed and uninterested. I don't think I ever told them exactly what I was going through, but the time they took to talk to me individually gave me hope and courage. Often it was just an opportunity to laugh with them that would bring a feeling of "I can do this".

Another economic professor who has exemplified this Christlike care would be Dr. Bradford. I had the opportunity to be his teaching assistant for Econ 381. He also took time to get to know me and take interest in my life. I loved his sense of humor and how he taught. It provided an example of how I want to teach others going forward. I was given opportunities to teach a few lectures to review for exams. I'm grateful for these tender moments of helping students and answering their questions. Despite my many doubts and thanks to the reassurances of these professors (without them even knowing it), going forward I want to spread this light of exciting discovery in economics and carefully watch over my students as a professor. I'm glad I have some pretty good role models to succeed in that sphere.

Emily Duncan, Current Student, Exp. B.S. 2025

I have always loved math. Finding economics was such a blessing-it's just math applied in an interesting way and it's the shortest major at BYU. I have loved a lot of the theoretical classes I have taken; however, the stats classes have been the bane of my existence. There have been numerous members of the faculty and fellow students that have helped me to survive some of these unpleasant courses. Professors have helped me to prepare one on one for exams. I previously considered myself destined to fail, my 388 TA is worthy to have my first-born son named after him, and my study groups have allowed me to find joy even in harrowing circumstances.

Brady Earley, B.S. 2021

I want to first mention a truth impressed upon me while studying economics that has blessed my life. Economics teaches us that life presents tradeoffs and thus how we choose to spend our time reflects the value we place on certain activities. At first, I loved this idea because it helped me be more effective with my time and efficient in my work. I regret to say that often, efficiency became the overriding motive for certain choices and decisions I would make. But then, I realized a higher principle at play. I learned at BYU that being as efficient as possible did not always bring the most utility or what we might refer to as joy. I found myself missing opportunities to have more meaningful interactions with others. I discovered that consecrating our lives to God's work means things may not always play out efficiently from a mortal perspective. But thinking celestial about how we use our time means we recognize that God may understands what will bring us the greatest joy. We do not always have perfect information, but we do have perfect truths to follow in Jesus Christ and His Gospel. So, we trust God and begin to understand to see our efforts in the divine economy of His work.

I will also add that I will always be thankful to all my professors did to show me what it means to be a disciple scholar. I remember many conversations

with professors about graduate school. Of course, they helped me think through all the relevant considerations that anyone making decisions for graduate school should weigh. But those conversations also led to invitations to pray and seek revelation in the temple. Such a powerful combination of seeking by study and faith was a blessing of my BYU education.

Tanner Eastmond, B.A. 2018, Faculty

As I have reflected on my short time here at BYU as a faculty member, the thing that stands out the most in terms of my opportunities to share my light is the opportunities that I have had to connect with students. For some reason, the sole fact of me being their professor has opened many opportunities for me to connect quickly with students. This connection has allowed me to be a support for my students not only in their work in the classroom, but also with their future careers and even with personal challenges. At various moments, students have trusted me enough to ask hard questions about life and faith. In these moments, I feel like both I and the students have been uplifted and enlightened by the Spirit.

Most of these experiences are very personal, but one specific experience that I feel comfortable sharing stands out from my first semester here at BYU. In one class I showed one of my research projects as an example of the concept that we were studying that day. We had a robust discussion about my project, then after class one of the students came up to me and said “Dr. Eastmond, this is what I want to do with my life!” referring to research. This student and I were able to talk at length about what a career in research would look like and how to get there. It was honestly amazing to see the light go on for this student and the excitement that they expressed for this potential path forward in their life.

Kristen Edwards, B.A. 2001

Kearl's letter encouraging me to major in Economics was enough to convince me to pursue the degree. Now, 24 years after graduating, I am deeply grateful for that decision. My time in the Economics Department illuminated my path in unexpected ways, shaping me into the wife, mother, and nonprofit professional I am today. When I first declared my major, I struggled in my macro and microeconomics courses. Frustrated, I remember walking past the FOB when a distinct thought came to me: *Kristen, you can do this. You can compete with these other students.* It was a moment of personal revelation—one of those rare times when light and confidence replace doubt and hesitation. That shift in mindset changed everything. It gave me the courage to persist, improve my performance in class, and develop a resilience that continues to guide me.

One of the things I most appreciated about studying economics was the nature of the tests—often, I would look at a problem and have no idea where to start. But by applying the tools and equations I had learned, piece by piece, the answer would begin to emerge. That problem-solving approach has stayed with me throughout my life. I also benefited greatly from the support of my professors, whose guidance and encouragement made a lasting impact.

For the first fifteen years after graduation, I dedicated most of my time to raising my four young children. I loved being a mother, but I often yearned for something more. During that time, I received priesthood blessings in which I was promised that I would "lift hands that hang down." Though, in the moment, my days were filled with diaper changes and park outings, those words reassured me that opportunities to serve outside of my home would come.

When my youngest started kindergarten, I knew it was time to pursue a master's in public policy. The part of the application process that made me the most nervous was securing a recommendation from a former professor—I

worried no one would remember me after ten years. Then, almost as if by divine design, I received an unexpected email from Dr. Mark Showalter, my Honors Thesis Advisor. He invited me to speak to female students currently in the program about my experience. That invitation felt like a clear sign that it was time to return to school.

Since earning my master's degree, I have had the opportunity to work for two nonprofits in Utah. While helping Better Days 2020 with finance and fundraising, I relied on the analytical skills I gained from my economics education to learn new skills. If my younger self could compete with some of the brightest students at BYU, then my middle-aged self could certainly apply for grants and learn about finance!

Four years ago, I joined Rising Star Outreach, a nonprofit that serves leprosy colonies in India—a dream come true for a girl from Chicago who always wanted to make a difference. My original role was to fundraise for the two schools we run in India, and while I enjoyed fundraising, I wanted to put my economics and public policy degrees to use in program evaluation.

Two years ago, Rising Star Outreach was accepted into the DOMO for Good program, and I have since led our efforts to start analyzing our programs through data analysis. While it's not as challenging as my Econ 388 class, the persistence I developed as an economics student—pushing through difficult assignments and embracing the learning process—has helped me navigate new systems and challenges. I often approach data visualization the same way I approached economics problems: just start playing with the problem, writing things down, experimenting with different approaches, and the answers will emerge through the process.

Beyond the data, one of the most fulfilling ways I get to share light is by tutoring Chandni, a young girl from a leprosy colony in India who dreams of becoming a cardiac surgeon. I help her with her English each week, and I

hope the programs we refine through our data efforts will allow her light to shine even brighter.

I am profoundly grateful for my professors, the subject matter, and the pride I felt in majoring in Economics. The skills I developed have enabled me to experience light through learning, share light through mentorship, and go forth to serve in ways I never imagined. I am honored to fulfill BYU's mission: *Enter to Learn, Go Forth to Serve.*

Morgan Edwards, B.A. 1983

I graduated Class of 1983. It was Dr Kearl's first year at BYU, teaching Econ 110.

I scored a 28 out of 100 on my first Econ 110 exam and he came up to me personally and said "that's an excellent score"

Turned out to be 2nd highest on the test and helped me decide to major in Economics.

My most impactful course was a class on The Cost/Benefits of Societal Decision-Making....something like that. It dealt with the social impact of decisions in everyday life and how to measure the costs and benefits not just to an individual but to society as a whole.

Closing a lane of traffic to fix a pothole costs a single person 15 minutes of lost productivity.... but if 3000 people are each delayed, total productivity loss for society is 750 hours. But the benefit is that traffic flows more smoothly in the future and there is less damage to tires/vehicles. you get the idea.

As I observe the world or watch the news, I see these principles in action and I'm constantly evaluating Costs and Benefits. Politicians often focus on the benefits without toting up the full cost. The selfish "me" wants to maximize my personal position, but optimizing for the good of all doesn't necessarily allow anyone to have everything they want. It was a really valuable lesson and assessment tool!

I went on to earn an MBA and worked in Banking for Morgan Stanley for a number of years. The concepts I learned in my Econ undergrad were instrumental in my success in both arena's.

Eric Eide, B.S. 1988, Faculty

BYU has been a major influence in my life, going all the way back to 1984. When I started as an undergraduate at BYU after my mission, I did not have a strong academic background. My entire teenage years were devoted to playing the saxophone as much as possible, to the detriment of my academic studies. Because of this, I did not have much confidence in my abilities as a student at a competitive academic institution.

Fortunately for me, my first roommate was a math major who ended up getting a PhD from Harvard, and he helped me get on the right path with math. More importantly, I observed him and the way he dedicated himself to his studies. As I followed his example, I started to do well in my classes and gain confidence.

I soon after stumbled into ECON 110 and was immediately hooked. Two of my good friends in the econ major were excellent students who were preparing for PhD's in economics, and as we took classes together, I further learned how to apply myself to my studies, and my future path in economics began to take shape. As I progressed in the major, I got to know several of the faculty who had a deep impact on my development both as an economist and as someone who was trying to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. I saw these faculty as examples not only of scholars but also as people who were highly committed to our faith. This helped me throughout my career in professional situations, showing me that I don't have to hide the fact that I am a person of faith.

As I finished the economics major and was considering what to do, the faculty that I considered my mentors were valuable in helping me find my path. I was Richard Butler's RA and realized that I enjoyed research and wanted to pursue

it as a career. Rulon Pope's ECON 580 and Jim McDonald's ECON 588 courses made me realize that the harder the courses were, the more I enjoyed them and that I might be successful in graduate school. Clayne Pope was not only my professor for Economic History but also my Bishop, and I recall discussing graduate school and economics with him on many occasions. Over my 32 years as a faculty member at BYU, I have tried to show interest in my students the way these faculty showed interest in me.

The relationships I have developed at BYU—with peers and professors as a student, and colleagues and students as a faculty member—have profoundly impacted me. I am grateful for BYU's role in my professional and spiritual development.

Timothy Lynn Elliott, B.A. 1985

As an undergraduate in economics, I learned about microeconomics from Roland Pope – the study of why individual people make the decisions they do. I learned macroeconomics from Dean Dutton – the study of how many people making millions of decisions build an entire economy. (I also learned from Dr. Dutton that one can follow their musical dreams but that is another day . . .). Years later, staring at a massive European cathedral, I gained an insight into micro and macro that I had not had before. A cathedral is made up of millions of micro decisions. Each stone, gargoyle, and archway consist of many, perhaps hundreds of small decisions made by a craftsman. In isolation, each of these decisions do not mean much, but together, they create a spectacular monument to God, the macroeconomy so to speak. The same analogy can be used for the Church – where millions of micro decisions create the macro-Church – the Kingdom of God. And so, I can say, the training I received as an economics major has influenced the way I see the world ever sense I graduated.

In addition to micro and macroeconomics, econometrics by Dr. McDonald taught me how to view data, Dr. Butler showed me that calculus has real

world applications, and Dr. Bryson taught me that Europe approaches economics differently that American does, and so forth. All this training helped me get into a PhD. Program in Foreign Affairs which I used, in turn, to craft a career in international education. In this career I have created programs in more than 30 countries and overseen to work of others in more than 40 more. These programs have served more than 30,000 students. The analytical skills my economics degree gave me and the dedicated faculty who taught me gave me the foundation I needed to do this work. I loved the major. Here's to 150 more years of Economic teaching at BYU.

William Evans, B.A. 1983

I am currently living in McLean, VA, and working as an attorney-advisor in the Benefits Tax Counsel's Office, Office of Tax Policy, U.S. Department of the Treasury. I graduated from Brigham Young University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1983, majoring in Economics and minoring in English. After graduating from BYU, I earned a Juris Doctorate degree from the University of Virginia School of Law, worked as a litigation, corporate, and employee benefits associate attorney at the Robinson, Bradshaw & Hinson, P.A. law firm in Charlotte, NC, worked as an employee benefits associate and principal attorney at the Groom Law Group, LLC law firm in Washington, DC, and have worked for nearly 20 years as an employee benefits attorney-advisor at the Treasury Department in Washington, DC.

I grew up on a dairy and potato farm in Hibbard, ID, just west of Rexburg. I had little understanding of career and education opportunities and realities. But I knew I wanted to learn and understand as much as I could in college, so I tried to take more than 20 credits each semester at Ricks College and at BYU. There was so much to learn, and there were so many tantalizing course titles! I graduated with an associate's degree from Ricks College, majoring in Business Management. My favorite course at Ricks College had been Economics 110, taught by Kent Vernon. So, full of hope for more of the same, I

signed up for Economics 210 from Jim Kearl during my first semester at BYU. My life would never be the same.

In that course, a Law and Economics course taught at BYU's J. Reuben Clark Law School, and an Economics of the Family course co-taught with Nobel laureate Gary Becker from the University of Chicago, Professor Kearl convinced me that human behavior and decision-making could best be understood by applying principles of microeconomics – supply and demand, prices, elasticity, externalities, Pareto optimality, the Coase theorem, and the rest. In the Econ 210 course, Mr. Kearl gathered headlines and stories from popular media and explained why they were incorrect or misleading. He explained how the world's largest battery – a system of reservoirs, dams, turbines, and pumps – could efficiently provide electricity for peak demand even though energy used to pump water up exceeded energy produced by turbines as water flowed down. In the Law and Economics course, he taught from Richard Posner's recently published *Economic Analysis of the Law*, which would change the way lawyers and judges analyzed and decided legal disputes. I knew I had to go to law school to learn more about these startlingly convincing ideas. In the Economics of the Family course, he taught from Becker's *A Treatise on the Family*, with guest lectures from Becker himself. I alarmed my friend Sally Leighton (Recreation Therapy, Class of '85) with discourses about my growing recognition that microeconomics drove dating, family, career, and a thousand other decisions involving marriages and families, but not enough to dissuade her from accepting my marriage proposal on the banks of Lake Erie during my 1L clerkship with Jones, Day, Reavis & Pogue. After a class at the BYU Law School, Mr. Kearl told stories from his time lecturing at the University of Virginia, waxing eloquent about the beauty of Mr. Jefferson's academical village – the Lawn, the Range, the Rotunda, and the elegant brick-width Serpentine Walls enclosing the Faculty Pavilion gardens. I knew I had to go to law school at the University of Virginia

(even though I had never before heard of the University of Virginia except that basketball player Ralph Sampson attended there).

At the University of Virginia School of Law, my familiarity with Posner's *Economic Analysis of the Law* served me very well, as some of the leading proponents of that branch of study taught at UVA – Saul Levmore, Robert Scott, Lillian BeVier. It was a poor man's University of Chicago. My study of economics at BYU also gave me tools to see through the perverse branch of the law just starting to take root – critical legal studies – which asserted that law was merely a manifestation of the marginalization of the disadvantaged in favor of the powerful. My hope and expectation is that the Economics Department at BYU continues to graduate students able to see through popular political narratives that are contrary to basic microeconomic theories explaining the optimality of free markets.

I am grateful for Dr. Kearl and the other economics professors at BYU who were beacons of light in my education, career, and life.

Robert Steven Farrell, B.A. 1987

In short, Economics was my third major (and the last thing I thought I would want to major in) and shaped my entire career. Working on Wall Street (first job out of BYU working for Banker's Trust), Harvard Business School to my career today (I still for our investment committee meetings every morning give an economic update Federal Reserve, interest rates etc….). Economics has been a good discipline and has been the foundation of my career.

I can remember Clayne Pope (I believe it was Clayne, he was a Pope) giving his final by having me stand up in front of him in his office. He then gave me several questions to choose from and I could then use the chalk board to give my presentation, analysis etc. This was such a helpful life lesson to be able to think on my feet while presenting. This helped me at HBS where we were asked to present our case in front of 90 classmates, often at the beginning of class and then to defend our position. Also, later in life presenting to boards of

directors in my profession. I appreciated all my professors who were professional and fun to learn from.

Economics also broadened my understanding of the world and how to analyze and get to the root cause of issues I have encountered in life. Of course, BYU was also the right school for not only learning a skill but learning to be a leader and a disciple which has helped me considerably throughout my life with my callings, family and others. I count it as one of the great blessings of my life to have been able to attend BYU.

While there I was the first Director of the Student Involvement Center and helped to present to the faculty and set-up Y-Groups (tours for new students and orientation activities). I am not sure if they are still doing this but hopefully.

Dar Fazulyanov, B.A. 1997

I really value my Economics education and thought process I gained at BYU. One quick example, when studying monopoly, my then classmate Curtis Toone and I wrote a paper about the NCAA being a monopoly and taking advantage of student athletes, proposing some free markets ideas to change NCAA rules and its monopolistic chokehold. Current NIL changes and transfer portal reflect some of the things we discussed all the way back almost thirty years ago...

Rebecca Hann Feito, B.A. 2000

I have reflected on my BYU education over the past ten months more than ever. What a gift it has been! You see, my husband passed away of brain cancer last April. The lessons I learned at BYU made all the difference in my life journey. I certainly received an education that allows me to take care of my four daughters, but I also gained confidence in God and myself which allowed me to make decisions over the last 24 years that prepared me for my present challenges. I once heard Dr. Kearl say something along the lines that

his mother worried when he went to grad school about whether faith and graduate studies could coexist; and he testified that it could. That lesson has remained with me and I have taken it to heart. Faith can coexist with all our temporal pursuits. I have carried my faith with me into my education certainly, but also into my work, my girl's sports, my husband's medical treatments, and everywhere I go.

Will Ford, Current Student, Exp. B.S. 2027

Over the years, I've had a great experience with the Econ department. Despite it being a tough major with competitive classes, most people I've met in the department are eager to help each other out, which stands in stark contrast to a world that seems to be embracing zero-sum logic more and more. I've had a great experience working as a TA and doing research in the Econ lab, and have really enjoyed it

Kent Ford, B.S. 1988

What I have to say isn't exactly earth-shaking, but I did find my career there at BYU and I have now been teaching undergraduate economics for the past 35 years.

Like many students, I was a business major because I didn't know what else to major in. It seemed like a pretty solid major with a wide range of opportunities. And, like all business majors, I was exposed to many different fields along the way -- accounting, computers, statistics, and ... economics). I tried to take an economics course a couple of times and dropped the class both times. It just wasn't my thing. Of course, I knew I had to take it eventually but kept putting it off. Then I enrolled in Prof. Kearl's ECON 110 class, and I was hooked (and I mean hooked). I wasn't the best student, but I was up there. Pretty solid. I changed my major to economics, graduated, and went to work for an investment firm in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Economics answered questions I had thought about for quite some time while working in my father's construction business. Trade Offs, opportunity costs, elasticity of substitution of inputs. Stuff like that. I ate it up.

While in California, I decided to get a master's degree in financial economics at the University of San Francisco. It was there that I got my first taste of teaching as a Teaching Assistant. Upon graduation, I decided to apply for some teaching jobs, and I was able to get one. A few years later, I decided to get a Ph.D. but left the program for another job (needing the money and having two kids by then) and I never completed the dissertation. So, I am ABD (one of my regrets).

I am still teaching. Still loving it. Still no plans to retire -- ever.

Shannon Francis, B.A. 2008

Being part of the economics department gave me something I was excited to learn about. It taught me how to think quickly, be grateful for study groups, and continue to work at something even when it was hard. It taught me to be proud of who I was and what I could learn and where to search for answers. It ignited a fire within me for research and gave me chances to explore new ways to find answers. (Econ 388-here's looking at you!) Economics has given me the basic understanding that actions are multi-faceted. There are so many factors unseen and seen that change how we act. It has given me a desire to not only understand why we behave the way we do but has helped me be less judgmental when someone behaves differently than I do.

Overall, it has helped me to be more Christlike, more willing to work hard, more curious about what I can accomplish, and more confident in my ability to serve my community. I'm so thankful for the economics department at BYU!

Brigham Frandsen, B.S. 2004, Faculty

High-profile research is the currency of the academic realm, in the phrase of a former dean, but I believe my biggest impact as a faculty member is through my students. I was drawn to BYU as a prospective faculty member because I believed--and still believe--in the mission of the university and I hoped--and still hope--that from this hill I could help add light to the world. My students are the main conduit for that light.

One way I have tried to shine light through my students is by helping them develop skills and attributes to provide for their families and be productive members of society. I have tried to keep my course material at the cutting edge and provide tools that will be valuable for my students in the labor market.

Second, I have to tried shine light through my students by being an example of a disciple of Christ. I have shared my testimony and invited students to share theirs. I hope my students know that God lives and loves them, and that they will be inspired themselves to love and serve God.

Third, I have tried to shine light through my students by showing Christ-like love for them, especially when they are going through trials. Faculty members are sometimes the source of those trials, but we are also in a position to minister in students' hardest times. Christ's ministering did not always mean taking away burdens--he commanded the halt man to take up his bed and walk--and likewise as faculty members we are not truly ministering by sparing our students work. But I have tried to help my students find a pathway to success despite trials. I hope my students know that I love them and that they themselves will be inspired to love and serve their fellow men and women. If so, my small light will have been multiplied into thousands of lights.

Seth Fuller, B.S. 2023

My daughter was born 11 weeks early during my senior year in the econ program. She was hospitalized for 60 days in the NICU through finals and through the first part of the next semester. All my professors were so kind and understanding. They worked with me along with friends and fellow students to get me to graduation where I was able to walk with my daughter and wife there to watch. I felt loved throughout.

Michael Gallup, B.A. 1998

This is a fantastic project and something I've always felt was missing from BYU's Economics program. They don't market themselves well enough, despite the incredible work they do in teaching students how to think critically. Professionally, I credit much of my success to three things: my mission, my Economics degree from BYU, and my ability to keep learning—from both failures and successes.

