



RICE ECON

News and Views from the Economics Department at Rice

Congratulations Class of 2021!

We would like to offer our heartiest congratulations to all of our graduating ECON and MTEC majors! I know that this has been a rough semester in many ways, but not only did you (and your instructors) adapt and persevere, you came through with flying colors. And I think that is a harbinger of great things to come, as you boldly go forth to forge your way to what I know will be a long series of professional and personal successes. So, best of luck to the class of 2021 as you find a multitude of ways of doing well by doing good. Live long and prosper!

We held our sixth annual RISE Day Economics awards celebration – and hopefully the last virtual version – on Saturday April 24, 2021. In this issue of the RICE ECON newsletter, we highlight our award winners.

Hope you have a great summer!

George Zodrow
Department Chair

2021 RISE Day Award Winners

RISE or the Rice Initiative for the Study of Economics is an ongoing venture dedicated to enhancing teaching and research in Economics at Rice, guided by the RISE Council, a group of roughly twenty supporters of Economics at Rice that is chaired by Houston businessman Nick Zdeblick. On April 24 via a Zoom webinar, the Economics Department held its sixth annual RISE Day celebration during which we honored outstanding students in our undergraduate and graduate programs; two faculty awards were presented as well. In this newsletter, we would like to recognize all of our undergraduate, graduate and faculty award winners. It is a pleasure to recognize their outstanding accomplishments, which are highlighted below. Note that a few students won multiple awards – in those cases, we provide their pictures and bios after the last award received is mentioned.

Undergraduate Awards

HONORS IN ECONOMICS

Honors in Economics is awarded to students who excel in our two-semester honors program, which is directed by Professor Robin Sickles. Students in the program must develop an original research idea, construct an economic model of the concept that has testable hypotheses, obtain the appropriate data and test those hypotheses, present the results in a workshop setting, and ultimately produce an academic quality paper. The students earning Honors in Economics in 2021 are **Cade Ballew**, **Autumn Engebretson**, **Vicente Iglesias**, **Nathan Kaplan**, and **Sree Yeluri**.

MALCOLM GILLIS AWARD IN ECONOMICS

The Malcolm Gillis Award in Economics is named after Rice's former president, who was also a highly respected member of the Economics department. It is presented to the graduating senior majoring in Economics with the highest GPA in courses for the major. The 2021 winner is Alexander Patterson.

Alexander Patterson is a graduating senior who studied Economics and Managerial Studies. His special interest is in finance, especially in developing an understanding the foundations of investing.



Alexander Patterson

MALCOLM GILLIS AWARD IN MATHEMATICAL ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

The Malcolm Gillis Award in Mathematical Economic Analysis is given to the graduating senior majoring in MTEC with the highest GPA in courses for the major. The 2021 winners are **Cade Ballew** and **Vicente Iglesias**.

MICHAEL D. MAHER RISE AWARD IN ECONOMICS



Cara He

The Michael D. Maher RISE Award in Economics is sponsored by the current senior program adviser for the Baker Institute Center for Energy Studies, and is awarded to the rising senior majoring in Economics with the highest GPA in courses for the major. The 2021 winners are Cara He and Rachel Moore.

Cara He is a rising senior majoring in Economics, minoring in Biochemistry and Cell Biology, and on the pre-med track. Her special interests are in health economics research and policy development, and she looks forward to applying her background in economics to her future career as a physician. At Rice, she is heavily involved in the Center for Civic Leadership, Rice University Dance Marathon, and Rice Dance Theatre.

Rachel Moore is a rising senior at McMurtry College majoring in Economics and Social Policy Analysis. She is interested in human capital development, especially how investment in traditionally underprivileged communities affects the economy as a whole.



Rachel Moore

RISE AWARD IN MATHEMATICAL ECONOMIC ANALYSIS



Lucas Tyler

The RISE Award in Mathematical Economic Analysis is sponsored by the RISE Council and is awarded to the rising senior majoring in MTEC with the highest GPA in courses for the major. The 2021 winner is Lucas Tyler.

Lucas Tyler enjoys sports, both playing and watching, above pretty much everything else. Along those same lines, he likes spending time out in nature and wants to see as much of our natural world preserved as possible. He wasn't certain what to do with his Economics degree when he first decided to do it, but he thinks the picture has crystallized a little bit. Given that the world largely revolves around our international economy, he is interested in seeing ways economic power can be leveraged to support sustainable projects and hopefully offset some of the negative effects we have had on the world.

