

GINTHER NAMED RECIPIENT OF COVID RESEARCH PIVOT AWARD

Dr. Donna Ginther has received a special COVID Research Pivot Award from the University of Kansas.

KU announced in January that Dr. Donna Ginther had received a special one-time COVID Research Pivot Award in recognition of her extraordinary efforts over the last year in quickly adjusting her research to help better understand the pandemic and provide valuable information to the public and policymakers.

Dr. Ginther, who serves as the Roy A. Roberts Distinguished Professor of Economics as well as Director of KU's prestigious Institute for Policy and Social Research, was named one of two recipients (along with Dr. Folashade Augusto, assistant professor of ecology and evolutionary biology) of the special award, which was selected by a multidisciplinary panel of KU faculty and staff to acknowledge faculty members who had quickly refocused their expertise to address the COVID crisis and its societal effects.

Vice Chancellor for Research Simon Atkinson said that while the entire KU research community had excelled at finding creative ways to adapt and advance their work while prioritizing health and safety, Dr. Ginther and Dr. Augusto in particular had been especially successful in the techniques they had implemented, noting that "the knowledge they continue to generate is helping meet pressing needs for people in Kansas and beyond."

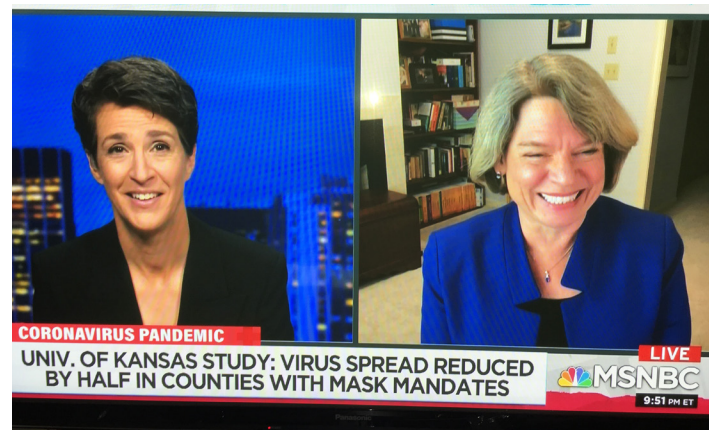
The winners and several other nominees gave brief presentations at a special Covid Research Pivot Symposium on March 2. That campus-wide zoom event also allowed many of its 180 registered attendees to interact with the presenters.

"We have learned that leadership matters," Dr. Ginther said in response to one question about the pandemic and its fallout. "Taking a stand early on and being consistent would have been the best approach. But it seems that economic interests began dominating over health interests as we moved forward, notwithstanding the fact that most economists believed that maximizing health outcomes would have been the best thing for the economy."

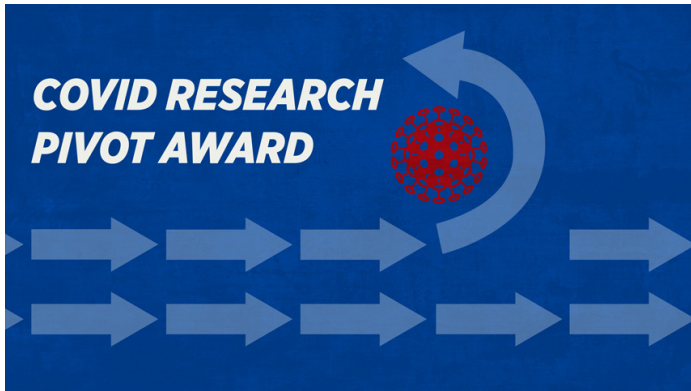
Adding to the many hats she wears, Dr. Ginther was appointed by Kansas Governor Laura Kelly in 2019 to serve as lead academician for the Governor's Council on Tax Reform. That group's charge to evaluate the overall adequacy and equity of the entire state and local tax system suddenly became much more challenging in the early months of 2020 as the pandemic began having significant implications for public health and the economy, as well as for multiple public finance issues.

By the end of last March, Dr. Ginther had in fact deftly pivoted and begun producing weekly presentations for the Governor, legislators and other state officials to help guide them through the unfolding crisis. Her experience as a labor economist helped her quickly assemble and interpret both state and federal employment/unemployment data even as the state labor department's infrastructure had begun reeling under the magnitude of the crisis, a pattern repeated in many other states. Among other achievements, she was the canary in the mineshaft in alerting policymakers to the early and dramatic impact on the manufacturing sector in and around Sedgwick County.

With her national reputation as an authority on the economic impact of the pandemic continuing to grow, the theme she picked for the annual Kansas Economic Policy Conference in October ("What is the Role of Government



Dr. Donna Ginther appeared on MSNBC October 28 to discuss her groundbreaking research on the effectiveness of mask mandates.



in a Crisis?) brought together public health officials, academicians, policymakers and other stakeholders for a robust discussion of the public sector's role in addressing the past, present and future of COVID-19. During her keynote presentation, Dr. Ginther unveiled some of her own groundbreaking research indicating how mask mandates had worked to reduce transmission of the disease in those Kansas counties which had maintained them. That important finding, soon to be published, has received national attention - cited in the *New York Times* and getting her a national TV appearance on MSNBC's *The Rachel Maddow Show*.

On the day of the symposium, one attendee referenced the importance of that research and observed with some dismay that Texas and Mississippi had only hours earlier announced the significant relaxation of mask mandates.

"I think the data are pretty clear that masks work," Dr. Ginther said. "If some of the new variants now take hold in a state like Texas, that could be very, very unfortunate."

Associate Vice Chancellor for Federal Relations Jack Cline mentioned that the work by COVID Research Award recipients and nominees was especially impressive given that in some fields, researchers had not been able to fully "return to their labs" because of the pandemic.

"This isn't just a recession," Dr. Ginther responded. "This is a natural disaster that is global in nature. The government needs to step in and support our researchers."

"Science has saved us with this vaccine; and if we don't now help save science, we are going to lose a lot more as a society in the long run."

Dr. Atkinson agreed with her comments, concluding the symposium by saying "how important research universities are in the country and the whole world, something that has been highlighted that much more by the pandemic."

SYMONS JOINING ECONOMICS DEPARTMENT AS NEW CHAIR IN JULY



Dr. John Symons will become the new chair of the Economics Department starting in July.

