

What does an Research Assistant (RA) in Economics do? Anthony Gatti lets us know.



In my time in the department, I have worked on projects ranging from analyzing the purchase of flood insurance after a flood (for Professor Justin Gallagher), comparing the purchase of generic vs. brand drugs (for Professor Mariana Carrera), gathering data on income and happiness (for Professor David Clingingsmith), and, occasionally, articles in the newsletter you are currently reading. In addition to being generally interesting, these projects have given me skills in finding and cleaning data, interpreting results of statistical models, and general administrative skills in keeping projects organized.

When I first came to work in the Economics department, I only knew a little bit about computer programming; I only knew a little bit of coding in Stata from Econometrics. The older RAs forced me to learn on my own, and at first I really did not like that. But over time, I became very thankful for the experience of learning on my own. I now make the younger RAs learn on their own as well.

Being an RA can be grueling at times; you spend a lot of time looking at a computer screen, trying to figure out why your computer code won't work, or how to figure out how to approach a problem in the first place. In addition, the RA room in the Economics department has no windows, so in the harsh Cleveland winters, you can get a little stir crazy. However, the rewards of helping a professor answer an economic question far outweigh these difficulties. I am thankful to have had the opportunity to pursue my passion for economics with researchers producing cutting-edge results.

As I prepare to graduate and move on, I am thankful for all the experiences I have had as an RA. I am thankful to Teresa Kabat, the department administrator, for her support of my schedule and academic success; to all the professors in the Economics department for entrusting me with assisting in critical junctions of their research; in particular, to Professor Justin Gallagher for being vigilant in providing assignments and for continually seeking to develop a research culture among the RAs; finally, to fellow RA alumni Trevor Allen, Will Eisenmenger, and especially Alex Warofka for pushing me to get better at my job and for befriending me.

Editor's Note: The department is thankful of Anthony's great service for 3 years. We wish him well as he heads to Northwestern University for a Masters of Science in Analytics.

Congratulations to the Economics Honors Students

The Economics Department would like to congratulate Ayesha Hasan and David Hershberger for their excellent Honors Project presentations on April 16. Ayesha has been studying whether the receipt of new health information causes people to eat more healthfully. David has applied game theory and simulation techniques to analyze strategy in a game close to his heart – croquet!

ECON majors interested in potentially joining the Honors Program should contact Teresa Kabat (teresa.kabat@case.edu) for more information, and schedule a meeting with the faculty member(s) in your area of interest as soon as possible. Since applications for entry into the program are due 10 days before start of the semester, it's a great idea to start discussing possible topics (or how to come up with a topic!) before you leave campus for the summer.

Professor Matt Sobel ends his reign as Department Chair

Chairing the Economics department between the summer of 2012 and the end of 2013 was the most satisfaction that I've had at Case in years! I learned all about our excellent Economics students, and I rubbed elbows with our award-winning faculty even more often than in the past. Our graduating students have gone (and are going) in a bewildering variety of impressive directions including professional positions with businesses, law school, internships in the Federal Reserve System, municipal sustainability offices, and graduate programs in economics, psychology and financial engineering. The excellence of our faculty was repeatedly recognized. Professor Susan Helper followed stint as a Senior Economist at the White House Council of Economic Advisors with her current position as Chief Economist of the U.S. Department of Commerce; Professors David Clingingsmith, Silke Forbes, Silvia Prina, and Mark Votruba were promoted or tenured; Professor Robin Dubin chaired the Case Faculty Senate; and Professors Mark Votruba and Scott Shane received awards for co-authoring the best papers in their respective subfields.



Our faculty expanded with two splendid appointments. Professor Silke Forbes specializes in the economics of industrial organization, and Professor Roman Sheremeta specializes in experimental economics. Retired Professor Asim Erdilek passed away and will be sorely missed. Professor Bo Carlsson retired but the pace of his professional activities remains high.

I will retire in a few months and I look forward to years of participating in the intellectual life of the department and Case. The biggest change is that I'll be able to do more research and writing about preferences regarding risk and timing, and the consequences of those preferences in three domains: mitigating the effects of global climate change, coordinating financial and operational decisions, and treating chronic diseases. Oh yes – until now, teaching obligations precluded bicycle trips during the fall and spring. This September look for me on a bike in New Mexico!

ECON Advising Update: Two is Better than One!

Going forward, newly declared Economics majors will have, not one, but TWO advisers assigned to them. One of these, the “academic advisor,” will continue to be a faculty member in the department. In addition, Assistant Dean Jim Hurley will be assigned as the “professional advisor” for each student. We see this as a tremendous benefit to future ECON majors. Jim is often a better source for answers when students have questions that are administrative in nature or pertain to other parts of the University. (He's usually who we have to ask anyway!) He also knows a lot about the services available to students throughout the University, and the career services provided at WSOM. Either Jim or the student's academic advisor will be able to lift a student's advising hold. So students can meet with whichever advisor makes the most sense given their specific needs – or with both, if they like!