PATRICIA AND ROBERT H. PARKS JR. PRIZE FOR EXCELLENCE IN ECONOMICS

The Patricia and Robert H. Parks Jr. Prize for Excellence in Economics is awarded to an outstanding ECON or MTEC student who is entering the work force upon graduation. The 2021 winner is **Nathan Kaplan**.

RONALD SOLIGO PUBLIC POLICY ESSAY PRIZE

The Ronald Soligo Public Policy Essay Prize is named after Emeritus Professor Ron Soligo, who was known for his research in development and energy economics and his dedication to our graduate program, which he directed for twenty years. The 2021 winner is Autumn Engebretson.

Autumn Engebretson is a senior at Duncan College majoring in Mathematical Economic Analysis and Managerial Studies. Her thesis explored "Carbon Dioxide Pipeline Development in Texas for the Scaled Deployment of Carbon Capture, Utilization, and Storage." During her time at Rice, Autumn was heavily involved with Rice Business Society, public economics research at the Baker Institute, and the Academic Fellows program. After graduation, she will be joining 547 Energy, a Houston-based clean energy private equity firm, as a private equity analyst.



Autumn Engebretson

BP PRIZE FOR BEST RESEARCH PAPER ON ENERGY ECONOMICS



Sree Yeluri

The BP Prize for Best Research Paper on Energy Economics is funded by the British Petroleum Company and recognizes an outstanding research paper written on any topic related to energy economics. The 2021 winner is Sree Yeluri.

Sree Yeluri majored in Economics and German Studies, with a minor in Politics, Law, and Social Thought (PLST). She has an interest in economic development and energy, which led to her honors thesis on copper mining productivity in Chile. Currently, she is a student researcher for Dr. Michot Foss at the Baker Institute for Public Policy, where she has been learning more about global mineral production and regulations. After two gap years, she is heading to Columbia Law School, where she hopes to specialize in energy and environmental law. During these gap years, she is planning on working in a research-based role and learning more about sustainability in the energy industry.

PETER MIESZKOWSKI PRIZE FOR HONORS PROGRAM RESEARCH



Cade Ballew

The Peter Mieszkowski Prize for Honors Program Research is named after Professor Emeritus Peter Mieszkowski, one of the most prolific scholars to have served in our department, and the winner of the National Tax Association's Holland Medal for lifetime contributions to the theory and practice of public finance. The prize goes to the best research paper written by a graduating senior in our honors program. The 2021 winners are Cade Ballew and Vicente Iglesias.

Cade Ballew is a graduating senior double majoring in Mathematical Economic Analysis and Computational and Applied Mathematics. He has enjoyed his time as an MTEC major, especially in the honors program. After graduation, he plans to join the Department of Applied Mathematics at the University of Washington as a doctoral student.

Vicente Iglesias is originally from Towson, Maryland and is majoring in Mathematical Economic Analysis as well as Statistics, with a minor in Financial Computation and Modeling. After graduation, he will be working for Susquehanna International as a Quantitative Trader. Outside of school, he is interested in running, baseball analytics, and playing the trumpet.



Vicente Iglesias

THE GASTON RIMLINGER PRIZE



Nathan Kaplan

The Gaston Rimlinger Prize is named after one of the founding members of our department, a renowned scholar and popular teacher who served as department chair for many of the department's formative years. It is our most prestigious undergraduate student award and recognizes the best research paper written in any Economics course. The 2021 winner is Nathan Kaplan.

Nathan Kaplan is majoring in mathematical economic analysis and will be working as a senior research analyst at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York after graduating. Academically, he is primarily interested in issues related to banking, financial intermediation, and small business financing. He likes to spend his free time watching sports with friends, working out, and going on hikes.



Rice University 2021 Commencement

Graduate Student Awards

MARIA ESTHER AND CARLOS LINARES FIRST-YEAR STUDENT AWARD

The Maria Esther and Carlos Linares First-Year Student Award recognizes the student with the best performance in first-year courses. The 2021 winner is Siwon Ryu.

Siwon Ryu's first-year coursework at Rice has reaffirmed his passion for economics. While he learned many economic concepts as an undergraduate, they were often taught without rigorous proofs. As a first-year student, he learned how to formulate problems and prove their solutions formally, which completed the theories. He is interested in applying new econometric theories to explain economic phenomena. He focused on econometrics and labor and health economics during his master's program. He has not yet decided his field of specialization but hopes to narrow down his field of interest this summer.