KU announced in January that Dr. John Symons will be the new Chair of the Economics Department starting on July 1. Dr. Symons, a professor of Philosophy who came to KU in 2012 and has extensive administrative and academic experience, will be succeeding current Chair Dr. Milena Stanislavova.

Dr. Symons took over as KU's Chair of the Department of Philosophy from 2012-17 after having served in that position previously at the University of Texas at El Paso. An authority in epistemic logic, philosophy of psychology, and philosophy of computation, Dr. Symons is author of 11 books or edited volumes and 57 articles and book chapters. He was past editor-in-chief of *Synthese* (2002-11), the leading journal in epistemology and philosophy of science, and has served as an editorial board member of numerous interdisciplinary journals and journals of philosophy. He currently serves as executive editor of *Philosophy and Technology*.

Professor Symons is a regular participant in Complexity Science programs and groups internationally and has served as visiting faculty at Peking University and The University of Lisbon. He represents Ireland in the Institut International de Philosophie (IIP) and is an associate member of the Institut d'histoire et de philosophie des science et des techniques (IHPST), Paris 1. He has successfully led efforts to secure large extramural research funding from NSF, the Templeton Foundation, and the Department of Defense, and currently leads a project on "Formal Approaches to the Ontology and Epistemology of Resilience" funded by the Department of Defense as part of KU's Science of Security label.

KU's Interim Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Dr. John Colombo said that he was confident Dr. Symons' extensive administrative and professional experience would enable him to be a very successful Chair of the Economics Department.

Welcome aboard, Dr. Symons!



ALUMNI NEWS

Alums and friends of Economics at KU, we want to hear from you! Please keep us updated on what is happening in your lives. We look forward to including your news and events in the next *KU Economist*.

Mail

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Subject Line: Alumni News





Dr. Tarun Sabarwal's groundbreaking new book represents a major contribution to game theory literature.

SABARWAL PUBLISHES IMPORTANT NEW BOOK ON MONOTONE GAMES

Dr. Tarun Sabarwal of the KU Economics Department recently published a groundbreaking new book (*Monotone Games: A Unified Approach to Games with Strategic Complements and Substitutes*, Palgrave Macmillan (Springer), 2021), which provides a significant

contribution to game theory literature. (<https://www.springer.com/us/book/9783030455125>.)

The work provides a fascinating examination of monotone games and studies incentives and outcomes when there are multiple players - and how the decision of each player affects the well-being of others in particular ways.

Games with strategic complements exhibit co-directional incentives, or incentives for each player to move in the same direction as other players. (Examples would include coordinating on a bank run or technology adoption, or even making a run on groceries during a pandemic.) Games with strategic substitutes exhibit contra-directional incentives, or incentives for each player to move in the direction opposite to other players. (Examples would include competing for market share or for a common good, or congestion games, or taking actions with a particular externality.) Monotone games include both types of players - some players have incentives to move in the same direction as other players; while other players have incentives to move in the direction opposite to other players.

"The theory of strategic complements is well-established and extensive," Dr. Sabarwal said. "Indeed, some of the insights of auction theory celebrated in this year's Nobel prize are based on the general theory of strategic complements.

"But the theories of strategic substitutes and of combinations of the two are newer and still evolving. I am

fortunate to contribute in central ways to the foundations of the newer theories. There are some similarities between the new and the old and some sharp differences as well," he added.

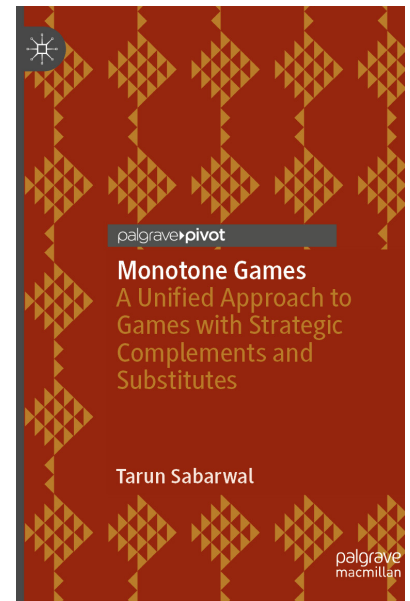
The book develops anew the foundations of all three classes of games in a unified manner under the umbrella of monotone games, providing systematic connections across different cases.

Department Chair Dr. Milena Stanislavova said that a research monograph of this significance by a faculty member represented "a real feather in the cap for KU in general and the Department in particular. We couldn't be more pleased about the worldwide publication of Tarun's important new book."

The publisher noted that the research is especially relevant given that incentives and outcomes studied in monotone games occur in a variety of disciplines, including biology, business, computer science, economics, mathematics, medicine, philosophy, political science, and psychology.

"I believe that the core principles studied in the book arise in fundamental ways in a large body of human and socioeconomic interaction with interdependent effects," Dr. Sabarwal said.

"There is a compelling reason for this body of knowledge to be accessible to a broader audience, and I hope the book accomplishes that goal."



The cover of Dr. Tarun Sabarwal's *Monotone Games: A Unified Approach to Games with Strategic Complements and Substitutes*.



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Longtime Office Manager Leanea Wales retired in December after 31 years with the Department.

LEANEA WALES RETIRES AS DEPARTMENT OFFICE MANAGER

For many thousands of students and others cycling through the Economics Department over the last three decades, longtime office manager Leanea Wales was one of the constants. Leanea officially retired in December

after more than 31 years with the Department.

The recipient of a special CLAS Staff Achievement Award in 2013 and the prestigious Oswald Service Award in 2014, she began her exemplary career with the Department in 1989. Leanea's KU days actually began in 1980, when she started working for what was then known as the Student Records Office.

"I came to the Economics Department in June of 1989 when (Former Chair) Joe Sicilian hired me," she explained, "and looking back on all the friends I have made with faculty and students alike, I'm so glad he did."

Leanea said that she had very much enjoyed working for multiple chairs and interacting with so many interesting and fascinating faculty members.

"Some of my fondest memories over the years include the in-depth analysis of each and every KU basketball game with Joe Sicilian, Dave Faurot, Neal Becker and Ted Juhl," she said.

Noting that she never knew what to expect from so many eccentric personalities on the faculty over the years, she even recalled one time a former professor showed up for work wearing one black shoe and one brown shoe.

