

THE LITTAUER LETTER

August 2016 | Issue 2 | The Harvard Economics Alumni Annual Newsletter



Members of Ec Class of 2016
on the Littauer steps

FALL REUNION

Economics Alumni Reception
Saturday, October 15, 2016

EC BEYOND HARVARD

Career Conversations
with Alumni
Saturday, November 5, 2016

SPRING REUNION

Economics Alumni Reception
Saturday, May 27, 2017

GREETINGS FROM THE CHAIR

Congratulations to our Class of 2016 Economics AB and PhD graduates! We are thrilled to welcome you to our phenomenal network of over 11,000 amazing economics alumni.

Having just completed my first year as Department Chair, I am proud of what our department has accomplished. Thanks to the help of Jeff Miron, our Director of Undergraduate Studies, I was able to hit the ground running and work with the University to further strengthen our department. This year, we successfully hired five new faculty and granted tenure to one of our junior faculty. For the coming year, we have authorizations for five more faculty appointments. Additionally, having recently completed a major revision of our undergraduate advising program, we are now embarking on a similar effort for our doctoral program. Finally, we are happy to report the establishment of new funds that will support our students' doctoral

research, including the Padma Desai Prize in Economic Science and the Padma Desai Research Awards for Economics.

We are also continuing to expand our connections with alumni. My sincere thanks to all of you who have written us emails and ideas, contributed suggestions for our newsletter name, joined our LinkedIn group, and attended one of our three economics alumni events this past year.

I wish you all the best and look forward to staying in touch.

Warm regards,



David Laibson AB '88
Department Chair
Robert I. Goldman Professor of Economics
Director of the Foundations of Human Behavior Initiative

By the NUMBERS

1,365

Number of alums in our HEA LinkedIn group. [Join today!](#)

23

Number of weekly seminars and workshops in the Economics Department

Members of the Class of 2016 with a concentration in economics

228

139

Members of the Class of 2016 with a secondary field in economics

Number of dogs regularly romping through Littauer

6

747

Number of students who took at least one semester of EC 10 in 2015-16

EC BEYOND HARVARD

Last October, our students were again inspired by a phenomenal panel of economics alumni at our third annual *Ec Beyond Harvard* event.

In response to the perennial student question, "What can I do with economics?", we created this annual event to showcase the diversity of economics-related career paths. This year, five panelists spoke to a packed crowd of over 150 students and parents and shared wisdom and insights from their wide variety of work experiences.

The 2015 panelists were **Steven Braun** AB '74, Director of Macroeconomic Forecasting at the Council of Economic Advisers; **Michael James** AB '06, a Director in the National Basketball Association's Team Marketing and Business Operations; **Jonathan Hall** AB '07, AM '08, PhD '10, Head of

Economic Research at Uber Technologies; **Ayah Mahgoub** AB '07, MPA '12, an urban economist at the World Bank; and **Maggie Armato** AB '13, Support Lead of Pinner Operations at Pinterest.



Alumni panelists speak with students and parents

If you would like to suggest an interesting economics alum (including yourself!) for a future *Ec Beyond Harvard* panel, please let us know at ecalums@fas.harvard.edu.

Ec Beyond Harvard is made possible through the generous support of the Donald M. Blinken Fund.

REUNION WEEKENDS

The Economics Department hosted two alumni receptions this past year, during the Fall and Spring reunion weekends. Each reception was an opportunity for alums to meet with each other and with members of the Department, as well as to attend a short talk by an economics faculty member.

In November, alums from the Classes of 1970, 1975, 1980 were treated to a conversation with **Professor Benjamin Friedman** AB '66, AM '69, PhD '71 about "technological unemployment" and the role of offshoring and immigration in the US labor market. This past May, **Professor Jeremy Stein** (pictured left) engaged alums in a lively discussion and Q&A about current issues in US monetary policy.



UNDERGRADUATE NEWS

After revamping the economics advising structure starting in Fall 2010, our undergraduate program continues to thrive. This past year, 224 sophomores joined the concentration and 228 seniors graduated, heading off into the world in various capacities (see sidebar).

Among this year's economics seniors, nearly one-quarter wrote senior theses, with a record 19 thesis writers nominated for the Thomas T. Hoopes Prize for outstanding scholarly work. Six economics concentrators received Hoopes Prizes, and three economics concentrators were co-winners of the John Dunlop Prize for the best thesis on a challenging public policy issue at the interface of business and government. In May, the Department hosted the inaugural Economics Senior Thesis Poster Session, featuring eight phenomenal theses. More

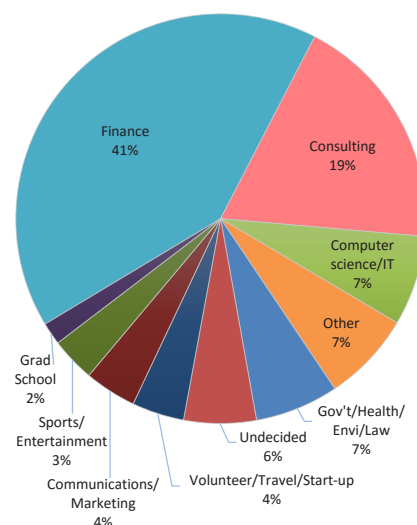
than 60 faculty and students attended the session, hearing about student research on foreign aid, the pharmaceutical industry, inflation targeting, migration, and more.