Since graduating, I've built and sold several companies and currently run a $6 billion pharmaceutical data and technology company—one of the largest in the world. Right now, I'm on a plane to London to visit one of our many offices, which span Tokyo, London, NYC, Boston, and Philadelphia. I wouldn't be here without several of my professors and the program as a whole, which taught me how to solve problems, gather and analyze data from multiple angles, make decisions, refine those decisions, and think critically about complex issues.

The program shaped my ability to understand what truly motivates people in my organization, why my clients make the trade-offs they do, what attracts them to my products, how to build sustained competitive advantage, and how to price effectively. While the program gave me foundational knowledge, more importantly, it provided the tools to approach and solve these problems at a deeper level.

I can think of three key instances where the program directly influenced my thinking and career.

1. The Lesson in Perseverance – Showalter's Microeconomics 380

I wanted an A in Professor Showalter's Microeconomics 380. He was a tough grader, and the most challenging test covered Lagrange Theorem, where we derived the demand curve. Today, I probably couldn't do multivariable calculus, but at the time, I was determined. I spent 7.5 hours in the testing center, checking and rechecking my work, and ultimately earned the A. That experience taught me an invaluable lesson: stick with something and finish, no matter how long it takes.

Real-world application:

Early in my career, I led a $120 million business with aging products. We decided to transform one of them—a traditional switch-and-voice system used in hospitals—into a cutting-edge, IP-based voice system with RFID tracking and LCD screens. This innovation allowed nurses to operate hands-free, keeping them focused on patients while ensuring mission-critical communication, including emergency codes.

However, when we launched, there were major issues. For an entire year, I slept in a separate room with a phone on my chest, fielding calls at all hours to fix and manage client concerns. That perseverance paid off. The system revolutionized the market, saved lives, improved nurses' efficiency, and now generates over $100 million in revenue. Competitors followed, but our product remains the leader. Whenever I thought of giving up, I remembered my mission, that test in Showalter's class, and, ironically, all the calculus I used to model market demand.

2. The Power of Analytical Thinking – Lessons from James Cardon

James Cardon taught me two invaluable lessons. First, the concept of $Y = x_1 + x_2 + x_3$ + white noise. I use this principle every day. It's how I approach nearly

every problem in tech and business—isolating key variables, measuring risk based on what we know versus the unknown (white noise), and focusing only on what truly matters. Second, he helped shift my perspective. I used to complain about being "stuck" at BYU, thinking I should have gone to an Ivy League school, but he reminded me how competitive BYU was and that I would come out ahead. He was right.

Real-world application:

Early in my career, I gained a reputation for troubleshooting complex systems—solving problems others couldn't. That skill came directly from my economics training. As an executive, I apply the same thinking to markets. I've built my career on identifying what really moves a market versus what is just noise.

In my current business, we uncovered what pharma companies truly need, which led to explosive growth—scaling from $40 million to $700 million in revenue over five years, with EBITDA increasing from $12 million to $300 million. We built one of the fastest-growing companies in the industry, leveraging AI, data science, and technology to connect patients with life-saving therapies in ways never done before. The ability to break down problems, isolate key drivers, and focus on what matters comes from my economics training.

3. The Value of Excellence – Lessons from Jim Kearl

For a long time, I didn't like Jim Kearl. I took his one-credit senior paper class, assuming it would be easy. I was wrong. He nearly failed me. At the time, I was taking 15–18 credits per semester, trying to graduate in three years, and couldn't understand why he was so tough on a one-credit class. But he got in my face, and I decided to prove him wrong. I ended up writing a paper on resale price maintenance that I still remember today. While I never became a researcher, I learned an important lesson: always take things seriously and do my best, even on the small stuff. Urgency is good—sloppiness is not.

Real-world application:

Demanding excellence is a good thing, and I learned not to be afraid of it. However, I also learned that there's a right and wrong way to do it. In my first company, I pushed too hard. We executed at an extremely high level, but the environment was brutal—few people enjoyed it. That said, five out of the eight executives from that team are now private-equity-backed CEOs. We demanded excellence, but I hadn't yet learned where to focus that pressure.

In my next business, I got better at balancing high expectations with culture. We grew from $30 million to $120 million. A significant part of the team followed me to the next company, where we scaled from $40 million to $500 million. Then again, most of that team joined me in my current company, where we've grown from $40 million to $700 million—and we're still scaling.

The lesson? Demanding excellence in the right way fosters both loyalty and high achievement. Thanks, Jim!

Nathan Giullian, B.S. 2017

I originally planned to major in Mechanical Engineering, but that all changed when I took Econ 110 from Dr. Kearl. Although I had taken an AP Microeconomics course in high school, I didn't score high enough on the exam to receive credit at BYU. In hindsight, that was one of the best things that could have happened. I thrived in Econ 110, despite its reputation as one of the more challenging courses on campus. When I received a letter from Dr. Kearl encouraging me to continue in economics, I took it to heart. After returning from my mission, I declared economics as my major.

Over time, I came to love what I was learning. To me, economics is the study of decision-making—how to make the best possible choices with the information available. That framework has served me well across many areas of life: in my career, in my personal development, and even in deepening my understanding of the gospel.

Professionally, I've learned that strong interpersonal skills are essential to success—especially as a consultant. Lessons from my behavioral economics class with Dr. Price often come to mind as I navigate the dynamic and complex world of human relationships. Those same principles have also enriched my home life. I am a better husband and father because I came to understand, while at BYU, that people are not always rational. But by embracing that reality and designing systems that accommodate our natural tendencies, we can make better decisions and live happier lives.

My time in the Economics Department at BYU changed the trajectory of my life for the better. I will always be grateful for the chance to study at such a remarkable institution and to learn from professors who took the time to mentor and inspire their students.

Michael Gmeiner, B.S. 2015

During my final year as an undergrad, I enrolled in History of Economic Thought, taught by Val Lambson. While many aspects of the course were interesting, the story behind Adam Smith's ideas had the longest-lasting impression. Growing up, I learned Adam Smith was "the guy who invented economics". To a large extent, this sentiment is echoed in secondary school economics courses, and most economists minimally think about Adam Smith again. (Despite being interesting, the history of economic thought isn't very relevant for contemporary economics research or policy). In the course, we first covered *The Theory of Moral Sentiments (1759)*, in which Adam Smith considered sympathy and living the golden rule as a method for society to be optimal. Next in the course, we discussed *The Wealth of Nations (1776)* in which Adam Smith considered self-interest and capitalism as a means to attain an ideal society. Val Lambson's commentary was that Adam Smith was trying to find ways for society to be optimal. He started by considering love and sympathy, then realized it wasn't practical to expect people to actually follow through with that. Next, Adam Smith considered self-interest and

capitalism, recognizing humans would naturally be drawn to this, and Adam Smith argued this would lead to an ideal society. There are two big overarching principles I took away from this. (1) Moving forward in a career in economic research and in life, it's important to always be thinking about how research and ideas affect society, hopefully for the better. (2) It's okay for ideas to change and evolve over time. If someone has the same viewpoint and perspective their whole life, they probably aren't learning from new information and experiences.

Jonathan Groberg, B.A. 1996

I still remember sitting in Econ 110 for the first time and having this lightbulb go off in my head and realizing, "So this explains how the world actually works!" Now, over 30 years later, as I reflect on my time in the Economics department, I can see how the experiences that I gained there were pivotal to shaping my professional journey. One of the most impactful opportunities was working on the Civil War project under Nobel Laureate Robert Fogel and BYU professor Larry Wimmer. Contributing to their groundbreaking research by collecting data at the National Archives in Washington, DC provided me with invaluable insights into the rigorous process of economic research and the importance of attention to detail. This hands-on involvement not only deepened my understanding of economic history but also instilled in me a sense of purpose and confidence in my ability to contribute meaningfully to complex projects. In addition to my research work, serving as a Teaching Assistant for Larry Wimmer's Econ 110 class was another transformative experience. Assisting students in grasping fundamental economic principles and seeing their progress over the semester was incredibly fulfilling. It reinforced my belief in the power and importance of learning, and it taught me how to communicate complex ideas more effectively. I will always be grateful for the education and experiences that the Economics Department at BYU provided me and the role they played in helping me build a foundation for a meaningful and impactful

career and, perhaps most importantly, providing me an early light to begin to better understand the wonderful complexity of human decision making.

David Hansen, B.A. 2001

I was an econ major at BYU in the early 2000s. I benefited from the guidance and advice of excellent mentors like Lars Lefgren, Val Lambson, and Frank McIntyre, who helped me realize that I wanted to do a PhD in economics and helped make my application to Stanford's program a success. BYU Econ's unique focus on preparing undergraduates for econ graduate work through the 500-level sequence of courses taught by masters of their art like Jim McDonald provided me with an enormous advantage. The friendships I made through classes with people who have turned out to be amazing economists, like Jonathan Hall, Brent Hickman, and Josh Price, have been a source of lasting joy for me.

After Stanford, I was able to work in the BYU economics department for two years as a visiting assistant professor. I greatly enjoyed getting to know my professors as an equal. They taught me a lot about teaching and helped me to refine my career goals. They were instrumental in helping me to get my current lecturer job at UW-Madison. BYU Econ has made a big difference in my life.

Jake Harmon, B.A. 2021

The department offering opportunities to TA and RA as undergrads had a massive impact on my career path. Very grateful to Dr. Eide and Dr. Wilson for their excellent mentorship.

Jacob Hart, B.S. 2008

I feel incredibly positive about my time at Brigham Young University, especially my education at the Economics Department. It has unquestionably illuminated paths in my life in my career and personal life. I still remember

fondly teachers that taught with vigor and challenged me to grow, learn, and accomplish things I didn't think possible. Names that immediately come to mind include:

- Dr. Jensen who taught me statistics for economics, my first A in the economics department and that led to my first job in school as a T.A. When someone asked if he was a math professor or an econ professor, he said "can't you tell by looking at me? That I look like I've got it all figured out?"
- Dr. Arden Pope, who taught me that environmentalism matters in practical, acute terms, that incentives are just a model, because just wearing new shoes can make you happy, and also because a view of Utah Lake on a clear day can give "a solid 6-7 utils"
- Dr. Lefgren, for teaching calculus-based price theory while still making you laugh, and explaining that it's ok to have a game on your computer if it's for a work trip
- Dr. Kearl, for introducing me to law and economics, and for being flexible when I talked to him about a grade (despite his reputation), and for his stories about the Jerusalem center
- Dr. Platt, for pushing us harder than we thought we could go but we were wrong, and who gave me the letter that helped me get into law school

I'm also incredibly grateful for the culture of group learning fostered by BYU. For the first time in my life, I learned collaboratively with my peers. It was more effective than I could have imagined and let me struggle through concepts with other people, sometimes learning and sometimes teaching. I have fond memories meeting with students of different backgrounds and stages of life, talking about difficult economics concepts sitting around a table in the Wilkinson Center.

My high school teacher warned me not to go into economics despite my proclivity toward it. The reason he said, was that it wasn't like we were learning in AP Econ and was mostly math. Well, at BYU in particular, he was right. But he was also wrong - because the solid mathematical underpinnings of the BYU Econ experience are what made me love it and made it so worthwhile in my life. I turned into an unusual lawyer who is "good at math" - at least for someone in my profession!

I learned that I could be good at something in the program. I tasted success for what felt like the first time - making A's in classes that I thought would be C's at the beginning. But through persistent effort, I mastered the concepts taught. I'll never forget the day when a letter arrived in the mail saying I had earned an Economics scholarship after my second year in the program. At that time in my life, nearly destitute, it brought tears of gratitude and joy to my eyes. And thank goodness you are so harsh at grading - I'm pretty sure I only had a 3.47 GPA, but the econ department had a much lower grade threshold than most!

My time in economics has practical uses that still inform my thinking in important ways. After law school, I started work as a government administrator in the Utah Department of Commerce. Regulation is economics - to be effective requires understanding and addressing market failures made possible by imperfect information.

As a deputy director in the Utah Department of Commerce, I often think and talk about government and incentive structures, work through budgets and growth projections, make projections about costs in new laws, and work through problems using data. Understanding that government regulation is not a means to an end but rather must be tailored to the problem it is meant to solve to be worth the cost. My ability to do this effectively is due in significant part to my time in BYU Econ.

And of course, I met my dear wife Cindy while I was attending my senior year at BYU. We are happily married today with five children.

I could say much more, I am incredibly grateful for the BYU Economics program and the work it does.

Steve Hartmann, B.A. 1982

I had a number of professors who each had an influence in my development and the manner in which I look at things. Economics has proven to be an extremely effective base in how I perceive things and how I approach the challenges I face in my career and in life. My career has been in the transportation industry, as an executive in the LTL and 3PL markets, currently I am the Vice President of Sales & Marketing for Lynden Transport, Inc. a specialty carrier providing services to/from and within the State of Alaska. We handle all types of freight via all available modes, we are the oldest, largest and most effective of the Alaska providers.

The information and insights I gained in basic economics, price theory, macro and microeconomics, econometrics provided me with accurate understanding in my career. Whether it involved identifying our lowest cost of equipment by OEM, setting and projecting pricing, accurately forecasting sales and income levels, understanding markets, competition, entry, seeing the big picture in all things and understanding how economics is the great natural/organic fixer/regulator has all come from my education at BYU and my major in Economics. It's been invaluable for me and my employers. I have served on a number of industry associations including the National Motor Freight Traffic Association, served as its chairman for a period and on their board of directors for over 30 years. I currently serve on the Marriott Schools Advisory Board for the Global Supply Chain Program. My education at BYU was an unbelievable experience for me for a number of reasons, I came to BYU as a good Catholic boy from Illinois, hoping to play football for LaVell Edwards. I left BYU with my major in Economics, my wonderful wife of

going on 43 years, I finished as a return missionary from Italy and a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I love BYU and all that it stands for, “Enter to Learn, Go Forth to Serve”.

David Hedengren, B.S. 2006

During my time in the BYU Economics program, I experienced one of the most transformative periods of my life. The program not only sharpened my analytical skills but also changed the way I saw the world, teaching me to approach problems with both creativity and empirical rigor.

Larry Wimmer’s *Intro to Economics* class first sparked my intellectual curiosity. I found myself reading unassigned chapters of the textbook just because the field was interesting. Jim Kearl’s Law and Economics was a deep dive into how economic thinking can reshape the world. I love the smile Dr. Kearl gets when he says, "counter intuitive." Dr. Showalter’s econometrics class was another defining experience, equipping me with the quantitative tools that became invaluable in my career. My research paper was an important bullet point in my first job interviews.

I've become more of a data scientist than an economist, but I use many of the tools of an economist. At every company I've worked for terms like utility, opportunity cost, and heteroskedasticity flow through all the products we make. Some of my most successful hires at Apple, Waymo, and Microsoft were economists because, while statisticians claim the correlation does not imply causation, economists believe it.

Thanks again for being the best major I could have possibly had at BYU.

Aaron Higley, B.A. 2000

My time at BYU and my studies with the Economics Department were inspiring. The experiences I had there taught me to set my sights high and have faith in the future. In the Economics Department, I was surrounded by

highly intelligent and thoughtful people, driven to set ambitious goals and achieve as much with their gifts as possible. Some went on to graduate programs at Princeton, join consulting firms, or work for the DOJ. I felt the need to work and study harder to be among them. That experience boosted my drive, enthusiasm, and faith and was tremendously helpful as I ventured out into the business world and started my own career. I am forever grateful for the opportunities my education has given me.

Evan Hill, B.A. 1994

My BYU Economics degree was the perfect preparation for my career on Wall Street, Harvard Business School, Management Consulting and C level executive positions in several successful technology companies. I advised many of the largest public and private tech companies in their mergers, acquisitions and capital raising efforts. I used my BYU Economics training in evaluating business opportunities for Angel and venture capital investors and even broke up a large Ponzi scheme. I currently use my education and the lifetime of learning it launched to write books that contain econ mini case studies. In all honesty, I was more stressed out and faced steeper competition during my BYU undergrad than I experienced at Harvard Business School. The students and faculty in the 90-94 BYU Econ program were absolutely top shelf. I cherish friendships that have lasted through these 35 years.

Brady Hirst, B.A. 2014

My life, like that of many BYU Economics alumni, was changed by taking Professor Kearl's Econ 110 class. His approach to analyzing the world inspired me to become an Economics major (despite multiple choice tests with choices A - K) and still influences my perspective today.

Throughout the semester, we learned to maximize profit, minimize externalities, and champion self-interested incentives. However, in his last lecture of the term, Dr. Kearl urged us to take time to set aside pure profit-

maximization and consider that our eternal salvation isn't about efficiency. Using Provo city as an example, he contrasted the homes of those with monetary success against the humble homes of others. Dr. Kearl testified that, in God's eyes, every person is equally valuable, regardless of economic output. He reminded us that focusing solely on wealth, without seeking our Savior's view, would miss the deeper purpose of our journey in mortality.

Later, as a TA, I had the opportunity to attend this final lecture a few more times, each one a reminder of what should matter the most in my life. This lecture resonated with me deeply, and I've reflected on it often since. I'm grateful for the opportunity to study economics at BYU.

Gabrielle Hoopes, Current Student, Exp. B.S. 2026

This discipline, and this department, is principles-based, meaning that you don't learn the right answers in class, but rather tools to come to a right answer. This is enormously frustrating if you like to memorize but liberating if you like to think. I have learned by experience that in economics, if you show up to class and do your homework, there is no test question you can't answer if you sit and stare at it for long enough. I think life is like that; you have to put in the time and the work, but that's it— no magic, no secret formula.

Matt Huang, B.A. 1999

Finding a major is like finding a soul mate. Neither are easy. Both involve trying and experimenting with different offerings. Some are so attractive at first only to turn out to be crazy and unreasonably demanding. Econ is my intellectual soul mate. I still think back on my Econ 110 class with the fondness of a first love. My mind was introduced to a way of thinking and systematically approaching the world that felt like taking the Red Pill. Crazy ideas are welcome but waxing philosophical was insufficient. Ideas were discussed as in many disciplines but they had to pass the scrutiny of econometric methods. This made me seriously question the validity of any other social

science. On the last day of Econ 110, I attended one of the most impactful lectures of my life. Dr. Arden Pope had the attention of the hundreds of students in the Kimball Hall auditorium. The class was unusually quiet and attentive as Dr. Pope shared his personal philosophy. Maximizing utility is not the same as maximizing money. Although we may learn the skills to make lots of money, this may not be the purpose of our skills. My younger and very poor self did not like this. What was I doing studying Econ if to not make money? Despite not liking the idea, it did feel right inside. Only at BYU would a professor be emphasizing the importance of using our talents for good rather than making loads of money. As my interactions with Econ professors increased through my years in the major, I came to see examples of this principle in many professors. I recall Dr. Showalter in a very matter of fact fashion sharing BYU was where he was supposed to be. His sense of purpose was not unique as I heard it repeated from Dr. Eide, Dr. Snow, Dr. Macdonald, and Dr. Rulon Pope. To my younger self, this highlighted an example of how I should live my life. I have since tried to incorporate this principle into my career and life. Experience has taught my older self jobs and career opportunities are not only to make money. I have come to appreciate the needed learning, growth, and experiences for myself, wife, or a specific child that has accompanied every change. After 25 years, 7 jobs and 6 moves, I am in awe of the heavenly orchestration that has been my post-BYU Econ journey.

Terry Huch, B.A. 1990

I came into my first BYU Economics class as an engineering major who hated engineering and wanted to go to business school. It was fall of 1985, and Professor Larry Wimmer had just lost his wife in August. Some suggested he might want to take the semester off, or at least not teach classes for underclassmen. Prof. Wimmer told our class that he decided it would be better for him to remain engaged rather than sitting around feeling sorry for himself. His feelings were tender, and his teaching seemed like a gift to the

entire Econ 110H class. He seemed to be looking at the material from a perspective he had never seen before, and his obvious care for us, his students, helped the lessons land deep in us.

I changed my major to Economics that semester and went on to have a great experience in the program. The program gave me the credentials to get into the business school I wanted to attend and the education understand and solve the problems that presented themselves to me in my career.

Professor Richard Butler's mentorship was especially important to my academic achievement and my early career. One day, my supervisor at a very successful company (and a future public company CFO) told me he was concerned about codetermination of the dependent and independent variables in a regression he was working on. He had his 700-page statistics text book in his hand, but hadn't been able to find any helpful information. I showed him the technique Prof. Butler had taught me to create artificial variables to test for codetermination. Later, when he found a mention in his text book that this subject was "beyond the scope of this work," he put me on a fast track that led to several successive promotions.

Excellence in teaching matters. I am very grateful that my professors and instructors in the BYU Economics Department chose to be beacons of light to the students through excellent teaching, even while doing outstanding research and publishing.

Gary Huggard, B.A. 1983

Upon graduation, I was commissioned as an officer in the US Air Force through the university’s ROTC program. I did not use my Economics degree directly in my Air Force assignments. I spent my career primarily in missile and space operations as well as aircraft logistics and counter drug operations.

I did use my degree in Economics after my 24-year Air Force career as a defense contractor. I have conducted dozens of business case analyses for aircraft landing gear redesign projects working for General Atomics.

My background in Economics taught me how to think differently in everyday life situations where I have been required to determine the optimal use of time, energy, and resources.