"But I would be remiss in not also talking about all the wonderful students who have come through the Department," she added. "Too many graduate students to name have turned out to be great friends to this day. And I especially don't want to forget all of the students who have worked out at the front desk over the years. I never would have survived without all of



The commemorative plaque given to Leanea Wales upon her retirement.

their great help – especially when we went from three staff members down to one."

Leanea said that like so many others, she was excited when the Department moved up the hill from Summerfield to Snow in the mid 2000s – but still has many happy recollections specific to Summerfield.

"One time when the staff got new office chairs, we had to test them out by having chair races down the hall to see whose chair would roll the fastest," she laughed. "It was definitely a quality-control kind of thing."

"And since we used to raise our own beef at home, one time I brought hamburgers to work and we set up a grill outside of Summerfield for a big cookout for the staff and graduate students," she said. "So many memories with so many great people, and I will miss them all."

Current Chair Milena Stanislavova said that the feeling was mutual, and that the Department would very much miss Leanea's steady presence in the office.

"She has been one of the pillars of the Department for so many years," Dr. Stanislavova said. "Her loss to us cannot be overstated, but we definitely wish her well in retirement."

SNAPSHOT OF A THRIVING DEPARTMENT

Amid declining support from the state in recent years and discussions about the costs of maintaining certain programs, the Economics Department has continued to thrive from an enrollment and graduation standpoint. Data provided by KU's Office of Institutional Research and Planning (OIRP) show that 115 undergraduate economics degrees were granted in the 2019-20 academic year; 11 master's degrees; and 9 doctoral degrees. The Department also oversaw the granting of 30 undergraduate minors in economics. Drilling down into statistics for the previous academic year, OIRP reports 3,709 student-courses in economics and 11,331 credit hours, corresponding to 2,250 unique students.

The latest OIRP data for the 2020-21 academic year again show that economics is one of the most popular programs within the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, with 282 students currently pursuing economics degrees at KU (220 declared undergraduate majors; 25 in the master's program; and 37 seeking doctoral degrees); as well as an additional 37 students seeking an undergraduate minor in economics.

Economics Degrees (2019-20)

Baccalaureate: 115 Masters: 11 Doctoral: 9

Economics Majors (2020-21)

Undergraduate: 220 Masters: 25 Doctoral: 37

Source: KU Office of Institutional Research and Planning



Dr. William A. Barnett will be a keynote speaker at an important international conference in June.

BARNETT TO GIVE KEYNOTE AT SPECIAL CONFERENCE FOCUSING ON TWIN UK CHALLENGES OF BREXIT, COVID-19

A major international conference on June 22-23 focusing on the impact of the simultaneous challenges Brexit and COVID-19 have had on the United Kingdom will feature KU's own Dr. William A. Barnett,

the Oswald Distinguished Professor of Macroeconomics, as one of its keynote speakers. Given that the pandemic has damaged the United Kingdom's economy more than many other European Union countries, uncertainties are expected to weigh heavily on the British economy as it enters the post-Brexit and post-COVID era.

The Money Macro and Finance Society conference ("Post BREXIT: Uncertainty, Risk Measurement and COVID-19 Challenges") will therefore focus on a broad array of policy and control issues and their interactions to economic phenomena following the UK's exit from both the COVID-19 crisis and from the EU. Of particular concern is how uncertainty over the nature of final agreements on trade could lead to firms' delaying investment, which could in turn lead to loss of certain internationally competitive advantages that had been present previously.

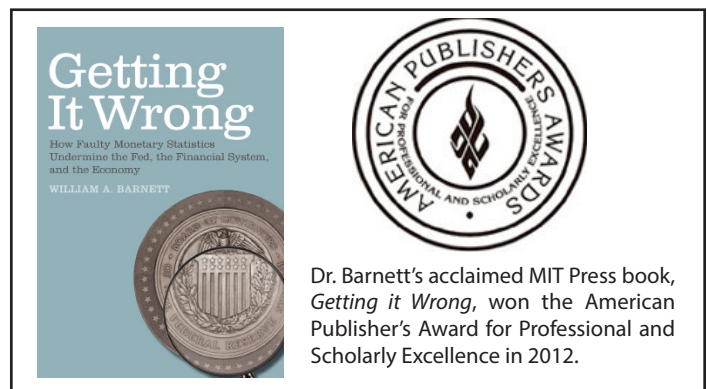
Dr. Barnett, who will give a keynote ("Is the BREXIT Bifurcation Causing Chaos in the United Kingdom?") which is expected to address the extent to which Shilnikov chaos could be relevant to understanding the ultimate outcome of BREXIT, also serves as Director of Advances in Monetary and Financial Measurement at the Center for Financial Stability (CFS) in New York City, and Director of the Institute for Nonlinear Dynamical Inference in Moscow. His current work is in the fields of chaos, bifurcation, and nonlinear dynamics in socioeconomic contexts, econometric modelling of consumption and production, and the study of the aggregation problem and the challenges of measurement in economics, especially in financial and monetary economics. He is Founder and was First President of the Society for Economic Measurement, Founding Editor of the Cambridge University Press journal, *Macroeconomic Dynamics*, and of the Emerald Group Publishing monograph series, *International Symposia in Economic Theory and Econometrics*, and originator of the Divisia monetary aggregates and the "Barnett critique." He is a Fellow of the American Statistical Association, a Charter Fellow of the *Journal of Econometrics*, a Charter Fellow of the Society for Economic Measurement, a Fellow of the World Innovation Foundation, a Fellow of the TANDO International Policy Institute, a Fellow of the Johns Hopkins Institute for Applied Economics, Global Health, and the Study of Business Enterprise, and Honorary Professor at Henan University in Kaifeng, China. Special issues of the

Journal of Econometrics, *Econometric Reviews*, and the *Journal of Financial Stability* have been published in his honor. He is ranked among the top 2% of the world's economists in RePEc. His acclaimed MIT Press book, *Getting it Wrong*, won the American Publisher's Award for Professional and Scholarly Excellence; and his book with Nobel Laureate Paul Samuelson, *Inside the Economist's Mind*, has been translated into six languages.

Co-sponsored by the University of Liverpool and the University of Birmingham, the event will seek to convene experts "from different research communities for an interdisciplinary stock-taking of the state of the art of research on the consequences of Brexit – and on the implications of the British withdrawal from the EU and the devastating consequences on European integration," according to some of the initial publicity.