What if you're already a declared ECON major? That's okay. Dean Hurley is more than happy to work with any ECON major who wants his advising assistance. And if you want to formally add Dean Hurley as a second advisor, we can do that too.

Research Profile: David Clingingsmith

My research falls into two main areas. The first area is the social aspects of economic decision making. For the most part, economists think of human beings as purely self-interested. There are many settings in which this seems to be the right idea. Most of us don't think about whether Giant Eagle or Dave's treats their employees better when deciding where to shop. But there are also many settings in which we care about how our decisions affect others. It wouldn't be fair, for example, to never do the dishes because we know our roommates will pick up the slack, and so we pitch in. We give to charity even though no one compels us to do so. We tell the truth when we would benefit from telling a lie. These situations in which we consider the interests of other people, either directly or through the observance of social norms, are of great interest to me. I am also interested in our concern about how we are viewed by others, our social status, and in social identity. How much does a concern for status affect our economic decisions? How much of our striving to achieve is related to intrinsic rewards and how much to social comparisons? How is social identity formed? Most of my work in this area involves laboratory and field experiments.



My second area of interest is the economics of language. I am one of the few economists who has done graduate study in linguistics and anthropology, and I have tried to use the econometric and theoretical tools of economics to better understand language. I've been particularly interested in how the languages that people learn and pass on to their children change over time. In the US, we see this clearly in the children of immigrants, who may not pass along their home country language to their own kids. But over the long run it is a general phenomenon. Given the advantages we enjoy as speakers of English in terms of access to information and employment, it might be surprising to learn that there are still more than 6,500 languages actively spoken in the world today. Some of my work tries to understand what is happening to linguistic diversity. Are we heading toward a world in which there are only a handful of spoken languages? Surprisingly, linguistic diversity appears to be quite stable, at least for now.

Job announcements, Internships, and Graduate School Postings

- Work as a Research Associate **Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, CA**. More information and the online application for the Research Associate position can be found at <http://www.frbsf.org/our-district/careers/departments/economic-research-jobs/>
- The Office of the Chief Economist in ESA has Student Trainee Economist internships available for currently enrolled students. Interns at ESA gain valuable work experience and training as they assist professional economists and senior-level officials in the performance of their assignments. To apply for an ESA internship, visit USAJobs.gov at <https://www.usajobs.gov/GetJob/ViewDetails/367975700>
- Master of Science in Applied Economics at University of Wisconsin, Whitewater. Learn more at www.uww.edu/cobe/msecon
- MSBA in Financial Risk Management at Colorado State University. Learn more at fmadvisor@business.colostate.edu

Postcards from Students

In the summer of 2013 I interned at the University of Michigan's Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research. During the ten week program I received training in data management, took graduate statistics courses with students from around the world, and completed an individual research project.

I spent my time in the National Addiction and HIV Data Archive Program, preparing the most recent wave of the Health Behavior in School-Aged Children survey for publication, and re-vamping data sets like the Boys Town Study of Youth Development or the Criminal Justice Drug Abuse Treatment Studies. The courses I took were Advanced Regression Analyses and Causal Inference for the Social Sciences.

The culmination of the summer was a poster presentation session, in which I presented my project "Contextual Factors Involved in End-Of-Life Decision Making." I used survey data from the Detroit Area Study of 1999, in which respondents were asked whether they felt euthanasia was acceptable given a hypothetical patient's story. I found that liberal, less religious people of higher socioeconomic status are most likely to support euthanasia; however, all respondents are more likely to support euthanasia when the hypothetical patient is older, African American or has contracted his/her condition through "immoral" activity.

I really enjoyed this summer program, and it gave me great training that I've put to use this year in my senior capstone project and as a TA for Econ 326.

- Melinda Ashe, '14



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When I started at Case, up until my junior year, I was interested in studying medicine. But, after competing in the Battle of Ohio, a case competition sponsored by Deloitte, I gained the confidence to pursue business and economics. Last spring, I participated in the Career Center's Practicum program: a paid internship with structured communication between a faculty advisor (Professor Justin Gallagher) and my summer employer (Booz Allen Hamilton).

At Booz Allen Hamilton, a management consulting firm based out of the Washington, D.C. area, I supported a variety of the firm's internal functions. I worked with a team of Principals for my long-term project, sitting in on discussions of the U.S. Intelligence Community and the firm's future in this market. After meeting with them frequently, I helped prepare slides that summarized months of analysis, to be used in a presentation for upper-level executives. I also worked on business development of a relatively new in-house simulation tool, a tool that analyzes a program or portfolio's joint cost, schedule, and risk. At the end of the five-month internship, I was happy to receive a full-time offer with the firm, and in July, I'll begin as a Consultant in the firm's new Strategic Innovation Group.

- Sidi Huang, '14



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