Across all years, our concentrators are a talented bunch. In November 2015, the Harvard Fed Challenge Team—including four economics concentrators—placed second out of 22 teams in the Boston Fed Challenge competition. And in April 2016, the Harvard Fiscal Challenge Team—including two economics concentrators—won the Fiscal Challenge competition in Washington, DC!

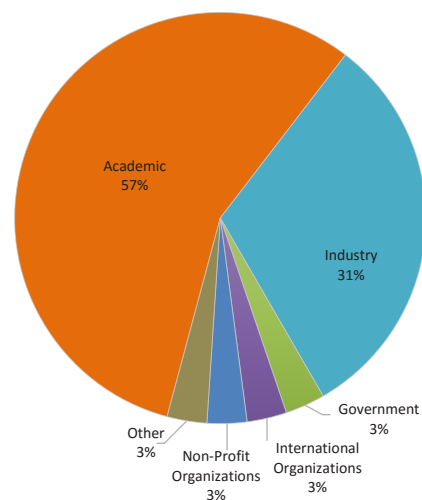
We will also welcome two new Lecturer/Advisors to our team this Fall. **Thomas Baranga** PhD '09 joins us from the University of California at San Diego, and **Judd Cramer** did his graduate studies at Princeton University.

WHERE DO THEY GO?

**Class of 2015
Economics Undergrads**



**Class of 2016
Economics PhDs**



GRADUATE NEWS

The Department is proud to congratulate this year's 32 PhD graduates and looks forward to welcoming 31 doctoral students to the Economics, Business-Economics, and Political Economy and Government PhD programs. This year's incoming class will also benefit from the brand new Economics Graduate Student Organization, which will work with the Department to hold events, provide information and mentorship, and more.

Our doctoral students are outstanding in many ways. In December, they once again hosted a hilarious holiday party for the

Department, featuring cohort and faculty skits, combined with stellar co-hosting by two students. And in April, a four-person team of economics doctoral students won the prestigious 2016 Econometric Game, hosted by the University of Amsterdam.

The University also bestowed a well-deserved honor on **Brenda Piquet**, the Graduate Program Administrator for the economics doctoral program. Brenda was chosen as one of 38 individual recipients of the 2016 Dean's Distinction award, which recognizes Harvard's highest-achieving staff members.



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Thanks to everyone for the 290 entries in our Name the Newsletter contest! Congratulations go to **Jonathan B. Wiener** AB '84, JD '87 for his winning entry of "The Littauer Letter."



Though Jonathan earned his AB in Economics in 1984, Littauer has been a special place since his childhood, when he used to

visit the office of his grandfather: Alexander Gerschenkron, Professor of Economics.

Jonathan went on to Harvard Law School and became interested in risk, externalities, and regulation during his clerkship for two federal judges. He then worked at the Department of Justice, the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, and the President's Council of Economic Advisers.

Jonathan joined the Duke University faculty in 1994 and co-directs Duke's program on Rethinking Regulation. He has taught as a visiting professor at Harvard Law School and published several books on risk, regulation, the environment, and climate policy.

If you want to recommend an economics alum for a future "Spotlight," please tell us at ecalums@fas.harvard.edu.



Economics faculty, staff, and students learn an Indian dance at the Department Spring Picnic

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

The Economics Department is proud to announce the promotion of **Tomasz Strzalecki** to Professor of Economics this fall. Tomasz's interests are economic theory, decision theory, and behavioral economics, with a particular focus on ambiguity aversion, temporal preferences, and bounded rationality.

The Department is also excited to welcome one new senior faculty and four new junior faculty.

Xavier Gabaix PhD '99 is the inaugural Pershing Square Professor of Economics and Finance. Xavier's research includes topics in macroeconomics, behavioural economics, asset pricing, and executive pay. He joins us from the NYU Stern School of Business.

Emily Breza joins us as Assistant Professor of Economics, with a research focus in development economics and household

finance. Emily received her PhD from MIT and was previously an Assistant Professor at Columbia Business School.

Benjamin Enke is a behavioral and experimental economist, joining the Department as Assistant Professor of Economics. Benjamin received his PhD from the University of Bonn this spring.

Myrto Kalouptsi works in industrial organization, applied microeconomics, and international trade and joins us as Assistant Professor of Economics. Myrto received her PhD from Yale and was most recently Assistant Professor at Princeton University.

Shengwu Li will be in Harvard's Society of Fellows for two years, before joining us as Assistant Professor of Economics in Fall 2018. Shengwu's research interests are in microeconomic theory, behavioral economics, experimental economics, and market design. He received his PhD from Stanford University this spring.



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