Organizers specifically asked for submissions from scholars and researchers working on policy and practical issues; as well as from those making more theoretical and normative arguments. Two special issues of prestigious journals will serve as a legacy to record the financial and economic unprecedented events the UK is facing - the *European Journal of Finance*; and *Economic Modelling*.

Papers for the event, which have a May 30 submission deadline (postbretitfinance@contacts.bham.ac.uk) are expected to be included on a significant number of critical topics, including: Money markets and monetary policy; COVID-19 and the financial crisis; costs and welfare effects of trade and free trade; dynamic systems, random states of disorder and chaos theory; theoretical and empirical analysis of trading activity; and business confidence, uncertainty and working capital costs and financial management.



CHANCELLOR'S GTA AWARD TO DUNCAN

KU announced in late 2020 that William Duncan had been named recipient of the prestigious Chancellor's GTA Award for 2019-20. William, a PhD candidate, currently serves as Assistant Professor of Applied Mathematics at Baker University. He also serves as a research fellow at the Midwest Policy Institute, a think tank he helped found to conduct applied economic research on issues of particular interest to the central United States. His dissertation at KU focuses on empirical questions of labor, well-being, and economic opportunity.

FACULTY NEWS

Dietrich Earnhart had his study on “Enforcement Federalism: Comparing the Effectiveness of Federal Punishment versus State Punishment” accepted for publication recently by *Environmental and Resource Economics*. An authority on environmental economics, Dr. Earnhart spent much of the fall semester leading a team of interdisciplinary faculty researchers from three Kansas Board of Regents institutions (KU, K State and Wichita State) in a special project examining the adaptability and resilience of surface and groundwater systems in the state in response to climate change. This timely project (which incorporates 10 different departments spanning the social sciences, natural and physical sciences, and engineering) is working to develop an integrated and holistic modeling framework to track the impact of climate shocks on water sources and water users. The effort to better inform the debate over climate change represents just the latest partnership-building initiative for Dr. Earnhart, who throughout his career has been instrumental in assembling networks involving both environmental non-governmental organizations and environmental public sector agencies to provide joint input on multiple interdisciplinary research projects.

Tarun Sabarwal, the Founder and Director of KU’s Center for Analytical Research in Economics, recently had his book (*Monotone Games: A Unified Approach to Games with Strategic Complements and Substitutes*, Palgrave Macmillan (Springer), 2021), a major contribution at the research frontier of game theory, published worldwide (see page 3). Dr. Sabarwal, who was named last summer as an Economic Theory Fellow by the Society of Advancement for Economic Theory (one of the highest honors in the profession for theoreticians), also was awarded a prestigious Keeler Intra-University Research Professorship by KU last fall. Instrumental in demonstrating the Economics Department’s flexibility in adapting to the COVID crisis, he organized two seminar series last summer (the Inter-University Colloquium on Analytical Research; and the Perspectives in Economics Research Seminar Series). An international authority on game theory, he more recently organized and chaired two sessions at the Southern Economic Association (SEA) meetings in November. In addition to presenting his own research at that SEA event, Dr. Sabarwal presented in November to the Research School of Australian National University; and in December at the Delhi School of Economics and Econometric Society’s 2020 Winter School. Serving as both Associate Chair and Director of Graduate Studies from 2016-20, the outstanding work he has done in recent years with the Department’s undergraduates also was featured in a special “Mentor Spotlight” released in October by KU’s Center for Undergraduate Research. An elected member of both the University Senate and Faculty Senate at KU, he recently published his research, “Strategic Complements in Two Stage, 2x2 Games” – with KU Economics PhD alumna, Dr. Yue Feng, in the *Journal of Economic Theory*, the top journal in the world dedicated to economic theory.

Shahnaz Parsaeian has new research, “Efficient Combined Estimation under Structural Breaks” (with Tae-hwy Lee and Aman Ullah), forthcoming in *Advances in Econometrics*. Building on previous work on estimation and forecasting time series models under structural breaks, the authors focus on developing a new method to obtain the optimal forecast. Dr. Parsaeian also made recent presentations at the 40th International Symposium on Forecasting; a special KU Research Perspectives seminar; and at the American Economic Association’s CeMENT Workshop. She is Principal Investigator for a project (“Forecasting Large Heterogenous Panel Data Models Under Structural Breaks”) that received funding from KU’s New Faculty General Research Fund.

David Slusky has recently published “Converting Between Dates in the Hebrew and Roman Calendars” (with Gabrielle Agus and the late Princeton mathematician John H. Conway) in the *College Mathematics Journal*; “The Impact of Driving Time to Family Planning Facilities on Preventive Service Use in Ohio” (with Jacqueline Ellison, Kevin Griffith, Madalyn Thursby, and Jacob Bor) in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*; and “Sunlight and Protection Against Influenza” (with Richard Zeckhauser) in *Economics & Human Biology*. Dr. Slusky’s work was recently presented at multiple conferences, including “Evaluation of Initiatives to Improve Maternal Health” at the Association for Policy & Management Fall Conference in November; and “COVID-19 Surgical Abortion Restriction Did Not Reduce Visits to Abortion Clinics” at the Population Health Science Workshop in December. An authority on health economics and public policy, he was responsible for organizing the inaugural Kansas Health Economics Conference (KHEC) last March just as the COVID-19 crisis was unfolding (see Spring 2020 issue of *KU Economist*, p. 1) and will host the second such event on April 29-30, funded by a National Science Foundation grant. He co-founded an important new electronic health economics colloquium that virtually serves a diverse mix of students and professors and averages over 100 attendees. Toward the end of 2020, Dr. Slusky also became a co-editor of the *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, published an important piece in *Econofact* (“Health and Economic Effects of Reduced Access to Abortion”), and was quoted by *Scienceline* on the impact of COVID-19 on abortion access throughout the US. As Associate Chair and Director of Undergraduate Studies, he oversaw implementation of a number of important initiatives (see Fall 2020 *KU Economist*, p. 7) and his personalized email outreach campaign was likely responsible in boosting the Department’s Fall 2020 undergraduate enrollment by five percent over Fall 2019, even during a time when enrollments were otherwise decreasing in many disciplines. KU announced at the outset of the fall semester that David had been named recipient of the Byron T. Shutz Award, one of the university’s top annual distinguished teaching honors (see Fall 2020 *KU Economist*, p.1).