Stan Kartchner, B.A. 1981

My experience with the Economics Department at BYU was quite positive. I interacted with professors who clearly cared about their students' education. In particular, I recall Dr. McDonald's econometrics class which involved math that was beyond what I had studied previously, but he made it very accessible and easily applicable to class requirements. I went from graduating with my Econ degree to the MBA program at BYU and after that to law school at the University of Arizona. Following graduation from law school in 1986, I worked in the bankruptcy department of a prominent Tucson firm where my background in economics and other business disciplines proved to be quite handy in the course of representing debtors and creditors primarily in business cases. In 1997, I was appointed to the panel of Chapter 7 Bankruptcy Trustees in the District of Arizona and have been engaged in that endeavor since then. Again, the background in economics has proven very useful in understanding and evaluating the cause and effect relationships of personal and business decisions with the necessity of bankruptcy for those involved, and interacting with the various parties (including individuals and businesses) in the Federal bankruptcy system.

TJ Kennedy, B.S. 2021

My original plan in college was to become a teacher, but while on my mission, I felt like I should change my major to Economics. I had taken 110 before the mission and had enjoyed it (shocker I know) but hadn't considered it as an

option since I wanted to teach. Nonetheless, I followed the prompting and enrolled.

My first class was 371 (macroeconomics) with Dr. vom Lehn. It was the first 300-level econ class I had taken, and all the talk I heard about the 300-levels being the hardest in the major seemed very accurate. I remember sitting in the library every Saturday, diligently reading through the textbook and taking extensive notes, trying to wrap my mind around some of these concepts and be prepared for Dr. vom Lehn's...*interesting* testing style. Rather than just have us repeat the things we had done in class, Dr. vom Lehn always included at least one question designed to make us stretch, to force us to take what we had been learning and apply it in a way that we hadn't before. (On one test I remember being so stressed because after doing all the algebra my equation had zeroed itself out, but with time running out I had no choice but to submit it. Turns out that was exactly what was supposed to happen, and vom Lehn was trying to show us that his wonky addition to the equation had no bearing on the ultimate result). Though at times stressful, it was a powerful method of teaching that really helped me develop. Instead of only being able to repeat what I had been given, I learned how to take things a step further, to innovate and go beyond what currently was the norm. Especially with all the fun my friends and I had in the class (shoutout to our "secret graphs" joke), it was the perfect class and teacher to solidify my decision to be an Econ major.

This growth was only compounded in later classes, particularly Dr. Eide's Economics of Education course. While every economist's favorite answer is "It depends," no class emphasized that like Dr. Eide's. The whole point of the class was to get us to think about policy consequences, what potentially could happen if something was implemented (and spoiler alert: every policy had positive and negative consequences). While it could've been seen as frustrating to not have a right answer, I found the process very liberating. Unlike school, the real world almost never has a right answer. Some options

may be better than others, but every decision has consequences, and the mark of a true critical thinker is someone who can be cognizant of them all.

Those twin aspects of the program have shaped my life and career more than anything else I experienced at BYU. The Econ major felt like "pure intelligence," to quote the Prophet, where I wasn't just gaining knowledge but wisdom. As it happened, I ended up not going into teaching, and it was my Econ degree that made it possible for me to get into grad school and into my current profession. Whenever I'm able to come up with a new way of accomplishing something at work, I always attribute it to the skills and light I got in my education at BYU. Whenever I make a decision, I'm always thinking about the consequences, particularly how it will affect the lives of my coworkers and the consumer. And in my church service, I find that inspiration flows more readily, where it feels like I can see which actions will be most effective in bringing people closer to Christ.

I will always be grateful for my time at BYU and for the economics program. With absolutely no bias 😉, I can confidently say that the program is the best one at BYU. Not only is it teaching you how to do something, but it's teaching you to become something, namely as wise and enlightened as our Heavenly Father.

Robert Killpack, B.A. 1979

The Master's degree in Economics program helped me to know how to learn. The preparation taught me how to take a challenge and run with it. The ability helped me to develop my skills and make a successful investment. I since bought a group of apartments after learning how to finance them, manage them and provide housing for people and how to serve them in a reasonable rental experience. This brought a lot of joy helping others in a win win situation. It has been a great investment and blessing to the families renting the apartments at a reasonable rent.

Dallin Kimble, B.A. 2010

BYU completely changed my life's trajectory. My upbringing was challenging and unstable. By the time I graduated high school, my family had moved fifteen times, my parents were no longer members of the Church, and I was forbidden from contacting more than half of my extended family. For a lot of reasons, my grades had declined every year of high school. I was sure that BYU wouldn't even accept me—and the admissions office probably conducted an investigation after I was admitted to see what went wrong. Despite all of this, after four years at BYU I had a totally new understanding of the gospel, an incredible wife and family of in-laws, and the tools I needed to excel in the world.

At the time, I felt like Economics was kicking my tail. I remember walking out of the testing center many times after three or four hours of long-hand statistics or econometrics or demand calculations and wondering if I was ever going to be good enough to perform well in a career. Some relief came when I'd go back to class and find out the curve had at least somewhat restored my dignity, but I had to work hard to get good enough grades in my classes. I took Law and Economics from Dr. Kearl, because I guess I'm glutton for punishment, and he would just make my papers bleed. Dr. Price challenged me to think analytically and consider data that contradicted things I thought I knew. Dr. Pope plunged my brain into a world of urban issues like air pollution or the potential liabilities of externalities between property owners. All the while, there were page-long calculations and derivatives and chants in my dreams about how OLS is BLUE.

It all paid off a thousand times in graduate school. After graduating from BYU, I studied public administration at Arizona State with a focus on urban management. I found I could write papers analyzing legal and policy issues really well. As my classes took deep dives into policy issues, the principles of economics that I learned at BYU helped me understand how to think through each challenge and even how to challenge what looked to be true on the

surface. I admit that I smiled when they told us we could use software for our statistical analysis, but understanding what was going on behind the programming improved my ability to analyze the results and make strong recommendations. I graduated summa cum laude from ASU and have continued to use what I learned at BYU in local government jobs in Virginia, California, and now Arizona. Importantly, I still cheer for BYU and my BYU tie comes out after every win.

Perhaps even more meaningful, and something that is unique to BYU, is the way my time there affected my testimony, my emotional and mental health, and the way I thought about myself. It may not be every student's experience, but I felt so fortunate to have professors who were teaching me that all truth can be circumscribed into one great whole. I vividly remember Dr. Kearl talking about sunken costs in Econ 110 and then using it to completely change my understanding of repentance. I remember learning about asymptotes to infinity and what that meant about an infinite Atonement. My minor was in business, and I remember sitting in the Great and Spacious Tanner Building getting a marketing lesson on the 1990's Be Like Mike campaign and then a gospel lesson about Being Like Christ. This is why I get emotional about BYU: while I was learning to excel in a career, my professors were helping me to heal, to grow, and to become the person who could use what I learned to serve the world.

Thanks again for the opportunity to respond. I'm happy to help BYU any way I can-- except maybe a longhand linear regression.

Spencer Klopfer, B.S. 2024

I was fortunate to be a TA for Economics 110 for 5 semesters. This experience allowed me to meet and help hundreds of students from different disciplines that were learning the basics of economics. I worked with students from many different backgrounds. The experience taught me how to modify my work and efforts to best help the person with whom I was working. People needed principles explained in different ways. This will help me in my career as a lawyer. I will work with clients from many different backgrounds, along with different lawyers and judges with whom I work. Different audiences need things explained in different ways, and I am better at tailoring explanations of similar concepts to different people now than I was before.

Another thing that I remember and appreciate from my time in the Economics department was how the professors really tied in spiritual themes, especially about helping God's children, within our course material. All professors did this, but I especially remember Dr. Wilson was successful in this. He truly cares about God's children. I felt that, and I felt how he cared for each

one of us. I want to make sure that I don't lose sight of helping others feel loved in the midst of my work.

Leslie Koyle, B.A. 2005

The BYU Economics Department has certainly been a beacon of light in my life in many aspects, not just academic or even career oriented. I was recently talking with several other BYU Econ alumni, and we were discussing how we came to choose the major. A recurring sentiment was expressed by all of us: “I didn’t choose Econ; Econ chose me.” As I sat in my very first Econ 110 class I thought, “This is how my brain has always worked.” It clicked like a perfect fit, and my choice of major was made.

Like many incoming freshmen with no idea of their career goals, I defaulted to “Business” as a major. One of the prerequisites was Econ 110, and despite all the warnings to take it “from anyone else” I went with the only open section and met my new favorite professor: JR Kearl. Charismatic, challenging, and brilliant, Dr. Kearl showed me that Economics is a rigorous way of thinking that can be applied almost anywhere, from the factory floor to the housing “cleaning checks”. Comparative advantage is reassuring, monopolies aren’t fair, negative externalities are annoying – all things I had felt but couldn’t articulate.

I jumped in with both feet – forget Business major, Econ speaks to my soul! I volunteered to be an Econ. 110 tutor the very next semester and was lucky enough to be assigned Garth Koyle (future husband). I joined the Women in Economics club and met talented and kind sisters in the major (future friends). I signed up for social events with the BYU Econ club and met all the other brilliant Economics professors (future mentors and employers).

The principles I learned in class didn’t just shape my academic path; they became guiding lights for decisions beyond campus. After leaving BYU, I have spent the last 20 years making choices: Where to work? Where to live? Buy or rent? When to have kids? When to stop having kids? When to retire? When to

apologize? How to forgive? Economic theory helps me evaluate some of those choices, but not all. Luckily, wise professors also taught me that we are not merely profit-maximizers, but children of God making choices with light to guide us to a higher path.

Beacons of light are there, but it's our choice whether to follow them. We have to join, volunteer, sign up, show up, and keep moving toward things that bring light to our lives. The BYU Economics Department didn't just teach me theory; it taught me how to think deeply, decide wisely, and follow light in every stage of life. For that, I'll always be grateful.

Jake Langlois, B.S. 2017

The only reason I have my current job is because I am an Econ major. I retired from my volleyball career and played basketball one morning with some of my friends. One of them was a partner at EY and I told him I was an Econ major. He proceeded to look for job listings at EY specific to this major (transfer pricing) and got me an interview. I ended up getting the job and the rest is history. There are few jobs that prefer Econ majors, and I was lucky someone knew transfer pricing was one of them!

Lars Lefgren, B.A. 1996, Faculty

I came to BYU in 2001 from graduate school in Chicago. I had served a mission and been very active in my wards both as an undergraduate and during graduate school. Despite this, when I chose to come to BYU, I came because it was a job—not because it was THE job. I was tired of the relative poverty of supporting a family on a graduate school stipend and part-time work. I also felt like full-time employment was a prerequisite for genuine adulthood. Consequently, by the time my fifth year of graduate school arrived I was ready to be done even though the completion of my dissertation was running behind schedule. When BYU invited me to apply and ultimately offered me a faculty position, I felt more relief than elation.

It was only gradually that I caught the full vision of BYU. I found myself routinely inspired by both the intellect *and* faith of colleagues. It was as normal to have a conversation about the most recent general conference as to have one about a labor economics research idea. The example of faithful scholarship and scholarly discipleship allowed my own faith to deepen and mature. Additionally, interacting with wonderfully curious, faithful, and delightful students allowed me to find great pleasure in teaching (minus the grading of course). These interactions also led me to understand the wisdom of BYU's focus on undergraduate education.

Some years after arriving at BYU, I went on leave to another institution. I had a wonderful visit and am grateful for the opportunity I had to develop my skills and create many new professional friendships. However, as I returned to BYU, I did so with the feeling that I was truly fortunate to have the opportunity to work at BYU. It had become THE job instead of a job.

Emily Leslie, B.S. 2011, Faculty

As a BYU faculty member, I experience light through the goodness and examples of people around me, including my colleagues and students. I have listened to a student share personal struggles with faith and then come upon him bowing his head in prayer before a job interview. I have felt the comfort and power of dozens of students who have prayed for me at the beginning of class. I have seen students who are excelling in established homework groups invite and welcome struggling peers to join them. I have felt God's love for every student, knowing that even as I struggle to memorize their names and learn a little about them in our short time together, He has always known and loved each of them.

I have also seen my colleagues exemplify Christlike service and dedication. I have seen the efforts of colleagues to minister to and share their deep faith with students and to mentor and advocate for them. I have visited the class of a colleague in another department to hear how he teaches candidly about

difficult topics in Church history while sharing his sincere testimony and faith. I have seen how faculty use their expertise to build others up through patient teaching and by seeking and following inspiration as they set their research agendas.

Being part of the BYU community means being surrounded by people striving to do good in the world and deepen their connection to God. As a member of this community acutely aware of my own shortcomings, I understand that our human imperfections mean there is always ample room for improvement. But in my experience so far, the examples of the people I get to associate with here motivate me to be better and more Christlike so that I can add to the light I see around me.

Brian Lewis, B.S. 2017

Some of the greatest highlights of my time in the Economics program were methodically picking apart papers in Lars Lefgren's "Applied Econometrics" course or getting lunch with Steve Waters to talk about future career opportunities. I think my interactions with professors like Eide, Lefgren, McDonald, and Waters showed me that *no matter how complicated a social problem may look on the surface, there is probably a thoughtful way of modeling it through the lens of economics*. That perspective has been life changing. Psychology talks about how important "self-efficacy" is for someone to overcome challenges and remain resilient. In so many ways, the BYU Economics program strengthened my belief not only that *I* could figure things out, but that *we* can figure things out.

I have been a much more capable and helpful spouse, employee, mentor, sibling, ward member, and friend because of the confidence I gained through BYU Economics that *most problems can be broken down and figured out*. Life will always be full of challenges, but I feel confident and optimistic about my ability to help people and organizations tackle challenges because of

the problem-solving mentality I developed as an undergraduate in the BYU Economics program.

Chenghao Li, B.S. 2023

I am currently a graduate student at MIT. I deeply cherish my time at Brigham Young University, where I studied economics and served as a TA and an RA. During my undergraduate years, I met like-minded peers, identified industrial organization and game theory as my primary research interests, and committed to applying theoretical models to real-world contexts.

My experience at BYU taught me three key lessons:

(1) Interdisciplinary Connections: Economics is deeply intertwined with disciplines such as mathematics, philosophy, sociology, and psychology. Exploring these connections provides a deeper and more holistic understanding of economics.

(2) Dual Dimensions of Economics: Economics is both a mathematically rigorous discipline and a field rooted in the complexities of human society, which cannot be fully quantified. Its true appeal lies in the tension and integration of these two dimensions.

(3) Humility in Learning: Surrounded by exceptionally talented and diligent individuals, I learned to stay humble. The deeper I delve into a field, the more I realize how much there is yet to learn, inspiring me to remain passionate and curious in my pursuit of knowledge.

Truman Longaker, Current Student, Exp. B.S. 2025

The BYU economics department has been the home for me that I didn't know I needed at BYU. Before I found the econ department, I wasn't sure what major I wanted to take. I tried many options like Exercise Science and Pre-Business. Both options didn't feel right to me. Once I found the econ department, school felt exciting. I quickly made friends within classes. School became a joy, the

professors made challenging courses more manageable. The friends I made pushed me to try my best and to progress. What has stood out to me as I have been in school, is how inspiring the professors of the Economics department are. Each of my professors have been experts in their fields and very well known within their fields. But what they showed is that they are not greater than the student. They have been willing to meet with me one on one and break things down for me. They have talked about life with me and helped me choose the path that I would like to go down. The Economics community has been home for me, and it is a place that I will not forget.

Roland Lyon, B.A. 1990

I was a freshman at BYU in 1984-- quite a year as it was the last and only time BYU football "won" the national championship with their Holiday Bowl win over Michigan.

While not fully committed to a life working as a dentist, I had chosen chemistry as my major as it seemed like a good foundation for dentistry. And as a young man, from my limited data set, I observed dentistry was a good profession that paid well and provided a balanced lifestyle.

In the 2nd semester of my freshman year, I enrolled in Econ 110 as it satisfied a GE requirement. After the first few weeks I was hooked! The concepts were so new, and at first difficult to grasp, and I loved that! I found my economics classes required me to actually THINK vs. just memorize and regurgitate on command. I'm admittedly a poor speller, which is indicative of how my brain works. I like to tell myself I have a full hard drive so I don't have capacity to store (memorize) much more; but I have a speedy processor with lots of RAM.

Many of the mid-term and final exams in the economics classes I took were open book and open notes. And yet the average scores were often quite low. To me that confirmed that to do well in economics one must learn the

concepts, and then apply those concepts coupled with critical thinking skills to solve real, multi-faceted problems.

So, I changed my major and went all in. I wasn't sure what specific occupation(s) a degree in economics would prepare me for, but I had confidence things would work out. I could always go into management consulting (which I did) and get an MBA along the way. (Yup, did that too.) Over thirty years later, I've had a very successful and rewarding career in the health care industry. What I learned in my time at BYU continues to serve me and my family well.

Richard Manning, B.A. 1982, Emeritus Faculty

I have many fond memories of my time as a student and later a faculty member in the economics department at BYU.

I found in the department a group of people who were good and hard-working, who were thoughtful about the world and what made it work. In fact, as an undergraduate, not intending to major in economics, I found that I really had little choice in the matter, after I had really been exposed to the topic. I learned that economics was more than _a_ way to think about the world, it was _who_ and _what_ I was. I could not think about it otherwise. After spending my youngest adult years thinking there were certain things about society that simply defied reason, I found from my economics education that there were good ways to think about difficult concepts that held together in my mind and helped the world make sense. I felt like my brain, and my soul together had a home at last, far more comfortable that the other places I had tried to place them previously.

Although not the most important, one experience is descriptive of the impact the discipline had on me. I was sitting in a supplementary class taught by an adjunct professor one evening. It was late in the week and I was planning to take the LSAT that weekend in preparation for going to law school as had two of my older siblings. As the professor was talking about some topic involving

international trade theory (not my favorite subject within economics) the thought occurred to me, “if you go to law school, you will always miss thinking about these things.”

So I did take the LSAT that weekend, but the following week, I went to another professor’s office and asked him if there was still time for me to prepare to go to graduate school in economics. He said yes, and I did. It was not an easy road for me, but it was the right one.

I ended up going to Chicago, which is a challenging place to get a PhD, but, perhaps exhibiting a bit of the Stockholm Syndrome, I have always been tremendously grateful to have gone to Chicago, to have studied with the leading minds of the discipline at the time, to have met amazing people, to have forged great friendships, to have seen the Gospel operate in the lives of brothers and sisters in an inner city environment, to see others in the Church and beyond who made the city, and the world, their life’s project. I am grateful to have seen examples of fathers, brothers, and friends, both good and not so good, whose examples could help me find my way.

As I left academics and have worked as an economist in both business and consulting environments, I have taken the economics I embraced at BYU and Chicago (to which I cannot believe I would have found my way without the influence of good men like Larry Wimmer, Clayne Pope and other BYU faculty). I am a better businessperson, a better adviser and expert than I could have been without that education, and the influence of good people.

It seems appropriate to mention that there are many others outside BYU who also see BYU Economics as a leading light. When I was working in NYC for a large company, I had occasion to have dinner with a distinguished economics professor from Princeton who at the time had been the primary editor of the discipline's principal academic journal. I no longer remember what the purpose of our dinner was, but as we talked, he asked about my background. When I told him I had been an undergraduate at BYU, he sat up

and remarked, along these lines, "_that_ is the _best_ undergraduate economics department _anywhere_."

I was obviously pleased he thought so, and pleased to have been able to be the standard bearer for just one night. I hope to continue to be so from time to time.

Ammon Matsuda, B.S. 2002

When I think back on my time in the economics department at BYU, I tend to remember three things: How difficult the classes were, how smart the professors were, and how they took time to teach us life principles and truths in addition to economics. It was perhaps the first formal view I had into a world where the secular and spiritual could coexist in a mutually reinforcing way. I observed leaders in their field demonstrate their foremost commitment in life to God and eternal truth. That has had a lasting impact on me as I have strived to navigate the business world without compromising what I know to be true, and the “church” world with increased understanding and perspective on helping others strive to magnify their talents. While I would hope that all departments at BYU provide this kind of foundation, I credit my economics professors for individually and collectively choosing to live with and share the light of Christ. Thank you to them all!

Jarom Matsuda, B.A. 1998

I grew up in Japan near Tokyo, so attending BYU was a big change for me in many ways. I was not familiar with economics in high school, so I was a little surprised to find out that Econ 110 was required for my chemical engineering major. When I enrolled in the class my first semester of my freshman year, I had no idea that the class had a reputation for being very difficult. I attended faithfully at 8AM three times a week and studied hard for my first midterm. When I received my score, I was devastated. 60%! D-! I graduated second in my high school class. I didn’t get “D’s”! Yet here I was, one point away from an

“F”. So, I studied harder. I learned about the econ lab and started going there regularly. On my next midterm, I got a 70%. C-. That was progress, but it was not where I wanted to be. So, I worked even harder, and the material started to click with me. On my last midterm, I earned a B-. Man! Econ was hard! But I was starting to get it. My professor, Farrell Jenson, announced that if we continued to improve throughout the semester, we could be graded on trend of improvement rather than averaging our grades. So, I reviewed all of my econ materials like my life depended on it. I had never studied so hard before. In the end, I got an A- in Econ 110. That was an amazing feeling – to progress from near failure to achieving an A in one of the most notorious classes BYU freshmen take.

