ECONMATTERS

Fall 2026 Newsletter-Department of Economics

News

Message from the Chair

Hello, alumni, students, faculty, and friends.

I am sorry to share the very sad news that Professor Ian McAllister passed away on September 22. Ian taught at Dalhousie from 1971 up until five days before his death; he spent his career dedicated to the students of Dalhousie. This is a huge loss to his family, to Dalhousie, and to the world.

This Fall 2026 issue of EconMatters includes profiles of four of our outstanding alumni: **Katherine Ryan** (BSc (Honours) 2014), **Darren Byers** (MDE 1998), **Saroja Kuruganty** (MDE 2005), and **Paola Beneras P.** (MDE 2014, PhD 2021); we thank them for sharing their experiences. Our Research Spotlight shines a light on the work of our faculty members Dr. **Mevlude Akbulut-Yuksel** and Dr. **Casey Warman**.

I would like to recognize several recent Economics award winners.

-**Reshma Joseph** and **Ernest Owusu-Ansah** were awarded the U.L.G. Rao Memorial Prize in Economics for writing the best master's theses of the 2025-26 academic year.

-The MA Prize was awarded to **Abdelaziz Elherbawy** and the MDE Prize was awarded to **Christopher Ajayi**.

-**Mavis Darling** was awarded the University Medal in Economics for 2026 as recognition for being the top honours student graduating in 2026. Mavis was also

Alumni Profiles

Katherine Ryan

BSc (Honours) in Economics and Mathematics (2014)

In 2014, I graduated from Dalhousie with a Bachelor of Science (Combined Honours Economics and Mathematics). I then went on to earn a Master of Arts from Simon Fraser University and have spent most of my time since then working for the Province of Nova Scotia. At Finance and Treasury Board, I lead a small but mighty team of economists who help inform decision making with data and economic theory.

Darren Byers

MDE (1998)

My move to Halifax was the first time I had been on an airplane. In fact, I had limited travel outside of Ontario, outside Toronto more specifically, with

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awarded the Avery Prize for the highest standing among graduates of baccalaureate programs.

-**Zihao Sheng** was awarded the Economics Teaching Assistant Award for 2025-26.

-Economics undergraduate student prizes for 2025-26 were awarded to: **Lakshana Saranyan** (Principles of Economics Prize), **Mohan Zhang** (Economic Theory Prize), **Angela Batnasan** (Econometrics Prize), **Ryan Higgins** and **Sophie Maillet-Purves** (Anonymous Prize), **Angela Batnasan** (International Student Essay Prize), **Tiana Kirkpatrick** (Honours Thesis Poster Award), and **Charlotte Milley** (Economics Honours Thesis Award).

-**Jean-Phillippe Bourgeois** was awarded the Department of Economics Teaching Award.

I would also like to announce that four of our faculty members were granted tenure or promotion on July 1. Dr. **Nicholas Lawson** and Dr. **Alvaro Parra** were granted tenure and promoted to Associate Professor; Dr. **Christos Ntantamis** was promoted to Senior Instructor; and Dr. **Weina Zhou** was promoted to Full Professor.

Great news: **Zihao Sheng** passed his PhD thesis defence on September 29. Congratulations to Dr. Sheng!

We very much appreciate the alumni, families, and friends who have donated to our scholarship and bursary funds (through giving.dal.ca) to help us support student excellence as well as financial need. Budget cuts are affecting our ability to provide graduate scholarships, and we are grateful for every donation, especially to our bursary funds, the Christian Marfels Memorial Bursary and the Alasdair Sinclair Memorial Bursary. Thank you for your generosity! I am pleased to announce the creation of a new bursary created by Paola Beneras, the Mark Higgins PhD Bursary in Economics. You can read more in Paola's alumni profile, and donate here: http://giving.dal.ca/markhiggins.

Stay in touch by following our LinkedIn page: https://www.linkedin.com/company/dalhousie-university-department-of-economics

All the best,

my entire family all living in the Greater Toronto Area (aka the Six). When I graduated from the University of Toronto with my Bachelor of Commerce in 1995, I yearned to continue my studies and broaden my horizons. Dalhousie introduced me to the rest of Canada and taught me to seize opportunities when they present themselves.

Saroja Kuruganty

MDE (2005)

I am currently Senior Counsel practicing in the area of trade law for the Government of Ontario's Ministry of the Attorney General. I obtained a Master of Development Economics (M.D.E.) and LLB from Dalhousie University, along with a B.A. Honours in economics and a B.A. in development studies from Queen's University. I completed a portion of my law degree studying international and comparative business law at Bucerius Law School in Hamburg, Germany, and I was called to the Ontario bar in 2009. Over the years, I have taught international trade law as an adjunct professor at Osgoode Hall Law School's Professional Development LLM program in International Business Law.

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Tess Cyrus

Associate Professor and Chair

Research Spotlight: Dr. Mevlude Akbulut-Yuksel

"World War II Blues: The Long–Lasting Mental Health Effect of Childhood Trauma" (with Erdal Tekin and Belgi Turan), *Journal of Human Resources*, 2025.

There has been a revival of warfare and threats of interstate war in recent years as the number of countries engaged in armed conflict surged dramatically, reaching levels unprecedented since the end of the Cold War. This is happening at a time when the global burden of mental health illness is also on the rise. We examine the causal impact of early life exposure to warfare on long–term mental health, using novel data on the amount of bombs dropped in German cities by Allied Air Forces during World War II (WWII) and the German Socio-economic Panel.

Research Spotlight: Dr. Casey Warman

"The Effect of School Disruptions on Parental Labor Supply: Evidence from Canadian Panel Data" (with Dean R. Lillard, Joseph Sabia, and Zihao Sheng), forthcoming in the *Journal of Labor Economics*.

This study explores the effects of COVID-19 school closures on labor market outcomes of Canadian parents of school-age children. Using newly collected data on grade level–specific school closures across 141 Canadian cities along with individual-level panel data from the Labour Force Survey, difference-in-differences estimates provide robust evidence that restrictions on in-person schooling reduced employment among partnered mothers of school-age children by approximately 2 percentage points. For fathers, labor supply adjustments are much weaker and concentrated on single fathers. Finally, auxiliary analyses using administrative tax records provide suggestive evidence that school closures increased public benefit receipt among single parents.

Paola Beneras P.

MDE (2012), PhD (2021)

For most of my undergraduate degree, I was convinced I would pursue an MBA. I moved to Canada thinking that Economics and Business would be the ideal degree combination for eventually founding a company that would help solve the socioeconomic problems burdening Ecuador. Growing up in Quito, I had a hard time reconciling my own life with the vastly different realities that surrounded me. I went to school, played sports, and had a loving family, while at many stoplights, children my age begged for food and money. I could not understand how, so arbitrarily, the lottery of birth had set us on such different paths when, in all ways that mattered, we were equals.

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Dalhousie University EconMatters is distributed twice a year to faculty, staff, students and alumni. Suggestions for future issues? Contact economics@dal.ca.

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