John Keating had his article “A Model of Monetary Policy Shocks for Financial Crises and Normal Conditions” (with Logan W. Kelly, A. Lee Smith and Victor Valcarcel) in the *Journal of Money Credit and Banking* recognized as being among the top ten percent of recently-published downloaded articles in that journal, one of the highest ranked field journals in macroeconomics. Dr. Keating presented his paper “A New Interpretation of Money Growth Targeting and the Monetarist Experiment” (with A. Lee Smith) in KU’s inaugural Perspectives in Economics Research Seminar Series. He also had two papers accepted for presentation at conferences in 2020 – “Testing Superneutrality when Money Growth is Endogenous: Implications for New-Keynesian Models” (with A. Lee Smith and Victor J. Valcarcel) at the Western Economic Association Meetings; and “How Can Divisia be Useful for Monetary Policy?” at the Society for Economic Measurement Annual Conference. Recipient of the Economics Department’s prestigious Oswald Outstanding Teaching Award for the current academic year, Dr. Keating further participated in a special continuing education course at the Allied Social Science Associations Meeting. That event on monetary policy featured some of the latest research from Professors Jon Steinsson (Berkeley University) and Gauti Eggertson (Brown University).

Eungsik Kim recently published “Is the Allais Paradox Due to Appeal of Certainty or Aversion to Zero?” (with Elif Incekara-Hafalir and Jack D. Stecher) in *Experimental Economics*; and “A Characterization of Markov Equilibrium in Stochastic Overlapping Generations Models” (with Stephen Spear) in *Journal of Economic Dynamics and Control*. Dr. Kim also was recently awarded a Big XII Faculty Fellowship.

Donna Ginther, the Roy A. Roberts Distinguished Professor of Economics and Director of KU’s Institute for Policy & Social Research, has made a multiple presentations on the impact of COVID-19 on the Kansas economy, including for the Governor’s Council on Tax Reform where she serves as lead academician. She also presented her important work on TANF (“Do State TANF Policies Affect Child Abuse and Neglect?”) at the EALE/SOLE World Conference, the Southern Economic Association Conference, and at a special Casey Family Programs event. Other presentations included “Can Mentoring Help Female Assistant Professors? An Evaluation by Randomized Trial” at the AEA Annual Meeting and at California State University-Fullerton. An increasingly valuable resource for policymakers at all levels, Dr. Ginther again organized the annual Kansas Economic Policy Conference in October (“What is the Role of Government in a Crisis?” see Fall issue of *KU Economist*, p. 8). With her groundbreaking research on mask mandates making national news, she was named recipient of KU’s COVID Research Pivot Award (see p. 1). Some of her recent publications include “Economy-Sensitive Conditions: Are Some Pediatric Hospitalizations Triggered By Economic Recessions?” (with Jeffrey D. Colvin, Troy Richardson, Matt Hall and Paul J. Chung) in *Health Affairs*; “Administrative Discretion in Scientific Funding: Evidence

from a Prestigious Postdoctoral Training Program” (with Misty L. Heggeness) in *Research Policy*; and “Can Mentoring Help Female Assistant Professors in Economics? An Evaluation by Randomized Trial.” (with Janet M. Currie, Francine D. Blau, and Rachel T.A. Croson) in *American Economic Review Papers and Proceedings*.

Additional Faculty Information

Information on faculty, their areas of research interest, and recent activities and publications may be found at <http://economics.ku.edu/faculty>.

Additional information on current working papers also is available at <http://econpapers.repec.org/paper/kanwpaper/>.

SECOND ANNUAL KANSAS HEALTH ECONOMICS CONFERENCE: APRIL 29-30

KU and the Economics Department have announced that the second annual Kansas Health Economics Conference, which comes at an especially critical time, will go off virtually via Zoom on April 29-30. The event, hosted by Dr. David Slusky and funded by a special National Science Foundation grant he obtained, has now taken on even greater significance in the wake of the global pandemic and its fallout.

The keynote address will be from Dr. Amitabh Chandra, the Ethel Zimmerman Wiener Professor of Public Policy and Director of Health Policy Research at Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government and the Henry and Allison McCance Professor of Business Administration at Harvard Business School. Dr. Chandra, who also serves as a member of the Congressional Budget Office’s Panel of Health Advisors; and as a Research Associate at the IZA Institute in Bonn, Germany and at the National Bureau of Economic Research, is renowned for his research on productivity and cost-growth in healthcare, medical malpractice, and racial disparities in healthcare.

“In addition to Dr. Chandra’s keynote, I am particularly excited about the latest COVID research, as well as the fact that we are expanding local representation this year to include the USDA’s Economic Research Service, Children’s Mercy Hospital, and the University of Missouri,” Dr. Slusky said.

Based on an early draft of the agenda, the second day is expected to feature a number of COVID-related presentations, including “COVID-19 Surgical Abortion Restriction Did Not Reduce Visits to Abortion Clinics”; “Association of Mask Mandates and COVID-19 Case Rates, Hospitalizations and Deaths in Kansas”; and “Food Insecurity Among Active-Duty Service Members and Their Families During the COVID-19 Pandemic”.

Details regarding registration for the conference, which is free, may be obtained directly from Dr. Slusky (david.slusky@ku.edu).

UNDERGRADUATE WEBSITE NOW PROVIDES FULL ARRAY OF RESOURCES

One of the important enhancements to the undergraduate program during the current academic year has been the successful transition of a previously bi-weekly undergraduate email newsletter into a fully functioning website with resources (<https://ku-econ-undergrad-resources.herokuapp.com/>).

Ryan Wendling and Sneha Verma, working under the guidance of Director of Undergraduate Studies Dr. David Slusky, set out to develop the new website into a more interactive and user-friendly newsletter that could be maintained through code instead of the “point-and-click” formatting that had made the previous e-version at times appear less than professional.

“In the job section, alongside the current postings is now a graph that will take three inputs from someone using the site – a base state, a comparison state, and a metric,” Ryan explained. “So students living in Kansas who see a job posting in Chicago, for example, can compare the unemployment rate or real per capita personal income in Kansas and Illinois using the interactive chart. Moreover, the jobs and academic opportunities now live on the site until they expire, so students no longer have to look through months of old emails to find these postings.”

Ryan added that another major emphasis of the project involved opening access to coding for departmental undergraduates, especially those not planning on graduate school. The “Student Resources” tab contains step-by-step instructions on how to install SQL Server, exercises to get started in it, and a video walking through the exercises and explaining SQL concepts.

