

RICE ECON

News and Views from the Economics Department at Rice

Congratulations Class of 2020!

We would like to offer our heartiest congratulations to all of our graduating ECON and MTEC majors! I know that with the coronavirus pandemic 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 2020 as you find a multitude of ways of doing well by doing good. Live long and prosper!

As part of our graduation events, we held our fifth annual RISE Day Economics awards celebration – and the first and hopefully last virtual version – on Wednesday May 13, 2020. I would like to thank all who attended, especially families and friends of the award winners. In this issue of the RICE ECON newsletter, we highlight our undergraduate and faculty award winners.

We hope you have a safe and healthy summer.

George Zodrow
Department Chair

**Social Sciences
faculty offer their
congratulations to
the Class of 2020!**

**Congratulations to
the Class of 2020
from the RICE
ECON Faculty!**

2020 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 nearly twenty supporters of Economics at Rice that is chaired by Houston businessman Robert Ladd. On May 13 via a Zoom webinar, the Economics Department held its fifth annual RISE Day celebration during which we honored outstanding students in our undergraduate, graduate, and Master in Energy Economics programs; two faculty awards were presented as well. In this newsletter, we would like to recognize all of our undergraduate and faculty award winners. It is a pleasure to acknowledge your outstanding accomplishments. Note that a few students won multiple awards – in those cases, we provide their photos and bios after the last award received is mentioned.

Undergraduate Awards

MALCOLM GILLIS AWARD IN ECONOMICS



Su Chen Teh

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. We have two recipients of the 2020 award, whose GPAs were within 0.004 of each other: Su Chen Teh and Erin Kilbride.

Su Chen Teh is a senior majoring in Economics and Environmental Engineering. She is interested in how economics can inform public policy, and has enjoyed learning new perspectives through her economics classes at Rice.

Erin Kilbride studied Economics and Chemistry at Rice, and in her free time, she enjoyed playing on the Rice Women's Club Soccer and Club Basketball teams. After graduation, she will be working as a consultant for the global strategy company Simon-Kucher and Partners.



Erin Kilbride

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 2020 winner is **Yixing (Lisa) Ling**.

MICHAEL D. MAHER RISE AWARD IN ECONOMICS

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 2020 winner is **Alexander Patterson**, who is a rising senior studying Economics and Managerial Studies. His special interest is in finance, especially in developing an understanding the foundations of investing.



RISE AWARD IN MATHEMATICAL ECONOMIC ANALYSIS



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. We have two recipients of the 2020 award, whose GPAs were also within 0.004 of each other: Cade Ballew and Vicente Iglesias.

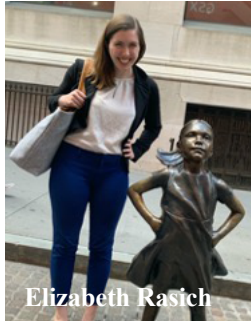
Cade Bellew is a rising senior at Brown College, originally from Norman, Oklahoma, who is a rising senior double majoring in MTEC and CAAM. He is looking forward to continuing his studies during his senior year, specifically through a research capstone course and the Honors Program.

Vicente Iglesias is originally from Towson, Maryland, and is majoring in Statistics as well as Mathematical Economic Analysis. He has interned at the Federal Reserve

and will be working for Susquehanna International this summer. He is still unsure what he will do after graduating, but is most interested in macroeconomics and finance.



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 or students who are entering the work force upon graduation. The 2020 recipients are Elizabeth Rasich and Davis Nelson.

Elizabeth Rasich is an MTEC major who will be working for the University of Chicago's Crime Lab after graduation. Her research projects at Rice examined the economics of consumer bankruptcy, environmental protections, and microfinance.

Davis Nelson is a senior MTEC major from McMurry College who, upon graduation, will begin working for BDT Capital Partners as a merchant banking analyst in Chicago. During his time at Rice, Davis was heavily involved with McMurry College Government, the Rice Club Lacrosse team, and the Rice

Undergraduate Finance Club.



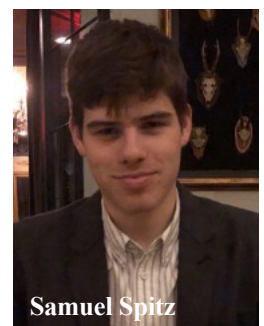
TAX EXECUTIVES INSTITUTE UNDERGRADUATE TAX SCHOLAR AWARD



The Tax Executives Institute Undergraduate Tax Scholar Award is given to an outstanding student or students who are rising seniors and have demonstrated an interest in taxation. There are two recipients in 2020: Autumn Engebretson and Samuel Spitz.

Autumn Engebretson is a rising senior at Duncan College majoring in Mathematical Economic Analysis and Managerial Studies and minoring in Business and in Financial Computation and Modeling. She is involved with the Baker Institute's Center for Public Finance working as a student researcher for Dr. John Diamond, and is exploring options in both finance and graduate work in tax policy and economics.

Samuel Spitz is a rising senior from the Bay Area studying Economics and Managerial Studies. Outside of his work in economics, Samuel enjoys leading Rice Ventures, running his startup (filitur.net), working with the Doerr Institute, and playing pickup basketball at the Rec.