My story doesn’t end there. After my mission, I decided that chemical engineering wasn’t for me. I just wasn’t loving it anymore. So, I went to the counseling office and declared that I wanted to change my major. When asked what my new major would be, I responded, “I have no idea! That’s why I’m here!” So, after taking a few surveys that basically told me I should become a janitor, the counselor asked me, “What are your goals?” I quickly responded, “I want to graduate as quickly as possible.” The counselor then suggested a sociology major and started to explain what that would entail. I quickly stopped her, “Let me add another goal. I’d like to get a job after I graduate.” She quickly pivoted, “Well, that changes things!” How about getting a degree in economics? It is difficult, but you can finish school a year and a half from now. You can go to law school. You can go to business school. You can continue to study economics through graduate school. Or you can get a job in business or research.” I liked the flexibility the Econ major seemed to provide. Since I had no idea what I wanted to be when I grew up, I quickly responded, “Sign me up.” Upon leaving the counseling center, however, I reflected on my Econ 110 experience as a freshman. “Oh no!” I thought. ”What have I done?!”

I took most of my 300 level econ classes winter semester. They were difficult, but many of my classmates seemed to do just fine. I soon found out that I was not the only engineering student who changed their major to econ. In fact, many of my classmates were just like me, leaving majors like chemical and mechanical engineering, physics, statistics, math, and other quantitatively rigorous subjects. I also learned how being graded on a curve worked, and having such smart classmates was not helpful to my cause! Still, I persevered, and I somehow did well enough to be invited to serve as an Econ 110 TA fall semester. I was assigned to Dr. Wimmer's class, and he was fantastic! I became a big fan of him as a person as well as his teaching style. I also appreciated how teaching econ helped me better understand my own discipline. I served as a TA in his class for two semesters before being assigned to TA for Dr. Arden Pope in the Spring. He was fantastic, too! I served as a TA for a visiting professor in the summer, and then I graduated. My counselor was right! After three years in school and two years on a mission, I had graduated with a degree from BYU and was headed to my first job in investment banking on Wall Street!

Back in those days, it was very difficult to get a job on Wall Street out of BYU. I felt very lucky! Three BYU graduates received offers from J.P. Morgan that year, and all of us held economics degrees. This surprised me, as investment banking is really a finance job. When I joined my training class, I quickly observed several things. First, the majority of my class came from Ivy League schools. Second, about a third of us were econ majors, and another third were engineering majors. The final third was a mix of all kinds of degrees, including law! I later asked a recruiter to explain why they hired so many econ and engineering majors for a finance position. She explained, "If you are smart enough to learn economics or engineering, we're confident we can teach you all you need to know about finance and investment banking.

When my younger brother attended BYU, I tried to tell him about the Econ major. He didn't want to hear anything about it. He had zero interest! I left BYU

after I graduated, and he went on a mission. I was surprised to learn later that he also decided to major in the Economics. BYU now had two Matsuda Econ grads! I must admit, however, that he was a much better Econ student than I ever was.

I am grateful to the Economics program at BYU for preparing me for my career that that has lasted over 25 years so far. I've worked in all kinds of disciplines, from finance to strategy, from supply chain to marketing. I've worked on Wall Street and started up an organic milk plant. I've managed massive logistics operations and led a small SaaS startup. The econ program at BYU prepared me for these diverse challenges by teaching me how to think and solve problems despite having incomplete and imperfect information. It was a challenging program, just like the counselor said. And just like the counselor promised, I as able to obtain a number of good jobs after graduating as well.

I now have three children at BYU, and my youngest just completed Econ 110. She called me after her first mid-term, devastated that she got a "D", just like me! I told her, "Welcome to BYU! Welcome to Econ 110!" She knew my story, but she was still surprised at how hard the test was. I told her to ask her professor, who happened to be the same Dr. Arden Pope I worked for as a TA decades ago, if he would be willing to grade her on a trend of improvement as well. He agreed, and my daughter went to work. She dove in to the textbook and lived in the TA labs. In the end, she also got an "A-", just like her dad. She called me and said, "Dad, that is the hardest class I have ever taken. I think I'll be an Econ major." Will BYU will get it's third Matsuda Econ grad? Time will tell!

Devin Mattson, B.A. 2009

Econ helped in a lot of ways. Two notable pieces were Dr. Cardon's short lecture on wealth and happiness and how it just didn't work. He told some stories and I can't remember specifics but it has stuck with me for almost 20 years now.

The other was the notion of consumption smoothing and not trying to live life all at once but smoothing it out over time. The idea of not making huge lifestyle shifts during my career has helped me find things I enjoy more and also avoid getting into the keeping up with the Joneses mentality.

Michael McCormick, Current Student, Exp. B.S. 2026

When I changed my major to Economics last year, I didn't know what to expect. I felt dejected and discouraged for not having reached my goal of qualifying for my originally intended program, but my kind older sister suggested I take another class in economics since I liked my first one so much. I signed up for Econ 378, not knowing what to expect, but I had hoped it would be a good thing. That decision has changed my life so far. I have met amazing students and faculty in the economics department, learned valuable empirical, theoretical, and social skills, and have had opportunities for employment in areas of interest. I feel blessed to have joined the BYU Economics family and am proud to "Go Forth to Serve" from this great organization.

Jim McDonald, Emeritus Faculty

I joined the Economics Department at BYU in 1972. It was a different time then, with heavier teaching loads than now. I still remember resonating with the new vision for the department shared by the department chair (Larry Wimmer) and two relatively new faculty members, Clayne Pope, and Dean Dutton. They felt the students and faculty would benefit by reducing teaching loads, teaching classes that reflected current topics and methodologies, and encouraging faculty to have active research programs. With this modification, we were better able to work closely with students on research projects and enable more students to experience the excitement of extending the frontiers of knowledge. This year the department has 35 Teaching assistants and 83 research assistants.

This stronger foundation increased employment and post-graduate opportunities for our students and also prepared more students to enter post-graduate programs. It was an exciting time and laid the foundation for what the department has become. Now, in a typical year, about 150 students graduate, with approximately 2/3 of them having plans to pursue postgraduate programs within a few years after graduation. These programs include professional programs such as an MBA or MPA, dental or medical school, or PhD programs such as Economics or Finance.

I feel fortunate to have worked with so many outstanding students and remarkably gifted and dedicated colleagues over my career. I loved my career and those I was blessed to work with.

Ryan McFadyen, B.S. 2022

My time in the Econ dept helped me think critically which I think has helped me tremendously as I've made career and personal decisions--it pushed me so much that I could only succeed with other people's help, so I'm better at knowing when I need to go to others for help with anything really. I liked the people I was around--made some great friends like Taylor Jensen, Coleman Webb, and really liked a lot of my professors who were good examples to me in many ways--Dr Vom Lehn, Dr Arden Pope, Dr Eide, and another I can't remember who I guess isn't at BYU anymore.

Joey McMurray, B.A. 2004, Faculty

As a BYU undergraduate, I remember being enamored with the idea that BYU pursues a mission to educate the whole student: not just feed us facts that will help us earn more money, but enlarge our intellects and our spirits, help us to find lifelong joy and equip us for lifelong service. I appreciated that economics professors such as Jim Kearl, Mark Showalter, Val Lambson, and Jim McDonald taught us how economic principles apply to life and to identifying public policies that will measurably improve society. I appreciated

how the university encouraged us to learn outside our disciplines, with an interdisciplinary honors program and numerous devotionals, forums, public lectures, and other events to teach us everything about everything. I remember once attending a fascinating panel discussion on evolution with a biologist, an anthropologist, a religion professor, and a visiting Jewish rabbi. I participated in BYU's Washington Seminar, where we heard from professionals in government and adjacent roles about their efforts to improve lives.

Attending graduate school and attending research conferences, faculty at other universities have repeatedly emphasized BYU's reputation for academic excellence, collegiality, and faculty and students who value their families not just their careers, and who genuinely seek to lift and help the world be better. I am thrilled to be a part of such an institution. I have also loved and admired fellow economics faculty who obviously care so much about their students, about research that will bless the world, and about following God's path for them. I appreciate their academic humility and willingness to change their mind when evidence suggests their earlier ideas were wrong. I appreciate the BYU administration's emphasis on inspiring learning and becoming BYU. I appreciate that I can trust students to do honest work, and I'm grateful for the freedom to teach them how economic theory, math, and statistics shed light on every corner of life, and can help us make the world a better place.

Matheus Medeiros, B.S. 2024

During my time at BYU, I was deeply touched by the genuine care and dedication of the Economics Department. For several times, I witnessed how faculty and staff went beyond their roles to serve and uplift students. They always make us feel seen, heard, and supported. Whether it was during my study sessions in the West Building, a quick conversation between classes, or meetings with advisors, I always felt like I was part of a team that was truly

investing in my success, not just academically, but in my career and personal growth as well.

Most of the time I chose to study in the West Building, not because it was the quietest or most comfortable spot on campus, but because I knew that at some point, I would run into my favorite part of the BYU Economics program: the faculty. This is where I experienced light. Every conversation with a professor, no matter how brief, left me more inspired. The more I spoke with them, the more I felt inspired by their intellect, dedication, and kindness. And without fail, those conversations always ended with words of encouragement, "Good job" or "Keep up the great work", reminding me that I was capable of achieving my goals.

At BYU, I never saw my professors as intimidating or obstacles to overcome, even though the coursework was rigorous and the exams challenging. Instead, I saw them as mentors, brilliant men and women who were not only shaping us into successful economists and professionals but also into disciples of Christ. Their influence made the hardest exams seem manageable, the workload feel lighter, and, most importantly, the connection between my studies and the gospel more clear. They spread light across campus, touching our lives in ways that prepared us to go forth and serve. Today, as I move forward in my career, my greatest aspiration is to apply the knowledge I gained at BYU to do the same, to uplift, inspire, and make a meaningful impact in the lives of others, just as my professors did for me.

John Meiling, B.A. 1990

My Economics education at BYU provided a foundation for me to build on in preparation to attend Business school.

I later graduated from University of Virginia in 1994 with an MBA and have had a successful 30-year career in senior leadership roles around the world in the IT and medical device industries. I have been blessed.

While at BYU, I had the opportunity to work as a Teaching Assistant for Larry Wimmer in Econ 110 classes. As I recall, I worked in the job for 3 semesters. Working as a T.A, and helping Econ 110 students in the Econ lab really help to solidify the basic principles of economics in my mind, including both macro- and micro-economics, because I had to be able to clearly explain these principles to other students. Great experience, and thanks to Larry Wimmer for the opportunity.

Jens Mickelson, Current Student, Exp. B.S. 2025

I was talking to one of my friends the other day, and she mentioned that since she has been an Econ major her life has just gotten better. She has more friends, she feels more seen, and enjoys her studies to a larger degree than when she was in another major. Her comment made me think about how many wonderful people in the Econ department have brought me closer to Christ and made my life better, and I could not agree more with her sentiment. The Econ department has been my home at BYU for a while now, and I love it here.

Grant Millard, Current Student, Exp. B.S. 2026

The BYU economics department has and continues to change how I see the world. From rigorous inquiry regarding the causal impacts that surround us to the mathematics that bridge the theory and the data. I can never return to my former misconceptions and assumptions. All of this is taught with a gospel lens highlighted by the testimonies and faith demonstrated by professors, TAs, and students. The objective secular perspective is synthesized with spiritual truth in BYU's economics department. Excellence and truth are both relentlessly pursued.

David Morley, B.S. 2016

When I was an undergrad at BYU, I knew I wanted to get a job as a financial analyst at a retail company when I graduated. What surprised me, however,

was going to many Finance Society meetings and hearing how all these successful finance leaders didn't come from Finance undergrad degrees, but from economics. Up to that point, I'd only ever taken the intro to econ class and while I liked the concepts taught in that class, the "weeding" nature of the class did not warm me to the thought of choosing econ as an undergrad.

That changed as I hit my second semester junior year and realized my options for graduation were either two more years of a finance undergrad or one year of 18 credits of econ classes. Having recently gotten married, my social life was no longer relevant to actual "adulting" so I opted for taking what I perceived as the "hard road" and opted for economics.

This brings me to my 2 main reflections I have of this decision:

1. I joined the program during Prof. Vom Lehn's first year of teaching and was my first time learning about macroeconomics, something I previously thought was boring and irrelevant. I was so wrong! What this class did for me was only showing me how important certain macroeconomic trends were to be aware of, it also showed me how economics had real-world impacts into my daily life. I came away from this class not only understanding how things worked, but I cared about it and made different life decisions because of it.
2. I took a micro-economics class and this is what ignited my passion for retail. The ability to take unknown assumptions about competitors and make strategic, tactical decisions that benefited the company was so interesting that I use this mindset still to this day in my professional career.

Overall, I went into the econ program thinking I was settling with something that would be awful but necessary for my career and instead came away wishing I knew about the program earlier so I could have taken my time going through the program and using the lessons for the rest of my life. To this day, I

still tell people about “triple convergence” from my urban economics class as well as my unyielding position on recycling.

Joe Mott, B.S. 1983

Economics changed my life. I was raised with two “life rules” that turned out to be bad advice. Econ taught me that these so-called rules resulted in wasted time and energy. Have you heard this one: “anything worth doing is worth doing right,” which means “all the way” or with your “best effort.” When evaluated against the economics axiom that you should engage in an activity only so long as the marginal benefits exceed the marginal cost, you realize that this life rule is wrong!

I used this concept everywhere in my life from judging how much time and effort to invest in activities such as yard work, household repairs, to my professional career. With time being the most limited resource we have, learning to use mine wisely, with the aid of this concept has been a huge blessing.

Another faulty life rule is that you have to complete or engage in an activity because of what you have already invested in it. One Friday afternoon my wife was very tired and bemoaned, “do we have to go to the symphony tonight; I know we’ve already paid for the tickets.” I replied that of course we don’t have to go, the tickets are a sunk cost. She was puzzled. I said that if we go, we’ll experience two losses, the money we spent on the tickets, plus a miserable night doing something we didn’t want to do. The cost of the tickets is gone; the only valid consideration is, do you want to go? She was thrilled, and we spent a guilt-free evening at home. This concept has also blessed us repeatedly as an aid in making decisions looking forward without regard to sunk costs.

Incidentally, I convinced two of our daughters to also take Econ 110 from Professor Kearl. And although neither majored in economics, these two

concepts have been taught thoroughly to our five children and used to help them navigate life's decisions.

In enrolled in Econ 110 in January 1979 after reading about this curios discipline of which I had never heard. The class was taught by J.R. Kearl, who is a superb teacher. His ability to describe abstract concepts, to engage the class in critical evaluation and push our understanding was an exhilarating introduction to my university education. I wanted more. The following semester I took Micro and thereafter, declared Econ as my major. Truly, my econ degree from BYU taught me how to think.

My most memorable classes are Econometrics from Jim McDonald, Theory of Collective Choice from Ron Heiner, Theory of Public Finance from Barton Smith, and Law and Economics from J.R. Kearl.

I went on to get my MBA from BYU in 1985, which I also loved. But I always told people that my undergraduate was much more rigorous academically. The MBA was a heavier load, but for intellectual challenge, econ was tougher. I loved the way that economics teaches one to always look for linkages, causes, and relationships.

I have retired from a 36-year career with Intermountain Health, enjoying many leadership roles across the organization. My degree in economics was foundational to my success.

Kevin Mumford, B.A. 2002

I am a 2002 graduate from the BYU Economics Department. I started out as an engineering student but after taking 110 from Larry Wimmer, I switched my major to economics. Most meaningful to me were the opportunities to be involved in research projects. Some were assigned class projects, several were part of my job as a research assistant to Arden Pope, and one was through my participation in the university honors program. No one in my extended family had ever earned a PhD and a career as a professor was not

on my radar until Economics Department faculty members recommended I consider it. Exposure to research projects as an undergraduate student got me excited about pursuing a PhD in economics and gave me the confidence to apply. I am very grateful to the BYU faculty members who taught me how to think like an economist and helped set me on a path to a very fulfilling career.

Dayton Murset, B.S. 2022

Joe Price's testimony of the Savior in the midst of sharing complex behavioral theory showed me that you can be excellent in your field AND know Christ. In the moment the program was challenging - and at times a grind - but I didn't expect certain job and education opportunities to feel easy because of the high standard that we were held to as Econ students. I'm grateful at least once a week or so for that day when I switched my major to Econ from the business school! Thank you for all the work that you put in to making it a high-quality program for all of us students.

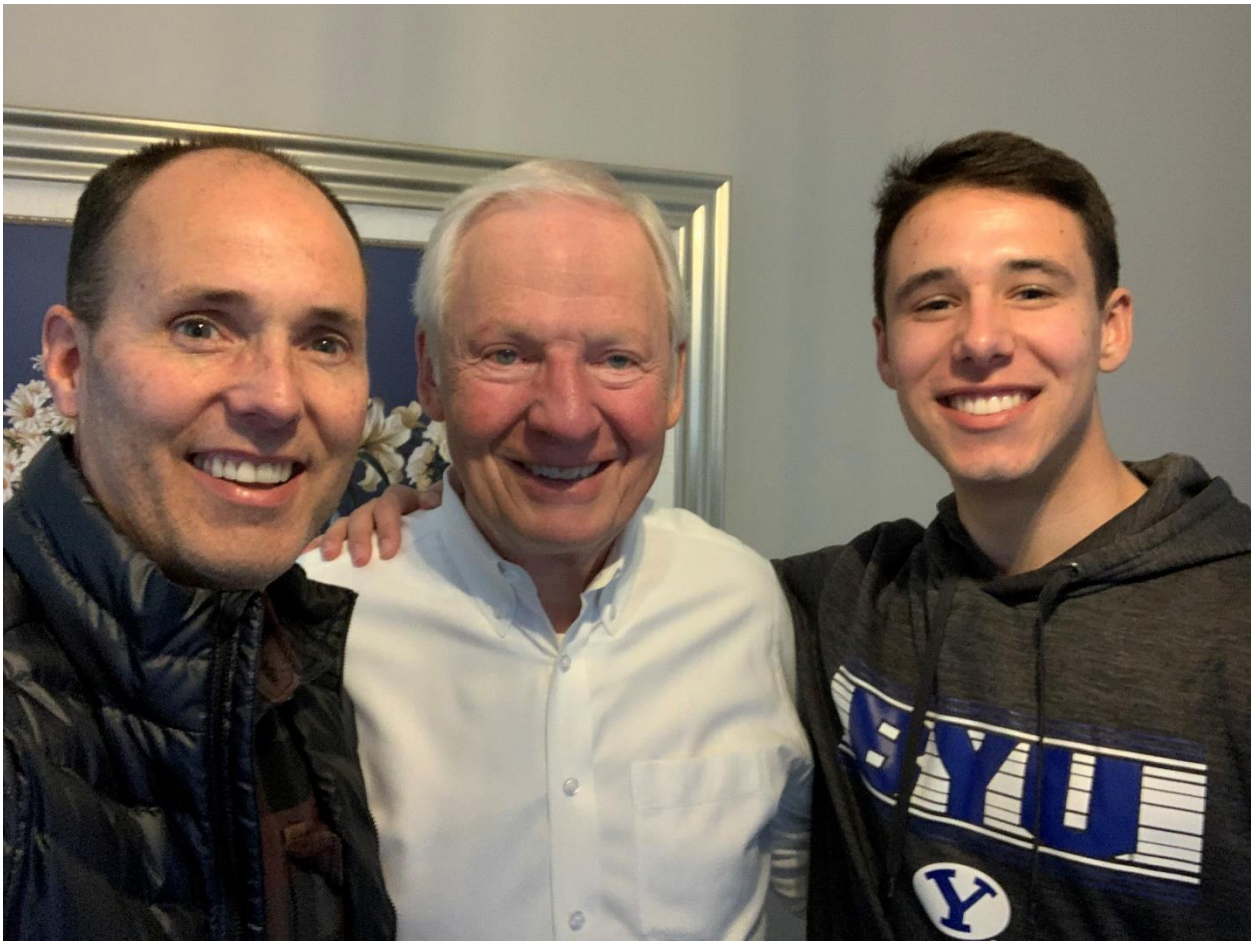
Diogo Myrrha, B.S. 2013

Learning Economics shifted the way I think about the world. As a Venture Capitalist, I am all about the efficient allocation of resources, and my training in Economics certainly contributed to the way I think about it. Further, learning in an organization that saw spiritual growth as an integral part of my education was a privilege, and I see that contribution in my life as a husband, a father, and a servant of God.

David Neil, B.S. 1994

A gorgeous fall Saturday in 1992 or 1993 our Econ professor Dr. James McDonald invited any interested students to join him on a hike to the top of Mount Timpanogos. I had never had a professor so personable who took a large part of his weekend to be with his students--really going above and beyond. It was a fantastic hike and the view from the top was, well,

unforgettable--vivid even 30 years later. On the hike up he talked to us not about econometrics, but about life and how to live it well. But speaking of later, a few years ago I received a surprise message from Dr. McDonald, now retired, asking how I was doing. He said he was just checking up on some of his former students. This led to some texting back and forth and ultimately, we got together for a visit when I was in town for a BYU football game. I was able to introduce him to my son who had just begun attending and would you believe it, they became friends and he has since mentored him in life lessons. Talk about going the second mile.



Alex Nelson, B.S. 2024

From a teachings standpoint, the Economics program taught me how to think critically about the topics and issues that I care about. From MLB teams to

poverty alleviation to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Economics professors at BYU have taught me to think about things theoretically & empirically and have taught me how to be a better thinker, steward, and person. I was given tools to know for myself the truth of things. From a human standpoint, I always felt valued in the Economics program. Professors were so generous with their time and took the time to get to know me and mentor me despite having many things on their plates. I also made some lifelong friends who are kind and wickedly smart, a rare combo. I will always be grateful for the people that I met and the things that I've learned while in the Economics program at BYU. I'm so glad I chose this major.