“We hope to get similar resources put together on Python, R, and maybe even Excel in the future,” Ryan said.

The “Media” tab represents another new feature rolled out with the website, highlighting the ways students can be involved with economics through media such as twitter and podcasts.

“We also borrow an #EconTwitter initiative called “What an Economist Looks Like” - where we highlight an excellent economist from an underrepresented background, which in our field is typically women and economists of color,” Ryan said. “The goal here is to increase representation of these groups in economics and highlight incredible economists whose work our undergraduates can begin following.”

Ryan, a senior who will be starting full time as an Operations Analyst at SelectQuote upon graduation in May, said that Dr. Slusky, his mentor since his freshman year, had been especially helpful in his journey through KU and the Department. He also credited Dr. Tsvetan Tsvetanov “for helping me understand the basics when I was just getting started”; and Dr. Donna Ginther for enhancing his grasp of econometrics.

“And I would be remiss if I did not mention GTA Will Duncan, who was such a huge part of my career in the Department,” Ryan said. “He let me RA for him my junior year and taught me so much about coding and the research process.”

REINARDY JOINS DEPARTMENT AS NEW ADMINISTRATIVE ASSOCIATE

Moving into 2021, the Department was pleased to welcome aboard Administrative Associate Trent Reinardy, who hit the ground running on multiple fronts. Trent immediately began working with Chair Milena Stanislavova to make the annual faculty self-evaluation process entirely digital.

With degrees from Emporia State in both information systems and marketing, Trent was uniquely qualified to help transition the Department’s website from Drupal 7 to Drupal 8 as part of a broader campus-wide initiative. He said that he had also been working with Dr. Josephine Lugovskyy to ramp up efforts to make the Department’s twitter account (@KU_Economics) more active.

“We very much appreciate Trent’s critical role in ensuring that we have the very latest technological and social media tools in our bag to help with communications and outreach as the pandemic now stretches into its second year,” Dr. Stanislavova said.

Trent said that starting with the Department during the pandemic had made for a “very unique” experience, since his initial introduction to many of his colleagues came through email.

“But everyone has been very helpful and patient as I have continued to learn how I can best help the Department in my new role,” he added. “I am very much looking forward to getting to know the faculty and students and interact with them in person when the pandemic becomes a thing of the past.”



Trent Reinardy has joined the Economics Department as Administrative Associate.

KU ECON GRAD PROGRAM NAMED TOP 50

The KU Economics Department received another honor in late March when the *US News & World Report* “Best Graduate Schools” rankings for 2022 named KU’s graduate programs in economics as being in the top 50 nationally among public universities. A total of 50 KU graduate programs were named in the publication’s top 50, more than all other Kansas universities and colleges combined.

“We look to rankings as one way to track our progress, and these *US News* rankings highlight the many different ways we contribute to the state and region,” said Chancellor Douglas A. Girod. “As a leading research university, our graduate programs are an important part of who we are. We remain focused on our broader mission and goals to help elevate these efforts across our university.”

ASIEDU GIVES KEYNOTE ON GENDER INEQUALITY IN EDUCATION

KU’s own Dr. Elizabeth Asiedu recently gave a special keynote lecture as part of the University of Missouri’s Africa Hub Women’s History Month Celebration. Her virtual presentation on March 11 (“On Gender Inequality in Education: Can Sub-Saharan Africa Countries Learn from Countries in the Middle East and North Africa and Countries in South Asia?”) began by citing several United Nations development resolution goals, including universal primary education attainment; and the promotion of gender equity and the empowerment of women.

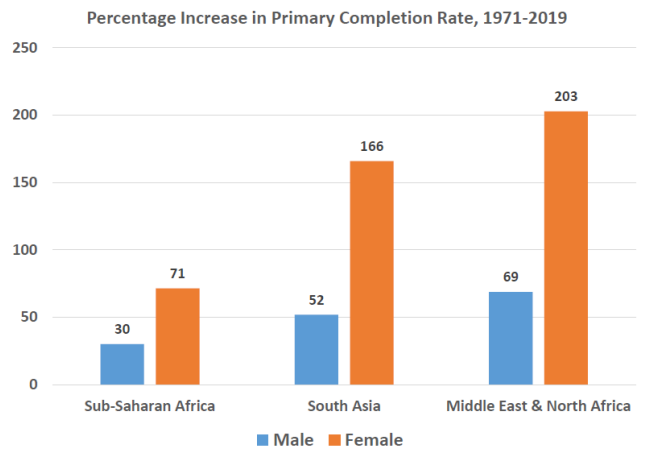
She also said that her topic was especially timely given that the World Bank had sent out a tweet just days before her talk noting its commitment to promoting female empowerment through “4Es: empowering women, employing women, enhancing access to reproductive health services, and educating girls.”

Reflecting on why she chose to focus on education, women and Africa, Dr. Asiedu, the President and Founder



Dr. Elizabeth Asiedu delivered a keynote lecture for the University of Missouri in March.

of the Association for the Advancement of African Women Economists (AAWE), quoted the late Dr. James Kwegyir Aggrey of Ghana, who had observed, “If you educate a man, you simply educate an individual; but if you educate a woman, you educate a whole nation.” She added that Africa was especially important for the analysis, given that



Dr. Asiedu’s lecture focused on education gender gaps in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East and North Africa.

there are more women than men in 9 of the 10 Sub-Saharan African (SSA) nations.

Using data from the World Bank’s World Development Indicators, Dr. Asiedu compared and contrasted historical trends in educational attainment (primary, secondary and tertiary) for SSA females with those in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and South Asia. She also then showed the historical gender gap educational trends for the three regions.

She concluded by saying that the data showed that since the early 1970s, MENA and South Asia appeared to have been more successful than had SSA in closing the educational gender gap.

Dr. Asiedu was honored in 2020 with a special award from the Sadie Collective for Academic Excellence and Mentoring (see Spring 2020 issue of *KU Economist*, p. 4). The Sadie Collective is the first US non-profit organization aimed specifically at increasing the representation of black women in economics and quantitative related fields.

COMMENCEMENT 2017 — A LOOK BACK

Even as the Class of 2021 looks forward to their own graduation, the Department fondly recalls a memorable May weekend in 2017 when William McNulty gave the Commencement Address to the Class of 2017 in Kansas Memorial Stadium after being awarded a special honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree by KU and the Kansas Board of Regents. He had previously received his undergraduate degree in economics and communication studies from KU in 2001 before subsequently moving on for a master’s degree in government security from Johns Hopkins.