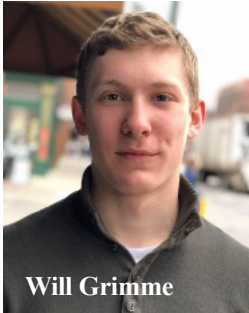
HONORS IN ECONOMICS



Honors in Economics is awarded to students who excel in our two-semester honors program, which is headed by Professor Robin Sickles. Students in the program must develop a research idea, construct an economic model of the concept that has testable hypotheses, obtain the appropriate data and test those hypotheses, and write and present in the workshop an academic quality paper. The students earning honors in economics in 2020 are Kira Luscher, Corey Fuller, Yixing (Lisa) Ling, William Grimme, and Eshaan Patel.

Kira Luscher is a senior at Jones College from San Francisco, California. Her honors thesis examined “Private Value Formation in the Secondary Fashion Market: An Empirical Analysis of Online Auction Outcomes.” In her free time, Kira is an avid dancer and choreographer with Rice Dance Theater, and she will be pursuing a career in private equity in New York after graduation.

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 20 years. We have two winners of the Ronald Soligo Public Policy Essay Prize in 2020: William Grimme and Eshaan Patel.

Will Grimme is a graduating senior within the Mathematical Economic Analysis (MTEC) and Theatre majors and also earned Honors in Economics. His essay investigated “Semi-Strategic Philanthropy: Hurricane Response and Relief Among U.S. Firms.” He is headed to Columbia University in the fall to pursue a Ph.D. in Economics, likely specializing in applied microeconomic theory.

Eshaan Patel is a senior from Will Rice majoring in Mathematical Economic Analysis and minoring in Math and Statistics and also earned Honors in Economics. His essay investigated “Credit and Paths of Development: Role of Land Reform in West Bengal.” After graduation, he will also be pursuing a Ph.D. in Economics at Columbia University with the intention of focusing on international development.



PETER MIESZKOWSKI PRIZE FOR HONORS PROGRAM RESEARCH



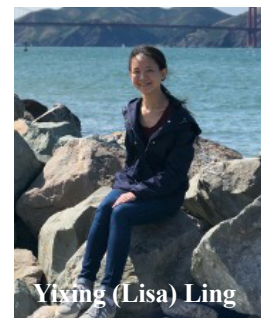
The Peter Mieszkowski Prize for Honors Program Research is named after Emeritus Professor Peter Mieszkowski, one of the most prolific scholars to have served in our department, and the winner of the National Tax Association’s Holland Medal for lifetime contributions to the theory and practice of public finance. The prize goes to the best research paper written by a graduating senior in our honors program, and the 2020 winner is Corey Fuller, who examined “Homelessness on the West Coast: What Role Does Health Play?” Corey also earned Honors in Economics.

Corey Fuller is graduating with a double major in math and mathematical economic analysis. After graduating from Rice, he is returning to his hometown of Dallas to work as a consultant at Oliver Wyman.

DISTINCTION IN RESEARCH

Distinction in Research is a university-level award that is given for exceptional research effort, above and beyond that typically required for a paper in a senior-level economics elective, including the honors program. Distinction in Research was awarded by the Economics Department for the first time in 2020. The recipient was Yixing (Lisa) Ling, who investigated “Banking Sector Competitiveness In Eurozone Countries: 2004-2014.” Lisa also earned Honors in Economics and was the winner of the Malcolm Gillis Award in Mathematical Economic Analysis.

Yixing (Lisa) Ling is a member of Baker College majoring in MTEC and VADA with a theatre concentration. After graduation, she will be joining McKinsey & Company as a business analyst in the Houston office.



Faculty Awards

We also presented awards to two members of our faculty at RISE Day.



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 his commitment.

The winner of the Malcolm Gillis Award for Distinction in Undergraduate Teaching in Economics this year is **Michele Biavati**, who is a senior lecturer and has been at Rice since 2013 and is a faculty associate at Will Rice College. Michele is eminently deserving of the Gillis Award, as he has always been an outstanding instructor in all of his courses, but we especially want to recognize his performance in his often over-subscribed Behavioral Economics course, where his outstanding lectures inevitably win accolades from his students. And Michele is extremely popular among our undergraduates, which in itself is quite a feat, as he also has the truly thankless task of being in charge of all undergraduate transfer credits.

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 has been the chair of the RISE Council since its inception; Rob is also the incoming 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 assistant professor **Rossella Calvi**. Rossella has been one of our best teachers since the day she arrived on campus and she continues to improve, receiving her best teaching effectiveness score on student evaluations in her most recent offering of her undergraduate course on economic development. Even more impressive is that in her graduate course in the same subject she has received a perfect 1.00 both times she has offered the course, an amazing accomplishment. And Rossella is a top-notch researcher as well. In fact, she just had her paper on "Why Are Older Women Missing in India? The Age Profile of Bargaining Power and Poverty" accepted in one of the top three journals in our profession, the *Journal of Political Economy*. We are delighted to present her with the O'Connor Award for Distinction in Teaching and Research.



Finally, we would like to mention a non-RISE Day prize awarded recently to one of our faculty members. A few weeks ago, Associate Professor **Mallesh Pai** won the 2020 award for the best paper published in the prestigious *American Economic Journal: Microeconomics*. And we would be remiss if we didn't mention that, amazingly enough, this same high-profile award was won last year by another one of our faculty members, **Yinghua He**. We would like to offer our heartiest congratulations to both young scholars on their impressive achievements!