Benjamin Nelson, B.A. 2002

I have always found myself to be extremely proud of my BA in Economics from BYU. When I went to school at BYU (Fall 1997; 2000-2002), I always found myself surrounded by students trying to get into the Marriott School of Management or students that had actually gotten accepted into the Marriott School of Management. These students went to school in “the great and spacious building” and always made sure to tell me how much more valuable their degree would be than mine. To counteract their boasts, I would have some quick rejoinders. First of all, they would all say they were getting their bachelor’s degree in business. My reply was always that I didn’t know that BYU had a bachelor’s degree in business, since they only offer one in management. The final rejoinder to their boasting would be for me to reply that there is no Noble Prize in business or management, only Economics!

My favorite thing about learning Economics was that it taught me how to think. Economics has applications in almost everything we do, whether we notice it or not. Because it is so applicable and such an important discipline, I always had fun showing people how Economics applies to things going on in our individual lives as well as around the world. When the Freakonomics books came out, I felt almost vindicated. Freakonomics was proof that economics is

fun and that it helps explain things, even outside of a business cycle. It was rewarding and vindicating to point to the fun studies in Freakonomics and show that those concepts and ideas are what drew me to Economics in the first place; it helped reinforce the validity of my reason for pursuing this discipline, as well as the value of my BA in Economics from BYU.

When I was in high school in the mid-1990s, I learned about Milton Friedman and that made me want to get a degree in Economics. I always knew that I wanted to go to BYU. However, I did not realize how strong the Economics faculty at BYU was and how exceptional the curriculum was. I was super excited that so many of the faculty members received their PhD's from the University of Chicago and had worked with all the Noble Prize-winning faculty from that unique university during that unique time; most of the BYU Economics professors decreased the theoretical "six degrees of separation" to just one degree of separation! One of my favorite memories from one of my classes was when our professor on the first day of class assigned us to read a Noble Prize-winning acceptance speech from a University of Chicago professor. In the next class meeting, he was seemingly dismayed that nobody in the class followed the asterisk from the acceptance speech to the back of the printout to discover that our professor was mentioned in part of the gratitude section. We all felt bad for not thinking to read the footnotes, but it made me really excited to have a professor that worked hand-in-hand with a Noble Prize winner. Needless to say, the Economic Department Faculty at BYU was extremely impressive and first class in every sense of the word.

My degree in Economics from BYU has helped me rise up the banking ranks from a teller all the way to branch management, department management, and now as a senior vice president of the largest community bank in Idaho. I always find myself secretly teaching Economic principles to my employees about cost/benefit analysis to help in their decision making, opportunity costs, as well as production possibility frontiers to get them to push themselves further and grow individually, thus allowing us to grow as a

department. These basic Economic principles and more apply to each employee individually, our department collectively, and of course help make sense of the industry we work in, as well as understanding the everchanging economy as a whole. Several times as I have weathered and navigated the Economic tsunamis that have resulted from the 2008 Housing Crisis and COVID-19, I have wondered what my BYU Economic professors would say about these significant events to future BYU students; and I am proud to say that I have been able to survive and thrive despite all the hardships and challenges because I have adhered to the basic truths and fundamentals that they taught me so many years ago. I have been fortunate enough that as a result of my application of Economic principles that I learned at BYU to have won several awards, including the Independent Community Bankers of America Community Banker of the Year Award for the Western United States, Idaho Business Review's 40 Under 40, Idaho Business Review's Excellence in Finance Award, and much more. In each of the accompanying articles describing my success, I am always so proud to mention that I have a BA in Economics from BYU. And to give credit where credit is due, my BA in Economics helped lay the foundation for all the success in banking and leadership that I have been able to enjoy.

From a BYU standpoint, I have always loved the "Enter to Learn, Go Forth to Serve" statement. As mentioned above, I learned a lot of things at BYU, especially from the Economics Department, that prepared me for future success in the banking industry. There is no doubt that the things I have learned have helped me find the success at work that I needed to allow me to give service. Giving service has been one of the most enriching parts of my banking career. I have been fortunate to be involved with a variety of service organizations. Serving in different capacities has allowed me to not only make a difference in my community, but it has also allowed me to create relationships with other good people that have been really rewarding. In fact, giving service is what has allowed me to grow my connections which in turn

has allowed me to become even more successful as a business professional. By giving service, I have benefited even more professionally than I would have if I chose to refrain from the opportunities to be involved with my community. Saying “yes” to service opportunities and community involvement has been not only personally rewarding, but it has also taught me more and helped me become the best version of myself. I have enjoyed being involved in Rotary, as both a club president and as a district governor. The good that we have been able to accomplish both here and abroad has been very fulfilling, and the friendships I have gained from it have been wonderful. Serving has led to me being asked to be on Intermountain Health hospital boards, the chamber of commerce board, a recreation district board, a water company board, a library board, etc. I have even been privileged to teach classes at the local junior college’s Institute of Religion. It has been wonderful to be a part of so many organizations that work so hard to make our communities and our world a better place. And with every organization, my biography proudly states that I have a BA in Economics from BYU. There is no doubt that the more I give in service, the more I have received in return. Engaging in “service above self” has made me a better person, a better employee, a better manager, a better husband, and a better father. I cannot express fully how grateful I am that I was able to enter BYU to learn about Economics and then had the privilege of going forth to serve in so many different organizations that truly make a difference for good.

Jonah Nelson, Current Student, Exp. B.S. 2026

Economics has changed my worldview, and studying economics at BYU has given me the opportunity to meet and collaborate with the best students, professors and friends BYU has to offer. Andrew Rushing was my TA last semester and helped me grapple with the complex ideas in Econ 380 and was will to meet with me outside of his normal hours to accommodate my schedule. Andrew is also a TA for one of my classes this semester and continues to help me succeed.

Whitney Newey, B.A. 1979

I cannot say enough good about my experience as a BYU undergraduate in the economics department. That experience established a wonderful foundation for what I have done as a graduate student at MIT and a professor at Princeton and MIT.

I was lucky enough to be an undergraduate when there were two recent Ph.D.'s from MIT in the BYU economics department, Dwight Israelsen and Jim Kearl. Their encouragement and support were really essential in considering and helping me to choose to work as a professor. In particular, I worked for Dwight as a research assistant for 2.5 years which provided wonderful support for a newly formed family, my wife and our first two children. Dwight and Jim also set a wonderful example of hard work and clear thinking that I have benefited from ever since. Jim McDonald was also an excellent example of good research work and an amazing example of teaching and mentorship for students. His work with students set an example that I have tried to emulate. The faithfulness in the Gospel of so many faculty at BYU has been a good example to me of having eternal priorities while working in scholarly pursuits.

The preparation I received for graduate school at BYU was outstanding. I found that I was just as well prepared as were many of my classmates from more prestigious schools like Harvard and Chicago.

I cannot imagine a better start for the rest of my life in earning a living than what I received from the BYU economics department.

Parker Nichol, B.S. 2016

I will always hold a special place in my heart for my time at BYU. It is where I met and married my wife (our first child is due in April). It is also where I made many lifelong friends who I am still very close to today. Finally, it was a place where I developed a deep love and understanding of the gospel of Jesus

Christ. I travel a lot for my current job, I meet a lot of people. I am so grateful to be able to share my experiences as a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints with many people who have never met a member before. I have had many very deep and meaningful conversations with people who are seemingly strangers.

When it comes to what the Econ department has done for me specifically, I don't think of my ability to still do derivatives or integrals on the fly, I think of how it expanded my world view. I think of things differently since my time in the department. When I am reading the news and developing my own opinions on movements in the world or even being reflective of my own life and actions, I do think about the tradeoffs more often than not. That is probably the biggest lesson I have taken away from my studies... the ability to cut straight to the tradeoffs that come when trying to answer all of life's day to day questions. Whether it is in my home with my family, in my professional work, or literally as I am doing anything. It is silly to say, but I feel like the BYU Econ department infected me with a new way of thinking about everything and it always starts for me with analyzing the tradeoffs.

Keith Olsen, B.S. 2019

In a conversation with another econ major, I rambled about the misallocations and market distortions of programs like SNAP. He let me complain for a long moment, and then simply responded, "An efficient market doesn't mean much to someone who can't feed their family." I didn't have any good response. It made me reflect on Dr. Kearl's final lecture where he powerfully taught about John Rawls' thought experiment, the veil of ignorance.

The material in my economics courses taught me how to optimize systems for the greatest efficiency. The people in the department taught me some of the situations when we might not want to.

Uyiosa Osa-Iduma, Current Student, Exp. B.S. 2025

The economics department at BYU has made a big difference in my life. The classes have taught me how to think critically and solve problems in a logical way. Learning about supply and demand, market trends, and data analysis has given me a new way to see the world. I enjoy using these skills to understand real-life situations, from how businesses set prices to how government policies affect the economy. The professors have also been great mentors, always willing to help and challenge me to grow. Being part of the economics program has also helped me prepare for my future career as a business analyst. The projects and research opportunities have given me hands-on experience with data and decision-making. Working with classmates on complex problems has improved my teamwork and communication skills, which are important for any job. More than just academics, this department has given me confidence and excitement about my future. As I get ready to graduate, I am grateful for everything I have learned and the people who have helped me along the way.

Curtis Oscarson, B.A. 2003

When I returned from my mission after two years of doing no math at all, I was completely unprepared to jump back into the economics core. I had taken a few economics courses before my mission, but none that involved the intensive math required for more advanced classes, including statistics and econometrics. I had worked hard to save enough money for college and to secure a scholarship, but ultimately, I was responsible for financing my own education. I was terrified of what could happen if my grades suffered.

Feeling overwhelmed, I decided to meet with Dr. Jim McDonald, the chair of the department. He greeted me with great compassion, listened carefully to my concerns, and then asked me a simple yet profound question. He wanted to know if I had learned that the atonement applies to return missionaries too.

I was caught off guard by his question. While I understood the atonement in theory, particularly as it relates to sin, I hadn't considered the enabling power of the atonement in the way I should have. Dr. McDonald helped me realize that if I was willing to do my part and follow the Lord's guidance, He would help me learn and develop the skills I needed, especially through diligent effort.

What Dr. McDonald said proved to be true. With hard work and the Lord's help, I was able to perform well in my classes and gained the confidence I needed moving forward. My economics education not only supported my success in law school and my legal career but has also been invaluable in my work as a business consultant, board member, and investor.

Looking back, I'm incredibly grateful not only for the education I received at BYU but also for the personal lessons I learned about the enabling power of Christ's atonement. It helped me overcome challenges in a way I hadn't expected. I am also deeply thankful for the loving and supportive approach Dr. McDonald took in helping me succeed.

Bob Packer, B.A. 1978

Toward the end of my study in Economics at BYU, I of course began to contemplate next steps. At one point I pondered a graduate degree in business and then the possibility of finding a job and a career with a New York investment bank. I had been aware of all of the stories of proactive, smart, aggressive people from high powered—mostly east coast-- business schools who worked at those places. Could I solve problems, think on my feet, proactively create business, and be sufficiently confident in hard situations? I did not truly think so!

During my time at BYU in the Economics Program, the Director was a fellow by the name of Wayne Clark. I had Dr. Clark for two different courses during my Economics program. If I recall correctly, Dr. Clark loved difficult and lengthy midterms and finals. If fact, the final for the second of those two classes—he

apparently felt—would be so time-consuming to grade that he decided he would have oral finals; each of the students of that class would schedule a 20-minute individual time in his office to answer his exam questions.

I remember his having a smallish blackboard to the side of his office and he was prepared to have us use the board and 'teach' him in that final. I entered his office comfortable with the material but not totally confident. I had studied well; but. As it happens, the questions that he asked in those 20 minutes happened to be concepts that I HAD learned well and enjoyed. In short, on my feet and under pressure, I nailed the final in this setting with Dr. Clark. I finished; he looked at me and asked me if I wanted to be a TA. I did not! But the final not only gave me the grade I wanted in that class but started me on the road to knowing what I could do even at an investment bank with really aggressive people..... if I prepared.

I left the program, attended business school, received an offer to work at Goldman, Sachs, worked over 20 years in three of four of the largest municipal areas in the country, and loved my 20-year career there. My thanks to Dr. Clark and Economics at BYU.

Jim Pack, B.A. 1985

Econ 110 with Dr. Wimmer changed the trajectory of my life & career. I'd been looking for scholastic direction, and was considering one of the various Engineering majors, but sitting in a large auditorium, with 100's of students, I was captivated by the theory of how things work around me and why they work. Even though my seat was frequently one of the steps at the top-back of the auditorium, Dr. Wimmer communicated and inspired. Many think of Econ as a somewhat dry subject, but Dr. Wimmer brought it to life!

Additionally, my personal interests are diverse, so when I discovered that the required credit list as an Econ major was small and would permit me to take additional classes that expanded my thinking in other areas (information

management, foreign language, and others), Econ became my undergraduate major.

As my studies progressed further into the program I had the opportunity to TA for the Econ 110 class. That work really helped solidify and clarify the foundations of my understanding. The funny thing about Econ is that your first classes tell you how economics theory works, and all the more advanced courses spend their time telling you how and when those basic theories don't usually work so simply. It really stretches your mind and requires much more than memorization.

Perhaps one of the most valuable aspects to the major was its ability to help you learn to think and reason. There are so few absolutes in life, and being able to question the assumptions and processes, not just the results, provides one with a skillset that is transferable to any leadership position.

I later went on for an MBA at the University of Michigan, and my experience as an Economics major, combined with other BYU coursework enabled me to compete and excel with some of the brightest business students in the nation.

I've now been involved in many entrepreneurial growth businesses, helped lead INC 500, and Utah 100 companies, been able to expand business interests from the US into and throughout Europe, Canada, Asia, and South America, and have grown, developed and sold several firms. The educational foundation goes back to that first Econ 110 class with Dr. Wimmer.

Thanks to the BYU Economics department for providing a rigorous, compelling, enlightening, and flexible education!

Christopher Palmer, B.A. 2008

I am immensely grateful for and proud of my experience in the BYU Economics Department. Foremost, the example of scholar-saints has been invaluable to my own testimony. The importance of simultaneously upholding

standards of academic excellence and standards of faithfulness was so salient in my experience. To have professors with world-renown intellect and insights in their field who also joyfully and deliberately keep their covenants and strive to follow Jesus Christ forcefully demonstrated to me that science and faith are absolutely compatible.

From a career standpoint, I have been proud to hold up my preparation for a PhD from BYU Economics alongside the preparation my graduate school classmates got from other elite universities. I didn't quite appreciate until I got to graduate school how unique it was to have received so much mentoring, not to mention widespread opportunities to be involved with research and teaching even as an undergraduate. That preparation has allowed me to have an impactful research career, studying how distressed families cope with financial pressures and designing better policies to support them. The religious education and friendships and conversations I had on campus have also been a priceless asset to my own service.

Rich Patterson, B.A. 2009, Faculty

When I arrived as a new faculty member at BYU, I was struck by how my colleagues treated their students. Before courses started, I saw my colleagues memorizing their students' names and pictures. In class, my colleagues used flashcards to call on students, making sure it wasn't just the most eager students who had a chance to participate. Several colleagues required each of their students to meet with them one-on-one. During these meetings, my colleagues provided their students with academic, professional, personal, and spiritual support. When students missed class, my colleagues would reach out to express concern and show support.

By acting as beacons of light, my colleagues changed how I interact with my students. As I started to follow my colleagues' examples, I began to care more about my students' welfare and have stronger connections with my students.

In a recent meeting with a student, I found out that his post-graduation plan had just fallen apart. I asked him what his ideal professional trajectory would be and felt impressed to connect him with a BYU alumnus who worked in his preferred field. After the two met, I asked my student, “How did it go?” He said that the meeting had gone better than he could have ever expected and that it had opened up a door to pursue his professional dreams. In that moment, I felt immense gratitude for the prompting I received and for the examples of my colleagues that led me to meet with my student in the first place.

Amanda Peterson, Economics Career Director

I've been sitting in on the Econ 210 class for years and appreciate the invitation Dr. McMurray has made to visiting alumni to share both their career journeys and the role the Gospel has played in their lives. I've seen an alumnus create a timeline of professional achievements paired with church callings. I've heard multiple alumni share stories of when they put family above their career, and stories of when they had to lean on temple covenants to bring them peace during challenging personal times. I've felt the Spirit as alumni have told stories of Divine coincidences that brought them to unanticipated work opportunities. In our logician-heavy major, I appreciate that so many recognize the role of personal revelation in steering the course of their life and their work.

Dan Peterson, B.A. 1979

As a Teaching Assistant for Dr. Roland Koller in the late 1970's, I had the opportunity to read and grade more than 200 new venture proposals authored by students in his Intermediate Microeconomics courses. The creativity of the students and their desire to have a positive impact on the world made a deep and lasting impression. Later, I received an MBA from Harvard Business School and have since had the opportunity to help found, fund and build dozens of companies over four decades. Many of those carried a sense of mission and incorporated values that extended beyond

delivering economic returns to investors, employees, and trading partners. While not all of them have proven to be financial successes, many thousands of lives have been improved as a reflection of the lessons learned while a lowly Teaching Assistant within the Economics Department. Toiling carefully and diligently on the task at hand--reading and grading carefully, fairly, and critically--taught indelible lessons regarding what to look for when the stakes became "real," and millions of dollars and hundreds of employees' jobs were at stake. The essential elements of risk management and long-term value creation have proven to be consistent across time, industries, and geographies. The analytical framework ingrained while training within the BYU Economics Department ended up blessing the lives of thousands and in ways that transcend mere dollars & cents. In my experience, the light and hope enabled by, and reflected in, new venture creation belie the characterization of Economics as "the dismal science."

Joshua Peterson, B.S. 2017

One fond memory of how BYU Economics added light to my life is through the friendly faculty. I graduated in 2017, when the Faculty Office Building (FOB) still housed the department. Dr. McMurray always referred to the FOB as the "Friendliest of Buildings". I found that to be true. Though I am working as a physician now and not as an economist, I am grateful for my time with BYU Economics and the educational foundation it provided.

Mark Peterson, B.A. 1989

I gave this some thought, and it really was my experience in the Department of Economics while obtaining my undergraduate degree in economics that led me to law school. Initially, I did not have economics or law school in my future plans as I was moving toward an engineering degree. However, the logical thinking necessary for economics, coupled with social thought and governmental policy opened up a new world to me. It led me to explore graduate degrees like law school where I could continue this intersection of

logical decision making based in governmental policy. My law degree has led me to all kinds of exciting and challenging experiences. I've worked in Bangkok, Thailand, Tokyo, Japan, Baghdad, Iraq, Montreal, Canada, Washington D.C., and now Honolulu. To summarize, my undergraduate economics experiences were the primary catalyst that opened up the world for my family and I to enjoy and experience while practicing law in areas like criminal prosecution, international air and space law, and healthcare law. But maybe more importantly, these experiences led to my family and I serving in wards and branches in many locations, receiving blessings of giving light and receiving light at each location. All three of our children served missions in Japan, which I'm sure was influenced by our living there. We assisted in the Washington D.C. Temple open house after its closure and refurbishing and now look forward to assisting in the open house of the new Honolulu Temple once it is built. There are so many experiences and blessings from Church Service, it is impossible to write all of them. We have truly been blessed.

Aaron Phipps, B.S. 2010

My experience in BYU's Economics Department illuminated both my academic path and my understanding of human flourishing. A pivotal moment came in Dr. Lefgren's labor economics class, where our discussion of teacher performance incentives sparked what would become a career-long research agenda. That initial exposure to the complexities of workplace incentives led me to develop new theoretical frameworks for understanding organizational performance and leadership—work that continues to influence how I think about improving educational outcomes and organizational effectiveness.

The department exemplified the integration of rigorous scholarship with genuine human connection. Dr. McDonald, my honors thesis advisor, went beyond academic mentoring to take a personal interest in his students' lives. When he called my mother during a difficult time in her life, it demonstrated how mentorship transcends academic guidance. These experiences taught

me that good mentorship, like good economics, requires understanding the full context of human experience.

My economics training has shaped how I serve in my community, particularly through the Church. While working with the Bishop's Storehouse, economic principles helped me appreciate both the operational efficiency that allows us to serve effectively and the complex barriers that can trap people in difficult circumstances. Economics has given me deeper empathy by illuminating how circumstances, skills, and external factors influence people's choices and situations. This understanding has made me a more thoughtful leader and community member, helping me see people as complex decision-makers navigating a challenging world, and better equipped to support them in their journey.

Preston Pierce, B.S. 2018

My economics education has not directly been used in my career (sales management in cybersecurity). However, I use the rigor in analysis in nearly every aspect of my life and in my career. Being able to dissect data, recognize and challenge assumptions, project unintended consequences, understand opportunity costs, and utilize cost benefit analyses has launched me into leadership at a relatively early point in my career. My economics degree shaped my modes of thinking and operating. Despite not being directly used in my career, it has been extremely valuable to my career advancement and just as valuable — if not more — to my life and family's decision-making processes.

Brennan Platt, Faculty

My perspective on BYU comes as one who did not attend as a student. Before applying for a position in the Economics Department, I had no knowledge of its reputation or familiarity with my future colleagues. However, when I was on campus for interviews, I could tell that BYU was a very different environment

than other universities that I was considering. The faculty were more collegial, more unified in purpose, and yet more excited for excellence. The students were more engaged and self-motivated. And most importantly to me, I could see how I could teach a fully integrated truth that placed my disciplinary perspective on my gospel foundation.