McNulty, a former Marine and Iraq War veteran who also served in military intelligence, has become internationally renowned since 2010, when he co-founded Team Rubicon, a special first-responder disaster team originally formed in the wake of the Haiti earthquake that year. The group subsequently has won worldwide acclaim for its ability to unite the skills and experience of military veterans with first responders to rapidly deploy emergency response



William McNulty, an Economics Department alum, addresses Commencement in 2017 after receiving an honorary Doctor of Human Letters degree.

teams into crisis situations. Rapid response deployments by Team Rubicon over the last decade have proven to be crucial in bridging time gaps between large humanitarian disasters and conventional aid responses in multiple locations around the world.



Former USTR Robert Lighthizer appeared at a special Dole Institute event in November co-hosted by the Economics Department.

USTR LIGHTHIZER GIVES PERSPECTIVE ON TRADE AT SPECIAL DOLE INSTITUTE EVENT

The Economics Department in late November co-sponsored a fascinating virtual event held by KU's Dole Institute of Politics featuring an interview with outgoing

US Trade Representative (USTR) Robert Lighthizer. KU Chancellor Douglas Girod, who introduced Ambassador Lighthizer, said that he was pleased the program represented the first-ever sitting cabinet member to appear at the Institute.

Lighthizer, who discussed his responsibilities in implementing the trade policies of former President Donald Trump, said that he was enthusiastic about his appearance at the event given his relationship with former Senator Bob Dole. After leaving private law practice in 1978 to join Dole's staff, Lighthizer ended up becoming Chief of Staff when Dole became Chair of the Senate Finance Committee in 1981. He subsequently left in 1983 to become Deputy USTR, a position which at that time required a great deal of work negotiating a new grain-purchase agreement with the former Soviet Union.

In response to a question from Dole Institute Director Bill Lacy, Lighthizer, who once again joined the federal government during the Trump administration as USTR in 2017, said that he had perhaps enjoyed more leeway than other officials in operating without direct White House micromanagement because of the extent to which he and the former president largely shared the same views about trade and manufacturing.

"We both believe that for too many years, trade policy had not been helping working people; and that we had let economists for far too long dictate policy based solely on market efficiencies," he said.

In addition to seeking to implement a number of major changes in trade relations with China and Japan, a great deal of Lighthizer's work since 2017 also involved reorganization of the former North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) into what is now the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA).

"A lot of the new emphasis was placed on stopping so many automobile manufacturing facilities from leaving for Mexico," he said. "I am especially proud that the new USMCA had bipartisan support in Congress. At the end of the day, my focus was to negotiate a deal to create and protect jobs and raise wages here in the US. I don't always think about the larger geopolitical issues, but there are certainly other officials like the Secretary of State who are charged with looking at the bigger picture."

His November 19 appearance represented the latest event in an important partnership the Economics Department has forged with the Dole Institute in recent years. Then Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos, one of the Department's most prominent alums, made a historic return to campus and appeared at the Institute in 2012 to receive the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Distinguished Achievement Award. Santos, who would later receive the Nobel Peace Prize, was hosted during his visit by a special delegation that included former Chair Joe Sicilian (see *KU Economist*, Fall 2012, p. 7). Dr. Sicilian subsequently served as a panelist at the Institute in 2015 for a special moderated forum on the hotly debated topic of income inequality (see *KU Economist*, Fall 2015, p. 3). At that event, which occurred in front of a packed house, panelists discussed the political and societal implications of growing inequality - noting that income inequality had been accelerating in the United States since around 1980; and that wealth inequality (a separate issue) likely represented an even greater potential problem.

Former Ambassador Lighthizer concluded his remarks by reflecting on how he had spent significant parts of his career in both the private and public sectors and added that he had one piece of advice for today's students.

"I would strongly encourage all people to do at least a stint in public service," he said.

WITH GRATITUDE



We wish to thank and acknowledge those who have contributed to the Economics Department Endowment funds. The generosity of our donors in recent years has helped provide graduate student travel, bring guest lecturers to campus from around the world, and support outstanding students in the pursuit of success. Establishment of the Corina Scoggins Outstanding Female in Financial Economics Award; the Carol Drever Pimental Scholarships and Awards; and significant enhancement of the John Ise Award would not have been possible without the willingness of our alumni to work with KUEA to give back to the Department.

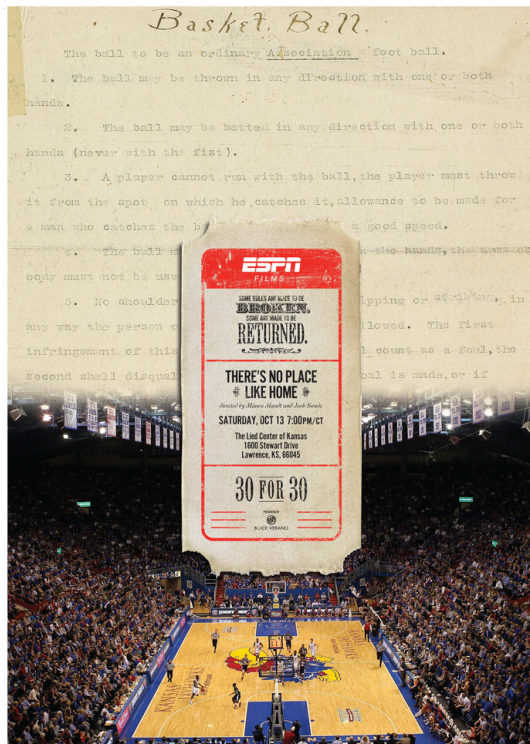
MARKING 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF DAVID BOOTH'S HISTORIC ACQUISITION OF NAISMITH'S RULES

December marked the 10th anniversary of the game-saving intervention on behalf KU basketball fans to secure the original rules of basketball by prominent KU Economics Department alum and renowned philanthropist, David Booth. David graduated from KU with his undergraduate economics degree in 1968 before staying on in Lawrence to get his master's from the business school in 1969.

Although James Naismith's "Original Rules of Basketball" now rest comfortably in their natural habitat at the DeBruce Center adjacent to Allen Fieldhouse as a major tourist attraction, their ultimate acquisition was very much in doubt in December 2010 when a KU fan noticed that they were going to be auctioned.