Siwon Ryu

ROBIN C. SICKLES ECONOMETRICS AWARD



Jintao Sun

The Robin C. Sickles Econometrics Award recognizes the student with the best performance on the econometrics qualifying exam. The 2021 winner is Jintao Sun.

Jintao Sun is now a second-year Ph.D student at Department of Economics at Rice University. He holds an M.A. in Economics from Duke University and a B.A. in Journalism from Fudan University in China. His current research interests are in applied microeconomics and market design.

RICA AND TONY LIGERALDE THEORY AWARD

The Rica and Tony Ligeralde Theory Award recognizes the student with the best performance on the economic theory qualifying exam. The 2021 winner is Dibya Mishra.

DAGOBERT L. BRITO RECITATION AWARD

The Dagobert L. Brito Recitation Award recognizes the student for the best performance by a recitation instructor. The 2021 winner is Dibya Mishra.

Dibya Mishra is a graduate student in Economics at Rice University. His research interests lie in Industrial Organization, Market Design, and Networks. He has an undergraduate degree in electrical engineering and an M.Sc. in economics and mathematical economics. He is currently working on evaluating allocation mechanisms.



Dibya Mishra

JOHN R. KELLY GRADUATE STUDENT TEACHING AWARD



Amir Kazempour

The John R. Kelly Graduate Student Teaching Award recognizes the best graduate student teaching in Economics. The 2021 winner is Amir Kazempour Esmati.

Amir Kazempour is a doctoral student in the Economics Department at Rice University with an interest in Industrial Organization. He holds a master's degree in Economics from the Institute for Advanced Studies in Vienna, Austria. Amir's research focuses on the econometrics of two-sided matching markets with observed prices. His empirical work studies the effects of health insurance cost-sharing design on the prices for health care services. He was the instructor of the Statistics course for the incoming PhD students during the 2018-2020 academic years.

GEORGE R. ZODROW WORKSHOP AWARD

The George R. Zodrow Workshop Award recognizes the student with the best performance in a workshop. The 2021 winner is Mingzi Niu.

Mingzi Niu is a third-year economic Ph.D. candidate at Rice University. She is from China, and her research interests are in microeconomic theory, with a focus on mechanism design, information theory, and behavioral economics, including their applications in algorithm fairness and household finance. She is devoted to analyzing the individual decision-making process and interpersonal interactions. She hopes that a better understanding of human choice can facilitate informed policy making, promote social equity, and alleviate poverty.



Mingzi Niu

TIMOTHY AND KATHARINE GUNNING THIRD-YEAR PAPER AWARD



Omer Sozbir

The Timothy and Katharine Gunning Third-Year Paper Award recognizes the student with the best third-year research paper. The 2021 winners are Omer Sozbir and Marcos Lee.

Omer Sozbir is a 4th year PhD student in Economics at Rice. Previously, he studied at Bogazici University and the London School of Economics. He also worked for Turk Eximbank, the export credit bank of Turkey, for a year before joining the PhD program at Rice. His research interests are in applied microeconomics, family economics, and economic development. Currently he is working on several projects examining children's well-being, intra-household inequality, and marriage markets in developing countries.

Marcos Lee is a 4th year PhD Student in Economics and a Research Assistant at the Texas Policy Lab. His research focuses on human capital formation in children and how to improve public policies in education.



Marcos Lee

JENNIFER AND PURVEZ CAPTAIN DISSERTATION AWARD



Daniel Prudencio

The Jennifer and Purvez Captain Dissertation Award recognizes the student with the most outstanding Economics dissertation. The 2021 winner is Daniel Prudencio.

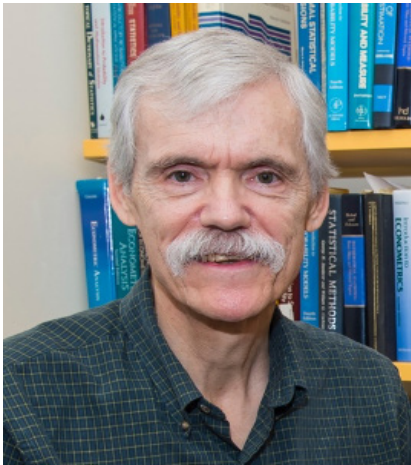
Daniel Prudencio completed his Ph.D. in May 2021. In the fall of 2021, he will join Tecnológico de Monterrey as an assistant professor in the economics department. Daniel's research focuses on the economics of education, and on the intersection of applied industrial organization and development economics. In the latter area, he has studied how local governments in Mexico allocate street pavement contracts when they exercise greater discretion over the hiring practices of the firms that bid on the contracts. His education research focuses on the importance of socio-emotional skills in child development, the development of student educational choices and aspirations, and the impact of the international child sponsorship program, Compassion International, on educational outcomes.