This was my beacon that drew me to BYU, and I can happily report that I have found my initial impressions were fully confirmed in the years that have followed. I have repeatedly felt that this is the place where I can truly pursue the glory of God: "intelligence, or in other words, light and truth" (D&C 93:36). I hope to keep that beacon lit for students and colleagues, current and future.

Mike Porter, B.A. 1996

I enjoyed my time at BYU and found immense value attaining a degree in Economics. I left BYU and immediately found a job in technology consulting first with Price Waterhouse and then with Perficient. You may not see a reason as to why a degree in Economics would have value for someone focused on implementing web sites, portal sites, customer relationship management systems, Marketing Automation Systems, and all sorts of integrations to said systems. However, my time at BYU taught me to be very open to how companies work and what incentives they have.

Over almost 30 years in consulting, I've worked with around 65 different industries. I've had to understand what the company does, who its customers are and what incentives do they use. I've had to understand the business model and how a company sells in various channels. Success in technology consulting hinged upon an understanding of the company and ability to wrap my arms around what the client wanted and how we would use a system or platform to deliver the value.

Each class at BYU helped me to look at a company in different ways. I've used what I learned in many classes including macro-economics, mathematics for econ, regression analysis, and yes, even third world economics to understand

a company and create a better solution for each. I mostly enjoyed and sometimes hated my classes at BYU, but each brought value and an ability to see the world in different ways.

Joe Price, B.A. 2003, Faculty

Brian Ashton reached out two years ago to see if my research lab at BYU could help provide meaningful work to BYU Pathway students in Africa. I'd been working with about 50 BYU students to design new ways to involve people in family history. We modified one of our tools to work really easily on a phone and within three weeks, we were providing full-time work for 200 Pathway students in Africa (funded by a generous donor).

The BYU students create the tools, training materials, and auditing materials to help the Pathway students have an amazing experience. Using these tools, the Pathway students have added millions of new people to the Family Tree at familysearch.org. This has been such a synergistic collaboration that taps the gifts and skills of BYU students in Provo and BYU Pathway students in Africa.

The students in my lab have also created automated tools that add entire families from historical records to the Family Tree. The combination of automation and Pathway student effort have allowed us to take on country-level tree growth projects. Recently, we added 300,000 families from historical records in Uruguay to the Family Tree. The Pathway students and volunteers helped connect these families using marriage records and merging duplicates. The end result is that now anyone in Uruguay can go on FamilySearch and see their family. This effort has also created an amazing dataset that BYU students are using to study immigration and assimilation in Uruguay.

This is one of the things that I love about BYU. We have students who are filled with light and want to use that light to do good in the world. Gathering Israel

by connecting together the human family is one of the ways that they can do good in the world.

Joshua Price, B.S. 2005, Faculty

It took me some time to discover my true educational direction. BYU was my third college, and even after arriving, I didn't initially see my path clearly. Everything changed when I enrolled in Econ 378, Statistics for Economists, taught by Eric Eide. Following the first midterm exam, I realized my passion and set a goal to pursue a PhD in Economics. The guidance and mentorship I received from the economics faculty at BYU played a pivotal role in preparing me and ultimately helped me gain acceptance into a PhD program.

During my doctoral studies, I was fortunate to return to Provo to teach Econ 378 during the summer term. This experience allowed me to deeply appreciate BYU's distinctive educational environment, characterized by supportive mentorship and a commitment to student-focused learning. It was here that I discovered my genuine passion for teaching.

Throughout my academic career, which emphasizes both teaching and research, I have repeatedly sought opportunities to return to BYU to teach summer terms, driven by my recognition of the exceptional educational atmosphere.

Today, as I once again find myself teaching at BYU, I am inspired by the incredible students I encounter. My greatest aspiration is to support them wholeheartedly in pursuing their dreams, just as my own professors at BYU supported me in pursuing mine.

Robert Reitz, B.A. 1993

I have said many times that Economics is a degree or a subject that helps you understand basic human behavior, business behavior, marketing, decision making, etc. Although there aren't many jobs that are specifically

looking for economics degrees, I have loved applying what I learned as I have worked in the business world and earned an MBA. I found that I understand the why of many things much better than most others with the many things learned in my Economics studies.

Addy Rogers, Current Student, Exp. B.S. 2025

Since joining economics, everything else in my life seems to have fallen into place. I have found a community of kind, intelligent people (both teachers and peers) who support my academic and career growth. Something that has stood out to me since switching majors is the drive of all the professors to know their students -- by name. They remember students' goals and ambitions, and care deeply on an individual level. I've bonded with fellow classmates in TA hours, struggling over problem sets and projects together. The culture of the economics department is of kindness and academic success; there is no competitive feeling, as everyone works together to achieve progress.

Additionally, I've had opportunities as a Teaching Assistant and Research Assistant in the economics department, and my coworkers and students have taught me more than I could ever learn on my own. Classmates have become friends outside of school, and I deeply value each of these connections. I am so grateful to be a part of this department; everyone has truly made an impact on my life, both currently and for my future.

Troy Rule, B.S. 2001

I graduated summa cum laude from BYU with a B.S. in economics in 2001. While in the economics program, I worked as a teacher assistant for Economics 110 and as a research assistant for Professor James Kearl.

My experiences in the BYU economics department shaped much of my career and empowered me to go forth and meaningfully serve. My Economics 110 course with Professor Kearl initially persuaded me to major in economics,

which proved to be valuable preparation for law school. After graduating from BYU, I was accepted at Harvard Law and numerous other schools but ultimately enrolled at the University of Chicago Law School upon advice from Professor Kearl and because of the school's reputation as a leader in economic analysis of law. At Chicago, I was named an Olin Fellow in Law & Economics and received further training that eventually helped me to publish my first few law journal articles and secure a tenure-track law faculty position at the University of Missouri in 2009 and then at Arizona State University's Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law in 2013, where I'm currently the Joseph M. Feller Memorial Chair in Law & Sustainability and Faculty Director of ASU's Law & Sustainability Program. I've authored multiple books and published dozens of articles over the years -- many of which apply economics to analyze property law and energy law topics and issues. My scholarly work has helped to advance the development of renewable energy law, sustainability law, drone law, property law, health law, and economic analysis of law.

Over the past 15 years, I've likewise taught thousands of law students in the classroom -- most of whom surely knew about my faith. I've always sought to use that platform to nurture positive impressions of Christ's restored church and its members in my students. I've also served for the past 15 years as a J. Reuben Clark Law Society student chapter faculty advisor, which has allowed me to mentor countless Latter-Day Saint law students. Outside of law teaching, I served for nearly five years as a bishop and am currently serving as a stake president. My wife, Amy (also a BYU alum), and I have three wonderful children -- one of whom is currently studying law and another who is on a church mission in Lima, Peru. Both of my two older children have enrolled at BYU, and my youngest plans to do so after he graduates from high school. Each of my primary roles -- as law professor, stake president, husband, and father -- enables me to routinely experience and share Christ's light in diverse and rewarding ways. I'm deeply grateful to have studied

economics at BYU and can sincerely say that my years in the economics program have profoundly blessed my life.

Stephen Hays Russell, B.S. 1967

My undergraduate education in economics (1961-1967) gave me a set of tools that has allowed me to enjoy a two-pronged career. First: Ingrained concepts of opportunity cost, marginal analysis, incentives and the modeling of behavior, optimization, economic efficiency, market structure, et al., gave me cognitive skills and an informed framework for analysis. As a career United States Air Force officer for 24 years, working first in complex aircraft systems development and acquisition, and later serving as an economist in the Office of the Secretary of Defense dealing with policy issues related to the defense industrial base, I consistently found my economics education at BYU as my career springboard. Second: My appreciation and admiration for Dr. Wayne Clark in particular motivated me to earn a doctorate in economics (Arizona State University) and enjoy a second career as an academic. I taught economics and statistics at the United States Air Force Academy, Weber State University, and BYU-Hawaii for a total of 23 years.

All of these professional joys were wrapped in a life committed to Jesus Christ and to the restored gospel. In this, I followed the inspiring examples of Richard Wirthlin (who opened every class period with prayer), Larry Wimmer, Willard Doxey, Wayne Clark, Robert Parsons and other faculty members of the Department of Economic at Brigham Young University.

Jen Ryan, B.A. 1995

My sophomore year I was really struggling both inside and outside the classroom. By midterms, I was failing all of my classes. Dr Gardener privately tutored me for an hour every week for the rest of the semester. It was the lift I needed while I was pulling my life together.

There are pivotal moments in life that shape your trajectory. I went on from there to a successful career in management consulting, starting a charter school, etc., I have often thought of Dr Gardner's support academically/emotionally that semester, and attribute much of what I have accomplished to his dedication to teaching.

Dylan Sablan, B.S. 2023

Nine months after earning my B.S. in Economics from BYU in 2023, I was blessed to be employed as the Recorder of the Yigo Guam Temple. In this full-

time role, I ensure that temple patrons from across Guam and Micronesia have a spiritually uplifting experience while overseeing the accurate recording of sacred ordinances and ensuring the temple operates in accordance with the First Presidency's standards.

My economics education has been instrumental in fulfilling these demanding responsibilities. As a manager, I frequently navigate trade-offs to optimize outcomes. For example, I must balance efficiency in temple ordinance work with effectiveness—ensuring that ordinances are performed promptly while maintaining an atmosphere that fosters deep spiritual experiences for patrons. Additionally, the principles of resource allocation guide my decision-making as I manage administrative duties while ministering to temple leaders, ordinance workers, and patrons.

Beyond my temple responsibilities, I juggle multiple roles as a husband, father, full-time online MBA student at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, member of the U.S. Navy Reserves, ward clerk, and president of the Parent-Teacher Organization at my children's school. Economics teaches that optimal allocation of scarce resources—especially time—yields the greatest return. By applying marginal analysis, I have found that no matter how demanding my schedule becomes, I always benefit from devoting additional time to prayer, scripture study, and temple worship. These spiritual investments consistently provide the strength, clarity, and inspiration I need to meet the demands of my many responsibilities.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks, in a recent general conference, taught, *"We have to forego some good things in order to choose others that are better or best because they develop faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and strengthen our families."* This principle resonates deeply with my understanding of economics. Just as opportunity cost guides decisions in markets, it also applies to life's priorities. Economics has trained me to seek not just what is good, but what is best—those choices that align with my faith, strengthen my family, and bring lasting fulfillment.

My experience at BYU's Economics Department shaped the way I approach decision-making, prioritize my time, and serve others. It reinforced the idea that with the right principles and faith, there is always a way to optimize both our temporal and spiritual pursuits.

Nathan Savage, B.A. 1993

Brigham Young University, and specifically the Economics Department, helped to provide a solid foundation both temporally and spiritually for the rest of my life. The discipline gained through Economics has been a filter through which I have made business decisions throughout my career. The spiritual discipline taught at BYU, and which comes as a Disciple of Christ, has provided the filter through which I have strived to make decisions to guide my life. Combined, it is an eternal formula for success which I will always be thankful for. I know that the dual nature of a BYU education is prophetically directed, and I am forever grateful to be a Cougar.

Mark Showalter, B.A. 1986, Faculty

BYU has been a great blessing in my life. I came here as an underprepared undergraduate, unsure of what I wanted to do. At the suggestion of a friend who was an econ major, I decided to try economics. Once in the major, I was encouraged and inspired by a whole set of dedicated faculty members: Clayne Pope, Rulon Pope, Dick Butler, Larry Wimmer, and Jim McDonald, among others. Clayne hired me as an RA which gave me a taste for what it would be like to do research and to be an academic. Others encouraged me to go on for graduate training, which I did.

After finishing my Ph.D., BYU offered me a position, and I accepted. Aside from a couple of sabbatical leaves, I have been at the university since that time. It was a privilege to be a colleague with those faculty who had initially set me on the path towards academics, and it has been a great joy to work with the

wonderful students who have passed through BYU. This is a marvelous place with amazing possibilities ahead. I am excited to see what comes next.

Neal Shumway, B.A. 1987

After serving a mission in 1983-4, I took Econ 280 (second-level intro to Economics). It was taught by a visiting professor, whose name I no longer remember. He had been Chief Economist of a lumber/paper company and was in an advanced stage of multiple sclerosis. He started most class sessions reviewing the textbook material but usually became frustrated with that. He would push the textbook off his table onto the floor and say, "let me tell you how an economist really uses these tools." Forty years later, I still remember his stories of price elasticities, supply/demand measurement techniques, and market penetration studies. This wasn't just math; it was investigative detective work! The class was the most defining event of my formal education. The instructor hooked me on economics, for life.

I remember other professors who helped me along the way: Rulon Pope, who had infinite explanatory patience, James McDonald, who helped extensively with my not-very-independent senior paper, and James Kearl, who told me that I had written an "almost" publishable paper for his Economic Law class.

David Sims, B.S. 1999

A Reflection on BYU moments

I find it fitting that BYU has chosen to celebrate its 150th anniversary by focusing on the metaphor of light. When I was a child, I used to imagine lighthouses as giant towers that constantly bathed the surrounding areas and observers in a bright blanket. But as I grew up, I learned that modern lighthouses are actually wonders of engineering, using precisely cut patterned lenses, bright illumination sources, mirrors, and motors to send an incredibly bright, rotating beam of light into the surrounding darkness. Observers, both near and far, experience this as the observation of brief,

repeating flashes of light. In this, I am reminded of Elder Lund's 2022 BYU devotional about moments of spiritual insight in life.

And I struggle to think of a better metaphor for BYU in my life. All learning is hard, even with both the tools of study and faith at our disposal. True knowledge is precious, and often realized at a great cost, struggle, and after many errors. As I reflect on time spent at BYU, I see a series of moments in my mind when I felt briefly illuminated by a realization of knowledge or insight gained.

Some of these flashes I associate with great joy, whether it be sitting in two old chairs in a lobby of BYU building that no longer exists listening to a friend with glowing eyes discuss her summer distributing aid to destitute people far away and the love it made her feel; or sitting in a Principles of Economics class as a venerable professor explains how despite our faults and selfishness, unplanned, voluntary transactions can make a society prosperous; it is also at a table in the library, with a graph of regression as a conditional expectation function approximation, and the memory of a feeling that I had unlocked a great secret for understanding the world that few others possessed.

Yet some of those moments, though I associate them with light and knowledge gained, are nevertheless moments of great sadness. There is a student stumbling, crying while trying explain how they have to leave school for home because there has been an accident and now a parent is gone, a haunting moment in the middle of a otherwise ordinary class on the Reformation when I reach the realization that for the legacy of ideas left by the Protestant reformers, there is the toll of death and suffering of millions whose lives were uprooted and ruined by the ensuing wars of religion. These serve to remind me that the need for opposition in all things inherent to God's plan is a painful, yet ultimately merciful reality, and not just an abstract idea on a page.

And there is the feeling I have every time I teach American Heritage when I think of a set of my ancestors participating in the acts of the story we are telling, my thrice Great-Grandfather, a wagon builder enabling the westward movement, my Grandfather, a young soldier in World War II, my Great-Grandmother, the almost penniless immigrant struggling to get by in a strange new world. Knowing these stories fills me with connection to a larger united story we all share. I only know those stories because a BYU professor in my first class as a fresh returned missionary explained that the best way to understand economics or history was to learn about the experiences of those we are connected to. He then made it the primary assignment of the semester to go find these experiences. Each one of those stories, and many more I see as a moment of learning, a flash of light. While this is not how everyone experiences their time at BYU, I hope there are some who can relate to some of these experiences, and in turn reflect back on their own personal flashes of light that BYU has provided them.

Benjamin Smith, B.A. 2019

When I entered BYU, I thought I'd be an engineering major. To their credit, the one thing I did take away from my one semester as a mechanical engineering major was inspiration from the professors' charge for us to use our degrees to do good in the world.

But I quickly discovered that engineering wasn't for me. At the same time, I was taking Jim Kearl's economics 101 class to fulfill a GE requirement. His fascination and passion for economics was contagious. The ideas he taught were transformative in how I viewed how the world worked from then on. Even if I had stopped there and never taken another economics class, I would have come away with a much better-informed understanding of important concepts like opportunity cost and how prices are determined in free markets. This alone would have been a meaningful investment in my future career and/or public service.

But after careful and prayerful consideration, I felt that economics was so appealing both as a field of study and as a springboard for a career, that I decided that it should be my major. Jim even sent me a letter encouraging me to join economics, despite my less than stellar grade in his class, which I had heard he does sometimes. This didn't significantly influence my decision, but it was reassuring that someone of his stature believed in my ability to understand economic theory. Jim even took the time to meet with me to discuss the economics major, not long after.

And this was the first of many investments, small and large, that professors and the department would make in me over the following years. After I did well on an exam (likely more out of luck than skill) the following semester, Jeff Denning emailed me suggesting I apply to be a TA. Having been in the major for only a month or so, I never would've had that idea on my own. So I applied to be a TA, and I would end up working as a TA for a total of 1 semester and 4 spring/summer terms. I loved the interactions with the students and the professors, and I learned much more than I had when taking the given classes.

Now that I am at a university that only allows graduate students to be TAs, I appreciate more than ever the unique opportunity I had to gain many semesters of TA experience before even coming to graduate school.

Joe Price later hired me to be an RA and quickly started allowing me to work with his data, giving me quite ample opportunities to tackle difficult coding problems, practice writing and editing grant proposals and papers, and managing teams of RAs. The more experienced RAs on Joe's team gave me a lot of help in learning how to use Stata. As with TA'ing, advanced RA opportunities like this are almost exclusively reserved for grad students at my current university, which makes me even more grateful for the likely undeserved confidence Joe gave to me, in giving me opportunities to learn how to do research and lots of freedom to figure out the best way to do things.

I worked for Joe for almost 2 years, I think, and when I left BYU, this research experience seems to have meaningfully compensated for my somewhat mediocre grades, in getting me a good RA position at the Federal Reserve Board. Once I was at the Board, I often found that I had much more coding experience than many of the other RAs, and most of that experience came from my work under Joe.

The classes I took in economics at BYU were also transformative. I graduated with an Econ-math double major, and while I had some bad experiences with poor math teachers, I took more economics classes than math classes, but I never had a single bad economics class. I thought that every single economics class I took was really well taught, and the professors were often very willing to take time to meet with me, even to discuss career-related topics.

Not only that, but I had the opportunity to take graduate-level classes in economics. In my current university, this opportunity is reserved to only the top students, and I likely wouldn't have made the cut. And since I did get to take these classes, I think they played an important role in helping me enter UCLA's economics PhD program. When I entered my PhD program, my first year was almost easy due to having seen much of the material at BYU. I had been warned for a long time about how difficult my first year would be, and I saw many of my classmates struggling, but I found the first-year classes to be easier than I had anticipated. And this was single-handedly thanks to the graduate-level classes I got to take in economics (and math) at BYU.

The upper-level economics classes were also very interesting — it was great to have access to a wide variety of options, taught by world-class researchers, and I wanted to take more of them than I had time to.

I also received at least one departmental scholarship, which was very helpful towards keeping me financially stable while at BYU.

After leaving BYU, I got my first opportunity at professional public service when I joined the Federal Reserve Board as an RA. For the next two years, my education and professional experience at BYU directly influenced my ability to make important contributions to the work that the Fed did during that time, which included its work responding to the COVID pandemic in 2020-2021. Unfortunately, I can't talk in detail about the policy contributions that I made, but I felt very useful.

As I mentioned before, after my time at the Fed, my experience at BYU was undoubtedly important in getting me into UCLA's economics PhD program. And since coming here, I have begun to develop a research agenda that is focused on helping inform optimal policy design. Specifically, my research interests include questions related to health and criminal justice policy, among other topics. Hopefully, my research will evolve to have meaningful impacts in the future. I certainly feel like, in great part thanks to BYU, I have an enormous opportunity to do a lot of good for society, and I hope to make the most of this opportunity.

Emma Smith, B.S. 2019

I have a lot I could say about how much the economics department has changed my life, bringing me light and helping me to share that with others.

One thing that stands out is after my third semester I applied for the department's experiential learning grant to help pay for my participation in the church history travel study program. I was amazed and so grateful that I was awarded the grant, and it covered the rest of the costs to go on the travel study.

The travel study was one of the most enriching experiences I had while at BYU. I saw many parts of the country I had never been to before, learned tons about church history, felt the spirit countless times as my testimony of Jesus Christ, the Restoration, and Joseph Smith were strengthened, made lifelong

friends, associated with incredible faculty members, and best of all I met my husband and best friend on that trip.

And I owe it all to the economics department for providing the grant and supporting me in the enriching and rounding experiences offered to all BYU students.

Olga Stoddard, Faculty

Shining my light through mentoring students outside the classroom

I consider teaching and mentoring students one of the most fulfilling parts of my job as faculty member at BYU. I enjoy interacting with students both inside and outside of the classroom and cherish the opportunity to contribute to their spiritual, intellectual, and personal growth.

In addition to my formal teaching responsibilities, my research agenda has allowed me to create a unique mentoring and inspiring learning environment for BYU students. Since 2015, I have employed over 100 undergraduate and 5 graduate students as my research assistants (RAs). I strive to integrate students into every stage of the research process, from experimental design and review of the literature to data collection, cleaning, and analysis. While some RAs I have hired work with me om short-term projects and tasks for 1-2 semesters, others work closely on long-term projects over the course of 2-3 years and make significant contributions to the research. I meet with my RAs regularly to discuss and provide feedback on their work and align the tasks with their long-term academic and professional aspirations as much as I can. My hope is that these mentoring experiences help prepare the students to excel in their goals and to contribute positively to the world as they go out to serve.