A 2012 ESPN documentary (*There's No Place Like Home*) chronicles KU basketball fan Josh Swade's quest late in 2010 to enlist financial support from famous KU athletics benefactors to purchase the original handwritten copy of Naismith's rules that were posted on a YMCA wall in 1891. Naismith later would serve as KU's first basketball coach and mentor for Forrest C. "Phog" Allen, considered the greatest coaching legend of his era. Swade, a student of the game schooled in Jayhawk history and tradition, said that he knew the original rules belonged in Lawrence on Naismith Drive in Allen Fieldhouse.

After seeing that the rules were being auctioned by Sotheby's in New York, Swade began scrambling around the country producing a documentary, which helped



A landmark ESPN documentary features the dramatic story of the decision by KU alum David Booth to purchase James Naismith's "Rules of Basketball" for permanent display at KU.



Fans can now visit the rules at the DeBruce Center adjacent to Allen Fieldhouse.

him acquire interviews with current KU Coach Bill Self and former coaches Larry Brown and Roy Williams. All three coaches said they thought Naismith's rules belonged at Allen Fieldhouse, and those videos convinced Booth to pledge up to \$1 million prior to the auction.

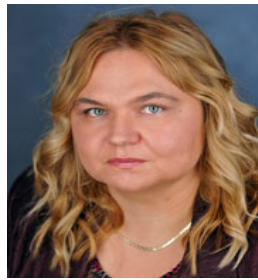
But when the bidding for the historic document (auctioned on the same stage as a copy of the Emancipation Proclamation signed by Abraham Lincoln that had been later owned by RFK; and an American flag that flew at Custer's Last Stand) began at more than \$1 million, the documentary captured the angst of Swade and the rest of Jayhawk nation as David and his wife Suzanne sat calmly at a table deciding how high they were willing to go.

The drama then unfolds as another bidder keeps topping Booth, who goes all the way up to \$3.8 million until Sotheby's brings down the gavel. The final purchase price, including all commissions and fees, was \$4.33 million - then a record for sports memorabilia. Although Booth's acquisition of the rules for KU was well known at the time, he startled the basketball world in April 2012 when he revealed to the *Lawrence Journal World* that the competing bidder was a Duke graduate trying to acquire the rules for display in Durham. This unnerving anecdote is confirmed in *There's No Place Like Home*. (Swade, for his part, dismissed the Dukies in the documentary as a relative newcomer who "didn't start winning championships until the '90s," and even went out of his way to taunt the Blue Devils and their fans by filming himself doing the Rock Chalk Chant in Cameron Indoor Stadium.)

The documentary aired nationwide on ESPN on October 2012 but had a special screening at the Lied Center three days earlier, where a raucous crowd cheered the cliff-side confrontation won by Booth on behalf of Jayhawks everywhere (see Spring 2013 issue of *KU Economist*, p. 2). His act of generosity is that much more impressive given that he had already distinguished himself as a result of previous gifts that led to the establishment of the Booth Family Hall of Athletics at Allen Fieldhouse; and subsequently pledged \$50 million towards the renovation of David Booth Kansas Memorial Stadium.

David is chairman and CEO of Dimensional Fund Advisors, one of the largest institutional fund managers in the US. He founded the company in 1981. He and Suzanne live in Austin, Texas.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



Greetings! I hope everyone is continuing to stay safe, sane and healthy as the Economics Department, KU, the state, nation and world navigate what we hope is the beginning of the end of the global crisis. I am very pleased to provide you with the latest issue of the *KU Economist* - the publication we launched a number of years ago to improve and expand on our alumni outreach efforts. I feel it is even more important for our students, alumni, faculty and other stakeholders to reflect on the positive goings on in and around the Department during this somewhat turbulent period in all of our lives. And I am especially comforted by the thought that the economics profession remains instrumental in helping society recover from the pandemic and its aftermath – whether it involves identifying important trends in advance; how events can be best quantified and understood; or what advice can be given to policymakers.

When looking around the Department in general and reviewing the spring edition of this publication in particular, I am excited to see how we have been able to continue excelling on so many fronts. Whether publishing a groundbreaking new book (page 3); making important keynote presentations (pages 5 and 9); or being named recipient of a special honor in recognition of contributing to COVID research (page 1), our award-winning faculty have continued to shine – something that is further underlined by the latest national rankings of top graduate programs (page 8). And even in the virtual world, we have remained a major player in bringing key personalities and events to campus (pages 7 and 10).

I would add that the 2020-21 academic year also marks a year of transition within the Department, as we bid farewell to one familiar face (page 4) in the office and welcomed aboard a new one (page 8). I have very much enjoyed my years as Chair and am very proud of our achievements. We added three excellent assistant professors, one teaching assistant professor

and redesigned the PhD program. We streamlined and expanded the undergraduate majors, minor and added undergraduate certificates and an accelerated masters degree option. Our new distinguished lecture series and the addition of summer research support for PhD students going on the job market was also made possible thanks to the generosity of alumni and friends of the department. But by far the highlight of my time as Chair has been the new connections, stimulating discussions and working together with all faculty to resolve problems as they appeared. Celebrating promotions, graduations, new job offers and other successes also stands out for me and will be memorable and greatly missed. As was announced in January (page 2), the baton will now be passed to Dr. John Symons, whose broad interdisciplinary background and significant administrative experience will serve the Department well moving forward. At the same time, Economics Department is losing its longest serving professor. After more than half a century on the faculty, Mohamed El-Hodiri is retiring at the end of May and will be greatly missed. Stay tuned for an article about Professor El-Hodiri and his interesting life and many contributions in our Fall newsletter. Lastly, we are excited to announce the promotion of Tsvetan Tsvetanov to Associate Professor with tenure at KU Economics.

Even as this semester winds down, I know that we are all looking forward to having our campus bustling with activity and more social interaction as soon as possible. If you are in Lawrence this fall, please enjoy a visit to campus and drop by our office in Snow Hall to say “hello” to Dr. Symons and others – or even consider sitting in on one of our fascinating guest lectures we host featuring the latest research from prominent visiting economists from around the world. In the meantime, please do keep us posted on your latest news (econ@ku.edu), as we want to stay in touch with everyone on an ongoing basis. We would love to feature you in your own “alumni update” in the fall issue.

Rock Chalk!

– Milena Stanislavova

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