Rice University 2021 Commencement

Faculty Awards

We also presented two faculty awards at RISE Day.



Jim Brown

The first is the Malcolm Gillis Award for Distinction in Undergraduate Teaching in Economics. Malcolm Gillis was not only an outstanding scholar in our department, an accomplished advisor to a multitude of governments and private entities, and an exemplary teacher, but also served as the President of Rice University from 1993 to 2004. Malcolm was incredibly committed to fostering excellent undergraduate teaching at Rice, and this award is a fitting tribute to that commitment.

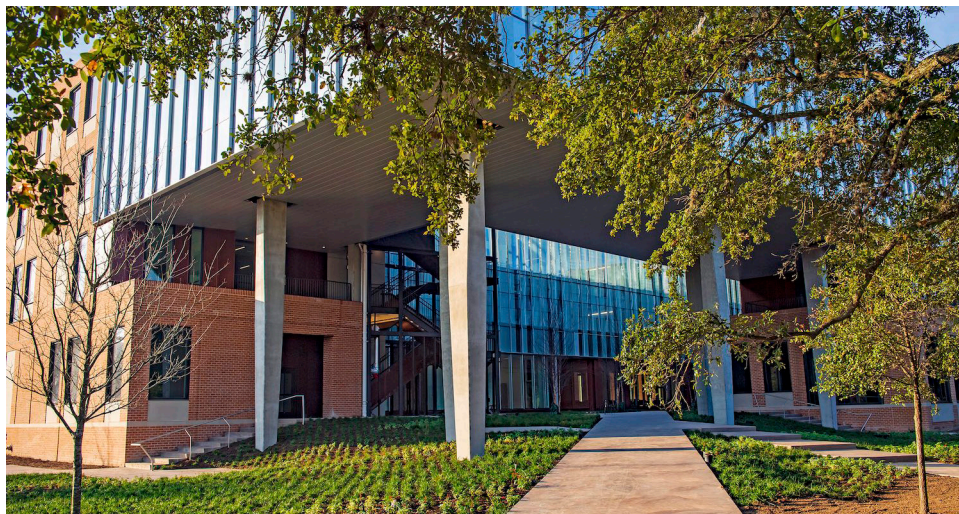
The winner of the Malcolm Gillis Award for Distinction in Undergraduate Teaching in Economics this year is Professor **Jim Brown**, who has been at Rice since 1992. In that time, he has been a spectacular teacher, winning the George R. Brown Award for Superior Teaching four times, the Brown Award for Excellence in Teaching on two occasions, as well as the Sarah Burnett Social Sciences Teaching Prize and the state-wide Piper Professor Award. Indeed in 2018, Jim was awarded the George R. Brown Certificate of Highest Merit for lifetime teaching achievement at Rice, and was retired from all future Brown award competitions. But that also gave us an opening – since Jim has been retired from receiving any more Brown teaching awards, we thought it only fitting that we award him the Gillis prize to add to his trophy case.

Our second faculty prize is the Ralph O'Connor Award for Distinction in Teaching and Research in Economics. This award honors Ralph O'Connor, who was one of the founding members of the RISE Council, and played a huge role in shaping Rice over the years, serving on the university board of governors and as a trustee, helping to establish Martel College, and earning the first Chairman's Award, the highest award for service given by the university, as well as the Rice Alumni Association's Gold Medal. The award is made possible by a gift from Rob Ladd, who was the first chair of the RISE Council, and is currently the Chair of Rice's Board of Trustees.

The winner of this year's Ralph O'Connor Award for Distinction in Teaching and Research in Economics is Professor **Richard Boylan**. Richard has been at Rice since 2005 and has long been one of our most successful teachers, even though he is responsible for ECON 305, Game Theory and other Microeconomic Topics, which is one of the gate-keeper courses for our Mathematical Economic Analysis major. He also teaches ECON 445, Managerial Economics, which is one of our most popular and often over-subscribed electives. Richard's research interests are in law and economics, political economy, game theory, and experimental economics, and he has recently published two articles in the Journal of Law and Economics, the top journal in that field. He is eminently deserving of the O'Connor Award for Distinction in Teaching and Research.



Richard Boylan



Kraft Hall -- Home of the Rice Economics Department