Many of my former RAs have gone on to well-ranked graduate programs in Economics (Stanford, University of Chicago Harris School, UC-Berkeley, UT-Austin, UC-San Diego, Syracuse University, University of North Carolina, UC-

Riverside, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, London School of Economics), and other disciplines (Yale, UC-Berkeley, University of Michigan, Carnegie Mellon, University of North Carolina, Illinoi at Urbana Champagne, London School of Economics, University of Pennsylvania). Many others have found successful employments in economic consulting, business, IT, as well as pre-doc roles (MIT, University of Chicago, Yale, Harvard Business School, USC). I have written over 85 letters of recommendation for students since 2015 and strive to continue being a mentor and resource to them long after they leave BYU.

Chase Tang, B.S. 2024

Although life was pretty rough during my time at BYU and there wasn't much I could do to change the circumstances, the Economics faculty and department helped me a lot during those challenging times. I really appreciate the warm welcome and kindness I received, including from the office receptionist, career advisor, office manager, and all the professors.

Throughout my Economics education, I believe it completely changed the way I think, which helped me reason through and evaluate my life decisions in a more logical way.

Mike Tolman, B.S. 1991

I graduated in 1991 and have recently retired from a great career that included many positions of finance at Michelin North America. I have often looked back on my time in the economics departments with great memories.

I made lifelong friends with some students and remember tough tests, great discussions on Euclidean Economics and other topics and more importantly professors that had a passion for helping us grasp sometimes difficult topics.

A specific memory is a project that Wade Brown, Eric Bawden, and I were involved in with Professor Arden Pope. The three of us were asked if we wanted to step outside of text book examples and assist with a real world

situation involving Geneva Steel. During this project we studied the data from the hospital admissions and Geneva Steel smelting operations to prove a conclusive link to higher rates of RSV, especially in younger children. As young married students, we each had at least one child and this really hit home. Professor Pope was very passionate about the project and very exacting on the detail and pushing our analysis to ensure exactitude. This eventually contributed to major changes at Geneva Steel and had a very positive impact on the community. But what I remember the most was the exactitude in assumptions, data collection and management and the rigor to ensure it was 100 % correct. That project became a real mark for me to measure against in my 30 years of corporate life and many many roles in church service. I became known for the precision that I demanded from my teams, but I also tried to emulate the softer side that I learned from many professors at BYU. The mantra to go forth and serve is ever present and has served me well for many years as I reflect on it often.

You can read a recap of the project from the Daily Universe from back then. The University had a policy to shield any students from being named in research studies or the subsequent lawsuits – which in this case were a few. But I believe Geneva Steel eventually shut down for at least a short period.

https://universe.byu.edu/2002/07/23/geneva-steel-closure-linked-to-cleaner-air/

Rob Thurston, B.S. 1980

My undergraduate degree in Economics in 1980 and then an MBA in 1982 helped me to focus on what has become my life's mission.

The BYU MBA program in 2003 asked to do a business profile on me. Instead, I requested and used the article to show what the impact of my special needs son Greg has been in my life: **Alumni Feature: Rob J. Thurston—Helping the Search for a Cure** *by Tali Nay*

After earning his MBA from BYU in 1982, Rob Thurston spent his career in the benefits and consulting field. He has worked for such companies as IBM and Delta and is currently the president and CEO of HR Consulting Group, Inc., a top twenty-five U.S.-based benefits and consulting firm.

Immediately following his MBA, Thurston admits to having been on the career "fast track." Within three years, he was a national vice president of the third largest HR and benefits consulting firm, Fred S. James Consulting. But at that same time, his two-year-old son was diagnosed with Tuberous Sclerosis (TS), a genetic disease that causes autism, epilepsy, cancerous tumors on the brain and kidneys, and mental retardation. The Thurston's had two other children and a fourth on the way and were devastated at the diagnosis and terrified that their other children might develop TS.

In adjusting to the news, Thurston decided to change the focus of his career and his traveling. He wanted to focus on helping his son while simultaneously helping others who were afflicted with TS. Due to his position in a large consulting firm, he was able to devote a significant amount of professional time to learning about health care. He was very passionate and driven about his search for information and knowledge, especially due to the personal and emotional interest he now had because of his son's condition.

One thing Thurston was able to do with his network of MBA classmates was get in touch with people at IHC and Primary Children's Hospital. By 1986, the Thurston's had put together a database of families with instances of TS that had been passed from generation to generation. Because of Thurston's networking, researchers at the University of Utah, Primary Children's Hospital, and UCLA began to work together for the first time. Thurston's son, as well as other afflicted children, helped to inspire the group to set aside their turf battles and funding issues and instead focus on doing what was best for children with TS. Thurston used his "win-win" management techniques learned while in the MBA program to help keep everyone on track.

Thurston's work inspired his whole family to get involved with helping others. They joined the Utah Autism Society and volunteered at the Child Behavior Therapy Unit, and Thurston was asked to lead the local Tuberous Sclerosis Association. The Thurston's made a generous financial donation to further the research of TS, and Thurston was asked to join the National Board of Tuberous Sclerosis. At the time of the donation, it provided 12 percent of the board's budget and consequently had a huge impact on the research that could be done.

Within three more years, the Thurston's had found more than forty-five people in the Smith family line that enabled them, due to polygamous marriages, to pinpoint the husband who was the genetic carrier for TS through several generations. This led all the involved TS researchers to the LDS genealogical database, and they were able to trace those Smith family members.

The results of this have been miraculous. Many charities are now banding together and the Voluntary Health Agencies now have more than thirty-eight charities as members that can do more effective lobbying and public education. Autism awareness and growth in Utah have brought about the support of the new Carmen Pingree School for Autism in Salt Lake City. Seizure medications have been developed that can prolong the life of Thurston's son and millions of others. Researchers in 1990 and in 1997 discovered the first and then second gene markers that show on which two chromosomes TS exists. By 1998, a diagnostic test was developed enabling anyone to know if they have TS and to help with genetic and family counseling. And now the National Board of TS Alliance raises several million dollars for research and family support each year. The National Institute of Health has designated TS as a disease whose cure could yield tremendous results for autism, epilepsy, and even cancer. Consequently, the Department of Defense and the federal government are now allocating many millions each year.

Thurston's goal and hope is for a cure. It might be too late for his son, who is now twenty-five years old, but, Thurston says, "The prolonging of his life and his quiet, sweet spirit in our home has been priceless." Clearly Thurston's efforts with regard to TS have been significant, and yet he is quick to dismiss credit and thanks. "None of these results have been due to my efforts but by countless families and friends who have gotten involved."

The Thurston's, who live in Provo, have five children, two of whom have TS. Thurston says the past years have not come without many difficult choices, but he claims he would gladly trade his career or see it suffer if it would mean less suffering for those he loves. "The trade-off is to see lives changed, impacted, and helped for the good." He continues, "If you want to do something greater than yourself, to experience the charity that Christ refers to, and to lose yourself in the service of others, you know what to do. Get involved." If you would like to learn more about TS and how you can help, please visit www.tsalliance.org."

Since 2003 many millions of dollars have been raised for research and drug treatments. Literally hundreds of thousands have been impacted. The TS Alliance just celebrated their 50th year anniversary.

Thank you, BYU, for the education and alumni network for helping to make all this possible.

Chris Udall, B.S. 1989

I originally began in the College of Biology and Agriculture with Dr. Parks as the Dean and Delos Ellsworth as my advisor.

First, I want to mention that I was first pursuing a business degree and began taking courses, spending a lot of time in the Tanner building. One semester, I did not feel right about my coursework, so after much prayer and fasting, I opened the catalog of degree options. As I immersed myself in reviewing degrees, the Agricultural Economics degree literally jumped off the page at me, so I jumped into that program with all fours that day and didn't look back. I have been grateful for that decision ever since.

It was interesting that just before I graduated, the Economics Department, as I recall was moved to the School of Family, Home & Social Sciences. Therefore, I was offered the option to say I had a B.S. degree in Economics with an

emphasis in Agribusiness or an Economics degree with an emphasis in Agricultural Economics. I chose both and over my career, my degree has served me well as a Congressional Aide for two Congressmen, working on natural resources, water and multiple other issues for 10 years throughout the districts in Arizona. I most recently semi-retired as the Executive Director of the Agribusiness & Water Council of Arizona where I worked to support the interests of irrigated agriculture within our membership, and agribusiness members. In this capacity, I also served as the State Executive to the National Water Resources Association, based on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. The Agribusiness & Water Council of Arizona or ABWC is the state affiliate to the National Water Resources Association which represents similar water interests throughout the west.

I have had so many opportunities to promote Brigham Young University throughout my career and I have actually been able to work with colleagues who also graduated from BYU, in differing degrees, primarily law degrees.

I am grateful for the professors who took a personal interest in my success and provided me educational and spiritual guidance along the way. I had great professors and enjoyed the strengths and different approaches of each. I am sure the program is stronger now, these many years later.

I wish current and future students all the best as they pursue a degree in Economics and beyond and admonish them to use what they have learned in their Economics courses but also share with the world what they have learned in their religion courses, which will go hand-in-hand with their success in all their future endeavors.

Israel Varela, Current Student, Exp. B.S. 2026

Professor Pope (the older one) has always brought a smile to my face. His class was not easy, but he always made sure to make it fun. His enthusiasm for economics multiplied my enthusiasm for the subject by 10!!! His light

brought me light, and I want to be able to share that light with all around me. Whether it's in my economics career or in my day to day life.

Christian vom Lehn, BA 2009, Faculty

I was a student in the economics department from 2007-2009 and have fond memories of the stimulating environment and supportive faculty during my studies. I remember how generous James Cardon was with his time, meeting with me several times when I was trying to make future career plans. When Lars Lefgren heard I was interested in pursuing the PhD track, I remember how hands on he was in helping me chart next steps in terms of coursework and student jobs. I remember sitting on the beanbag in Val Lambson's office and getting advice about where to go to graduate school. And I of course won't forget Jim McDonald calling my Mom to tell her about my econometrics exam score.

I also remember the great camaraderie I felt with my classmates and TAs as well. Like many students in the economics program, I often felt a keen dependence on my TAs, needing their help to navigate challenging problem sets and daunting exams. And so when I was a TA for Farrell Jensen's Econ 378 class, I felt a great sense of responsibility to watch out for the students in the class, to watch over this "flock," preparing them to succeed in the class and beyond.

Given the lasting imprint of my time as a student, when I came back to BYU as a faculty member in 2014, I came wanting to pass on the generosity and attention I had received in my time as a student. I've found it immensely rewarding to get to know the many students I've had in my macroeconomics classes, learning about their plans, their interests, and sometimes even their heartaches. Even though some of the material we teach is foundational content that is the same from semester to semester, getting to know a new group of students, seeing them come alive as they learn prevents teaching from feeling rote and repetitive.

One of the things I love about being a faculty member in the economics department is getting to introduce economists outside of BYU to the environment and community we have in the department. First of all, they always marvel at the mountains, reminding me of how easily I take the natural beauty in the area for granted. But they also walk away so impressed with the energy, politeness, brilliance of the students, as well as the strength of the overall department community. Not long after I was hired, I invited a close colleague of mine from graduate school to visit BYU. He had enjoyed great prestige and professional success since we were in school together, and I was a little envious of his many accomplishments. But as he spent a couple of days on campus, to my surprise, he told me how envious he was of me, being part of such a talented, cohesive, supportive community imbued with a deeper purpose and meaning. Regular experiences like these remind me of how grateful I am for all that the students, faculty, and alumni contribute to make the BYU economics department what it is.

In addition to my teaching at BYU, I hope that my contributions as a researcher can continue to shine that light to others, bringing attention to the university and its unique mission, providing an example of scholar who is engaged both in study and faith.

Joshua Walkenhorst, B.S. 2024

My time in the Econ program at BYU was one for the memory books. I stepped into Dr. Kearl's Econ 110 class on my second day of my freshman year at BYU. I could never have realized then that my life would be forever molded by a profound gospel principle that was taught to me from day 1. It is that individuals are rational, self-interested and always choose what is best for their situation. Every individual will always choose to maximize. As I began to ponder this foundational assumption in Economics, I couldn't help but wonder that if this was the case, why did so many of God's children make poor choices? I found my answer within the first few days of this class, and it

changed my life forever. One of the first things Dr. Kearl taught us about was Motives, The Social Structure, and Outcomes. Everyone has a motivation of some kind. We have a motive from someone, and then through the Social Structure presented to them (or in other words the incentives they are given) we will get outcomes. He then proceeded to make his point through an object lesson in which he managed to get students to enter an auction where the prize was $1, and students were bidding more than $1 to only get $1. Why would anyone do this?! To do so on face value seems insane! An onlooker who did not understand the rules and incentives that were set up in this object lesson would easily deem these participating students "irrational". Those students who seemed to be making a poor decision by paying more than the $1 was worth would easily be condemned by one only looking at the outcome. It would be easy to assume that the motives of the students were bad just by looking at the outcome. This is not what the Gospel of Jesus Christ teaches us to do. Assuming bad intentions because of a bad outcome is an unrighteous judgement that the Savior condemned the Pharisees for. Instead of assuming bad motives or intentions, we can take time to look at the Social Structure or incentives that people have in order to understand why they are choosing a "bad outcome". With this lens, it is much easier to understand why many of God's children do not obey His commandments. Instead of condemning those individuals for their unrighteous actions, we can take the time to understand what it is that is going on in their life that is driving them to make such wrong choices. With every individual that I have taken the time to get to know and really listen to, I have learned that there almost always is a reason for them making their "poor choice". As a disciple of Christ, I learned from the econ program how to truly love others. We really can believe that everyone has the best intentions and look on with love when others fall short! And in life, there is not just a social structure but an emotional structure and spiritual structure that are driving the actions of people. When someone makes a wrong choice, we can look on with love and through careful listening and sincere prayer see how we can help them to have a better social,

emotional or spiritual structure to enable them to make the choices needed to return to live with their Father in Heaven. Viewing everyone I meet through this framework has made it so easy to love everyone and has given me a glimpse of how it is possible for the Savior to love each one of us so deeply. When I entered BYU in 2018, if someone would've told me the most profound lesson I would learn at BYU would be in my Econ 110 class, I never would've believed them. This lesson has gone on to shape how I served my mission, view my wife and family and in general how I live my day-to-day life. It is easy to see the best intentions in others and to love others as the Savior would. This lesson got reiterated throughout all my econ classes and while I learned many other important lessons that I don't have time to share, how grateful I am for this lesson that I learned so early on in my life, truly enabling me to go forth to serve.

Yiding Wang, B.S. 2014

I am writing to express my great gratitude for the invaluable experience I had as an international student in the Economics Department at BYU about ten years ago. During my time there, I earned my bachelor's degree in economics and was fortunate to receive tremendous support and guidance from many professors such as Dr. Stoddard. Their mentorship left a lasting impact on me and contributed to some of my most cherished memories from my academic journey.

One particularly memorable experience was taking Dr. McDonald's class, which sparked my interest in research and inspired me to consider pursuing a doctoral degree. I thoroughly enjoyed his early morning class and found it to be a defining moment in my academic and professional aspirations.

Today, I am proud to serve as an assistant professor of accounting at the University of Houston-Downtown. I can confidently say that without the foundation I built during my time at BYU and the support of the economics department, I would not have been able to achieve my goals and turn my

dreams into reality. I always look back on my time there with deep appreciation and fondness.

Steve Waters, B.A. 1984, Faculty

As an adjunct faculty member in the Economics Department at BYU, I have loved being able to incorporate the spiritual dimension of life into my walk with students. The typical walk with students is within the walls of a room as part of lectures, class discussions, and one-on-one conversations in office hours. Those walks are largely within the parameters of the course syllabus as we explore economic theories and models. But with a spiritual foundation that is almost universal to the student body, I can refer to Christ, to scripture, to General Conference addresses as appropriate to show how I have navigated my career without sacrificing the critical elements of faith, family, and community.

For example, I give a quote at the beginning of the semester that I gleaned a dozen years ago from an MBA-level Economics text that states, “Remember, the rational-actor paradigm is only a tool for analyzing behavior, not advice on how to live your life.” (Luke Froeb, Professor, Vanderbilt University) I tell the students that Economics presents a view of what the world means to be rational, but if we take this message too far, it leaves little room for compassion, empathy, and virtue. In short, one can look rational to the world, but fall completely short on the metrics that ultimately matter in this mortal probation. Whereas the world might look to maximize profits in its decisions, we learn from King Benjamin in The Book of Mormon that even if we serve with all our might, yet we will be unprofitable. I suggest to the students that if God was looking to maximize profits, he wouldn’t be investing in us. But he does invest in us and, in fact, his investment in us is His entire work and His glory.

I feel an extra freedom to express myself in class at BYU because I can discuss how the gospel informs my moral center, my spiritual life, my career, my decisions, and the dreams and goals I have. There are few places outside of a

Sunday School class where such is accepted, let alone welcomed. BYU provides such an environment, and I am pleased to be able to bring this to the classes I teach. A number of years ago I started opening up my lunch hour to students to provide them an avenue to ask questions outside of the classroom about the course as well as careers, testimony, good books, cycling, life choices, or anything else on the students' minds. This has been a rich experience in learning about the students and letting them learn about me. Some of the most cherished comments I receive from students have been about how these lunches (and comments I make in class) made a difference for them. I miss the students when they move on. I work to maintain contact with them through a networking spreadsheet and this has been a source of great happiness as I hear about their successes and learn about their defeats. You rejoice with them, you pray with them, and you grieve with them. What an honor it is to teach these students and be in their lives.

Jason Weber, B.S. 2000

I really value my time and the things I learned in the BYU economics department. The teachers were passionate, entertaining, and great at providing a foundational education that I feel greatly benefited my career and life. I eventually found my way into real estate and have had a wonderful 25-year career doing land acquisition for national homebuilders. In that time, I have acquired over 13,000 lots, so a small town (30,000+ people) now live on lots that I helped purchase. The understanding of macroeconomic trends, and especially the ability to focus in and conduct meaningful analysis was the best part of what I learned from the BYU economics department. That and an ability to see through common outlooks to really understand an issue or business opportunity. I'll always be thankful for the education and experience provided by the department.

Becky Weech, B.S. 2015

I believe I was able to contribute so much and in so many different ways because of the broad spectrum of knowledge I acquired in my studies. I tell everyone I was a very successful BYU undergrad, I graduated with my; B.A., MRS, and MOM! My Degree in Economics taught me much about accounting and general business management skills. I worked as a tax preparer for H&R Block to supplement my family's income. I also soaked up the skills and knowledge to be the event planner for the first Global Conference on Sustainable Beef in the US. It was a very successful conference with more than 300 people from all over the world for a week in Denver, CO. It was also translated in 3 languages. I'm especially proud that my daughter also graduated from BYU with a degree in Economics and is lighting up the world in Manhattan right now working for Morgan Stanley. McKenna Weech served a mission in the Philippines for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and life is good!

Paul Weitzel, B.A. 2006

The econ department helped me see so much beauty in the world as markets transact and clear. I learned more about the value of freedom and choice and working to help others. Also, they are just great people. Lars Lefgren stands out as the type of professor I try to be for my students.

Jason Wernli, B.A. 2008

While still in my last year at BYU, I started a consulting company helping animal hospitals increase demand for their services and improve profitability. That experience led to an even bigger opportunity—creating a software company to solve similar challenges on a larger scale. After years of growth, we sold the business, which helped fund the initial needs of a nonprofit: Daybreak Vision Project, which provides sight-restoring surgeries to the

needlessly blind in Africa. So far, thousands of people can now see, and we've helped train dozens of local doctors in Ghana to continue the work.

Looking back, it's crazy how many economic principles have been at play throughout my journey—from understanding market dynamics in the veterinary industry to applying supply and demand in real-world business decisions. Even with nonprofit, we see economics in action—whether it's solving market failures in healthcare access, leveraging resources efficiently, or empowering local doctors with the right training to create lasting impact.

The idea of sharing light has been especially meaningful to me. I gained so much from my time at BYU, and now, in a very real way, I get to share light—both figuratively and literally—as people who were once in darkness can now see.

I love this initiative and appreciate the chance to contribute. Thanks again—and a big thank you to the econ department for a once-in-a-lifetime education and experience!

Jeffrey Whatcott, B.S. 1992

I earned my B.S. in Economics from BYU and later pursued an MBA there after working as a technical translator in Japan. Initially, I was concerned about my limited knowledge in accounting and finance, but the analytical skills I gained in my undergraduate studies proved to be highly beneficial during my MBA program. This foundation helped me excel and led to a successful career as a senior executive and entrepreneur, for which I credit the rigorous training from the BYU Economics department. Additionally, I applied my economic knowledge in various service roles within the church. Understanding complex systems allowed me to effectively assess dynamics in different settings, such as in elders quorum and during my time as a bishop. Recently, my wife and I served a mission in the Asia Area office Hong Kong, focusing on young adult self-reliance across the entire Asia Area. My economics background enabled us to analyze the factors influencing this area comprehensively. While some

of our findings challenged existing perspectives, they also encouraged deeper discussions that could lead to impactful interventions. Overall, the skills I developed in the BYU Economics program have been instrumental in both my professional and personal service endeavors. Let me know if you find any of these perspectives worth exploring further.

Megan Nelson White, B.S. 2009

Sharing Light to the One: Lessons from BYU Economics

Like any person, I have worn a variety of "hats," or roles, throughout my life. Some of these roles include being a daughter, sister, student, financial analyst, trial lawyer, ministering sister, wife, stepmom, and mom. As I reflect on these roles, I have concluded that it is not merely obtaining specific roles that has brought me joy. Rather, it is the relationships I have built and the loving interactions I have experienced because of these roles that have brought me real and ongoing joy—the essence of "light." This is certainly true of my roles as a BYU economics student and alumna. My lifelong love for the BYU economics program has always been about the people—even before I declared my major.

Many students choose their major very methodically, only after spending time exploring different courses. Not me. At 17, on my first day of classes at BYU, I declared economics as my major. It was not because I had already taken any economics coursework (because I hadn't). Rather, it was because of the fine examples of BYU Economics alumni and other BYU Economics enthusiasts I happened to cross paths with during my senior year of high school. Just three of these individuals included the husband of my Young Women advisor, who would later become my first employer in the financial industry; a distinguished father and grandfather in our ward who served with my dad in the Oakland temple; and a dear family friend who, along with his wife, hosted my parents and me for dinner in Provo just days before I started at BYU. What did these individuals have in common? All were either BYU Economics alumni

themselves or knew enough about the program and about me to strongly encourage me to major in economics. Based on their examples, it was clear to me that they were prospering both spiritually and temporally. As a young woman entering college at the end of 2006, on the cusp of a major financial recession, I wanted to be well-prepared to support myself and my future family. Their words and examples were compelling, and I declared an economics major right away.

As my experiences as a BYU economics student continued, my interactions with individuals in the department made all the difference in empowering me to obtain and experience light. Unfortunately, economists sometimes get a "bad rap" for being "dull" or "impersonal." However, some of the most meaningful lessons I learned about ministering came from BYU economics faculty. One such individual was my intermediate price theory professor, Lars Lefgren. I took his class during my second semester of freshman year, at a point when I had already declared economics as my major but had not yet fully connected with the subject. My path as an economics major became much clearer upon taking Professor Lefgren's course.

Professor Lefgren had a talent for communicating economic concepts in an intuitive and fun way. One of the most compelling ways he did this was by treating his students as individuals and taking a genuine interest in their lives. On the first day of class, he asked each student to fill in an index card with their name and basic facts about themselves. When calling on students, he often referred to these cards, engaging them in personal conversations as he incorporated them into the lecture. Knowing that Professor Lefgren genuinely cared about my well-being helped me grasp microeconomics more effectively. I also trusted him enough to seek his guidance about certain life decisions, both during and long after taking his class. His wise counsel led me, directly and indirectly, toward greater joy in many life experiences. Even beyond that, I believe his ministering to me has blessed countless individuals whom he has never met, as I have sought to apply his example of ministering

in my own interactions with individuals at school, church, work, home, and beyond.

Professor Lefgren will always be a great example to me of sharing light, but he is not the only person from the economics department who exemplified this. For example, I think of another professor, now retired, from whom I never had the privilege of taking a class. Yet, I continue to be inspired when I hear from his former students about how this professor often contacted the parents or loved ones of his students to praise them for even modest achievements in his class. Beyond the faculty and staff, I also think of countless classmates and acquaintances I met in the computer labs and teaching assistant labs of the Economics Department. These individuals lifted my spirits as we helped each other with homework and brainstormed career and life paths between classes. In particular, I remember a classmate from my econometrics class, a beautiful young woman from Hong Kong, whom I hardly knew at the time. One night, when I was feeling discouraged about a project, she noticed me quietly crying in the computer lab. The next day, she handed me a sweet, handwritten note along with a Bath & Body Works lotion. Her encouragement empowered me to persevere with my project, but even more than that, it forever shaped my testimony of ministering to “the one.”

Even years beyond my time at BYU, I think of countless other individuals associated with the Economics Department whom I have encountered in various wards, stakes, and business and personal settings across the country. Some of the most beloved of these individuals are past and current economics students whom I have been blessed to mentor in small ways. Just as those handful of Economics Department alumni who I met during high school inspired me to major in economics in the first place, all of these other individuals also continue to inspire me, through their examples, to obtain and share light.

I do not know what future “hats” I will wear in the coming chapters of my life. But wherever I am, I hope to continue reflecting the light I have received, just as so many from the BYU Economics community have done for me.

Dallana Wijesundera, B.S. 2022

My first experience in the BYU Economics Department began April 2019 in ECON 378 - Statistics for Economists with Natalie Jensen. I remember feeling lost academically and emotionally as I had just returned from my mission and was a new transfer student from a university in CA. Natalie shined light in our lives as a professor, she took time to help me grasp the material during her office hours, and she made a point to encourage me along the way as I put in the work. I went from thinking I would fail to earning one of the few A’s in the class. What stood out to me most was how clear it was that Natalie cared about each member of our class. I remember thinking “At what school do professors demonstrate this level of kindness and compassion towards students? Nowhere but BYU.” The support I received in ECON 378 from Natalie, our TA, and classmates helped me to get an A in the class. That experience

gave me immense confidence as I went forward into the major and into my time at BYU.

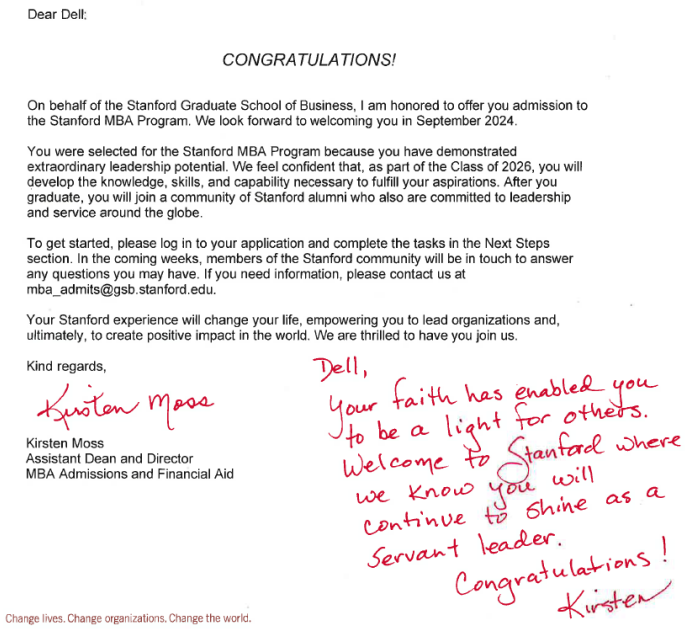
Fall Semester 2019 I took ECON 380 from Steven Waters. Dr. Waters immediately became a captivating and thrilling professor to learn from. What was most valuable from his class was how he would start with a meditation for a few minutes. That was my introduction to meditation, and I have since continued meditating and it has become a significant pillar of my life, faith, and relationship with God. Steven is shining light himself. His spiritual influence in the class was unmistakable. He would share meaningful haikus with the class and teach us how to write them. He invited students to get lunch with him on campus. I took him up on that offer. We became friends through that experience and over the last six years we have stayed in touch, and he has become a wonderful friend and great enrichment to my life.

A year later I was interviewed and selected by the outgoing Economics Student Association (ESA) Presidency and Economics Department Chair as the new ESA President. It was a paid job and a marvelous experience. I was able to interview and hire my own presidency members, create meaningful events for the economics student body, and find ways to help them have success and happiness while students at BYU. The entire experience of service blessed my life with more light and opportunities for leadership and understanding. Through the ESA, I had the opportunity to interact on a regular basis with Mark Showalter, our Econ Department Chair, and Joe Price, our ESA Faculty Advisor. They are stellar individuals and mentors.

Thanks to the opportunity and trust I was given as the ESA President; I was nominated by Mark Showalter as a candidate for the BYU President's Leadership Council Mentored Student Program. After being selected for this program, I had outstanding experiences interacting with some of the university's most successful alumni. Those experiences deeply influenced my choices, view of my life and the world, and my time at BYU.

I could write on and on about how the Economics Department at BYU and the people in it have influenced my life in powerful ways. I will close by saying that the enduring friendships I made, the experiences of leadership and learning I had, and the rigor of the program have shaped my life immeasurably. Just after graduating from BYU in April of 2022, I was accepted to the Deferred MBA Program at the Stanford Graduate School of Business. Dr. Steven Waters wrote one of my letters of recommendation. I received the letter of acceptance while driving a van full of Ukrainian refugees in Krakow, Poland. I would spend the next week in Ukraine during the height of the war providing food, water, hygiene products, clothing, and medicine to those suffering on the Eastern border. Without a doubt, my time in the Econ program shaped who I am and my decisions to serve and use intelligence to do good in the world and do it in a powerful and efficient way.

When I applied to GSB, I wrote an essay about how my faith was the most important aspect of my life. I thought they would reject me for talking so openly about how faith had guided my life experiences and was at the heart of all the relationships I had made. Instead, I received a warm note on my acceptance letter (attached below).



Dear Dell:

CONGRATULATIONS!

On behalf of the Stanford Graduate School of Business, I am honored to offer you admission to the Stanford MBA Program. We look forward to welcoming you in September 2024.

You were selected for the Stanford MBA Program because you have demonstrated extraordinary leadership potential. We feel confident that, as part of the Class of 2026, you will develop the knowledge, skills, and capability necessary to fulfill your aspirations. After you graduate, you will join a community of Stanford alumni who also are committed to leadership and service around the globe.

To get started, please log in to your application and complete the tasks in the Next Steps section. In the coming weeks, members of the Stanford community will be in touch to answer any questions you may have. If you need information, please contact us at mba_admits@gsb.stanford.edu.

Your Stanford experience will change your life, empowering you to lead organizations and, ultimately, to create positive impact in the world. We are thrilled to have you join us.

Kind regards,

Kirsten Moss

Kirsten Moss
Assistant Dean and Director
MBA Admissions and Financial Aid

Dell,
Your faith has enabled you to be a light for others. Welcome to Stanford where we know you will continue to shine as a servant leader.
Congratulations!
Kirsten

Change lives. Change organizations. Change the world.

Chad Willardson, B.A. 2003

I learned a lot from my time at BYU! Earning a degree in Economics was no easy task! I remember many late nights doing calculus and studying principles of economics in the study lab with fellow students. What it taught me was great discipline and an appreciation for learning. I've used my economics degree to build a career in wealth management and eventually entrepreneurship. I've written five best-selling books and been able to speak on some big stages over the past few years. The ability to spread light and goodness has come from building a platform of success and credibility, which all began with my studies at BYU!

Riley Wilson, B.A. 2013, Faculty

One of the best parts of being faculty at BYU is the opportunity to be surrounded by Beacons of Light: our students. Naturally, this is a time in their lives when they ponder, plan, and worry about their future. I cannot count the number of interactions with students where they voice at least one of two overarching desires:

1. Students want to do what the Lord wants them to do.
2. Students want to do something with their life and careers that has meaning and purpose and helps other people.

To me, this is such a consecrated embodiment of living the First and Second Great Commandments –love the Lord and love thy neighbor. It is hard not to evaluate your own life, love, and consecration when surrounded by these spiritual giants.

I cherish the opportunity I have to help students recognize their light and focus that light to improve the lives of those around them. I have many opportunities to do this, but here is one that has grown meaningful to me.

In Public Economics (Econ 475) we discuss the role of the government in the economy. We identify conditions or settings where private markets are likely

to work, as well as situations where the private market outcome might not be optimal, and public intervention might be warranted. An important part of public economic theory is the Social Welfare Function. Essentially, this is a societal-level utility function where we decide how we value the welfare of each citizen of that society. Each person and each elected official might hold a different social welfare function. One person might value each individual's welfare equally, while another might think society is only as well off as the least well-off individual. This, obviously, leads to different implications for which types of actions will be "welfare-maximizing" or optimal. One of my goals in this class is to help students take a higher view – how can they make decisions based on what is good for society, not only for themselves?

I find it very unlikely that our Savior Jesus Christ was considering his own benefit (or utility in economics lingo!) when deciding to heal the blind man, instruct the woman at the well, and suffer for our welfare in the Garden of Gethsemane. Rather, I am certain that he behaves like a benevolent social planner, constantly doing the things that are best for *our* good. He makes decisions based on society's welfare – and we are each counted in that equation.

Because our students are bright, hard-working, and committed, many of them will go on to be successful in whatever they pursue. They are destined to be "rich, young rulers," and thus face a choice: what will they do with the resources they have been give? How will they choose to give of their time to the Lord? Will they make sacrifices of tithes and fast offerings to lift someone they only vaguely know? Will they engage in their community and government in a way that lifts society broadly, or narrowly focus on minimizing their tax bill? As I share my testimony and the knowledge of my profession intertwined, I can help students see how to achieve those two great desires of loving the Lord and loving others. As faculty, I have the privilege of prompting them to share their beacon of light as they "Enter to learn; go forth to serve."

Larry Wimmer, Emeritus Faculty

As an undergraduate student at BYU, I was fortunate to study under Professor Del Gardner, who had recently arrived from his Ph.D. work at the University of Chicago. I came to BYU from two small towns in Arizona, Snowflake and Safford. I intended to major in geology, and a Ph.D. had never entered my thoughts! One course in economics and my reaction: "They will PAY you to read and study economics? I am in!"

Del encouraged me to apply to the University of Chicago for graduate studies. Surely, a kid from Snowflake and BYU could NOT compete against Harvard, Columbia, and Hebrew University students. I discovered you could if you had had all of Del Gardner's courses! The experience was so positive and life-changing that, in hindsight, I admit my intent from the start was to complete a Ph.D., return to BYU, and do all I could to ensure that other BYU (LDS) students had the same opportunities that BYU had given me. Upon hearing that I was returning to BYU, my major professor nailed it "Back to the womb!" Another, however, insisted: "Never apologize for returning to BYU."

When I returned to BYU, a common saying was, "Parents send their daughters to BYU and their sons to Stanford or Harvard." Richard Wirthlin and I were determined to change that perception. With the department's support, we were committed to hiring first-rate LDS economists. We were determined that a rigorous undergraduate program at BYU would prepare exceptional students to compete in the marketplace or the most prestigious graduate programs in economics, law, business, or any program of their choice.

The current BYU Department of Economics is evidence of the accomplishment of that goal set 50 years ago. I recall one year in which the University of Chicago Law School admitted SIX graduates from our one department into its first-year class, a feat few universities have equaled. After that, their Dean visited BYU. I ask him why BYU. His answer: "I want to personally discover what is happening at BYU." Another incident involved the Nobel Laureate, Bob Fogel,

of the Economics Department at Chicago. The scholarship committee ended their selection with one scholarship and two acceptable applicants, one from Harvard and the other a BYU graduate. Bob recommended the BYU student; a new faculty member asked, "Why would you ever choose a BYU student over a Harvard student?" Bob's reply "We have never had a poor student from BYU. Harvard cannot make that claim!"

Economics at BYU is intended to be a showcase, a light of what young BYU/LDS students can accomplish if given the right program and the right faculty. We change lives. We add to the pool of ethical, committed, well-educated, promising, bright young minds. That is our primary contribution to our Church and our nation.

Rhett Wimmer, B.S. 2013

Lately, I've been reflecting regularly on the many hours I spent at a whiteboard in the FOB. My econ study group often worked late into the night on various assignments together. Each group member brought unique strengths to the whiteboard; my buddies typically brought the math skills, and I brought the graph skills. I remember working and reworking problem after problem, until everyone in the group understood math and the related concept—with the typical breaks to talk about someone's most recent date or breakup. The thrill of achieving cohesive mathematical and conceptual clarity there in the dark FOB, surrounded by friends at the whiteboard, is one I will always remember. With fondness, I recently hung a whiteboard in my office where I work and rework project after project.

Brycen Woodley, B.A. 2002

My time in the Economics Department at BYU was incredibly formative, providing me with not only the technical knowledge but also the analytical skills that have shaped my career. I cherish the relationships I built with the faculty, many of whom went above and beyond by assisting with questions

outside of the classroom, offering guidance on how to apply economic theory to real-world scenarios. These interactions fostered a deeper understanding of the material and gave me a strong foundation for both my professional and personal growth.

The critical thinking and problem-solving abilities I developed through my economics courses have been essential in every phase of my career. As I went on to earn my law degree, I found that the skills I gained in economics—like analyzing complex issues, weighing multiple factors, and evaluating long-term implications—were crucial in navigating the intricacies of legal work. From there, as I transitioned into leadership positions, I applied these same analytical skills in managing people and projects, working with organizations of varying sizes, and developing strategies to drive growth and solve organizational challenges.

Whether it's managing large-scale projects or evaluating the financial health of an organization, my ability to evaluate data, identify trends, and approach challenges with a systematic perspective has allowed me to make informed decisions and capitalize on opportunities. These skills have not only helped me in my professional career but also in my volunteer and community efforts, where I've been able to apply a strategic mindset to drive impact and create value for the organizations I serve.

Looking back, I can see how my education at BYU was a springboard that allowed me to engage in a broad range of professional fields with confidence. The ability to think critically, analyze situations, and make data-driven decisions has shaped my leadership style and continues to influence how I approach both business challenges and opportunities for service. It's been a rewarding journey, and I'm grateful for the way my economics education laid the groundwork for everything that followed.

Scott Woolley, B.S. 1985

After my degree in Economics, I went on to get a master's and PhD in Marriage and Family Therapy and then on into both fulltime academics and part-time practice with a focus on couple therapy. I have had an unusual career in that I have traveled extensively to many parts of the world training therapists in couple therapy (over 125 international workshops, nearly 300 domestically).

The training I received in the BYU economics program has been foundational to my success in my field because it taught me critical thinking, pattern recognition, and quantitative reasoning. More importantly, I had modeled for me faculty who were enthusiastic, leading scholars that had the light of firm gospel testimonies and cared deeply about students and their work. I have tried to use their models of dedication, rigor, light, and love in teaching our students, in training professionals around the world, and in my clinical work.

One memory is of Dr. James Kearl running up and down the stairs in a classroom in the Law building to help us stay engaged in Econ 110 (Fall of 1979) at 8 AM! His active, enthusiastic teaching style is something I have tried to model over the years. I still walk around as I teach, use my hands, tell stories, and occasionally walk into the audience, which can really get people's attention particularly in countries where this is simply not done. I often think of him as I am sure many others do.

I am grateful for the education I received in the BYU Economics program, and for the examples of both scholarly rigor and faithful, light filled service.

Anthony Yim, B.S. 2017, Faculty

As a newer faculty member in the department, I treasure the unique opportunity BYU provides to share my testimony and gospel-centered thoughts with students, both in and out of the classroom—something I could not do anywhere else in higher education. Teaching here is more than just

covering course material; it is about engaging in conversations that intertwine faith and learning, allowing both my students and me to grow spiritually and intellectually. It is incredibly inspiring to be surrounded by colleagues and students who share my faith or who are deeply committed to their own beliefs. Hearing their testimonies and stories has been a source of learning and personal growth for me, strengthening my own faith and deepening my understanding of how the gospel influences every aspect of life.

One of the highlights of my experience at BYU has been the weekly devotionals, which provide a space for spiritual reflection and discussion. These devotionals often spark meaningful conversations with students that extend beyond the classroom. I have had students visit me during office hours to discuss not only coursework but also our shared faith journeys. In one such conversation, we reminisced about our mission experiences by sharing stories of the people we met, the challenges we faced, and the spiritual growth we experienced through service. These discussions often turn into powerful moments of testimony, reinforcing the principle that the Lord is deeply involved in our lives. In another conversation, we shared how we or our ancestors joined the Church, reflecting on the sacrifices and faith that brought us to where we are today. These interactions remind me of the incredible blessing it is to teach in an environment where faith is not only welcomed but encouraged.

At BYU, I have found that teaching is not just about imparting knowledge. Instead, it is about lifting and strengthening one another in our shared discipleship. The opportunity to grow spiritually alongside my students, to learn from their experiences, and to witness their testimonies in action has been one of the most rewarding aspects of my time here. This shared spiritual foundation makes BYU a truly special place to teach, learn, and grow together.

Karl Young, B.S. 2010

I am incredibly grateful for my experience at BYU and in the Economics department. I currently serve as one of the Owners and CEO of Lemon Head Design, a digital agency specializing in web design, web development, online marketing (SEO, AEO, Google Ads, and social media marketing), and cybersecurity solutions (AI chatbots, AI email campaigns, reputation management, and web hosting security best practices). Our team has helped hundreds of businesses in Utah and across the U.S. enhance their online presence, implement cybersecurity best practices, and scale their growth.

We've had the privilege of designing websites for BYU and various departments, including the **BYU Print Intelligence Lab**, helping showcase BYU students and elevate their PR efforts.

As a BYU Economics major, I gained a deep appreciation for research—learning how to analyze data critically, validate findings, and distinguish between reliable and unreliable information. This foundation of analytical thinking, along with my love for learning, enabled me to start my company as a side business while working in larger corporations. That experience taught me how to build a more efficient, well-run organization and stay agile with emerging technologies.

Beyond academics, BYU also played a crucial role in my personal life—I met my wife there, which was the greatest blessing of all. Marrying someone who shares a foundation in Jesus Christ (Helaman 5:12) has been invaluable in navigating life's challenges.

I'm proud to be part of the BYU Economics Alumni community, a network of exceptional individuals built on strong values. Always stay humble, obedient, and virtuous, and the Lord will bless and guide your path.