



DODGE FAMILY COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
ECONOMICS
The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA

Fall 2025 Economics Alumni Newsletter

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Economics at OU: Be in Demand

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Welcome and Department Update

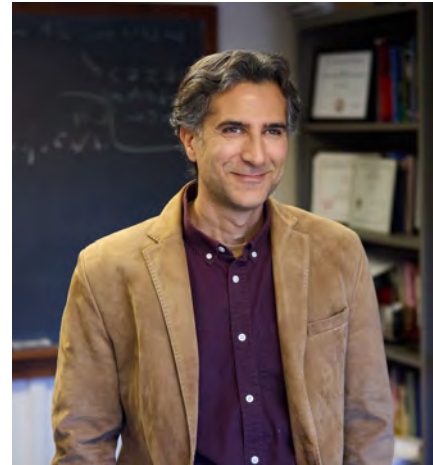
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Report from the Interim Chair Firat Demir, Department of Economics

Dear Alumni and Friends of the OU Economics Department,

Welcome to the latest edition of our department newsletter! We have so many exciting updates, milestones, and celebrations to share with you.

Let me begin with a bit of bittersweet news. Our colleague and friend, Dr. Greg Burge—known affectionately to his students as “Dr. B”—has been promoted to Associate Dean of Student Affairs at the Dodge Family College of Arts and Sciences. While his new office in Ellison Hall isn’t far from our current home in Cate 1, this important role means he has stepped down as Chair of our department.



This transition is bittersweet because, while we will miss Greg’s leadership within the department, we are thrilled to see him step up to serve the wider College and University. Anyone who has worked with Greg or taken his classes knows the respect and admiration he has earned as a dedicated teacher, accomplished scholar, colleague, and true friend.

With that, allow me to introduce myself. I am Firat Demir, your department's new Interim Chair. Greg and I arrived in Norman within days of each other nearly two decades ago, and we've been close friends ever since. It's an honor to carry the torch from him during these challenging yet exciting times. My goal is simple: to build on the outstanding work of my colleagues and to ensure that our department continues to thrive.

A little about me. My wife, Dace, and I joined OU family in 2006. We have two wonderful children: our 18-year-old son has just started as a freshman at OU, and our 14-year-old daughter is both a volleyball player and fan. Outside of campus, I’m an avid outdoorsman and food enthusiast. I’ve had the privilege of serving twice as a Fulbright Fellow (Montenegro, 2016; Lithuania, 2022).

Welcome and Department Update

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My research focuses on development economics and open-economy macroeconomics, and I love teaching and mentoring our students. Over the course of past many years, I have served at many levels at OU, the profession and the wider public. Most recently I've served as our Director of Graduate Studies, which is a role I have just passed to my great colleague, Dr. Qihong Liu.

Before diving into our 2025 highlights, I want to begin with a heartfelt thank you to all the generous supporters who helped make our recent Day of Giving such a resounding success. Thanks to your contributions, the Economics Department raised over \$20,000. Even better, we were able to dedicate these funds to need-based Study Abroad Scholarships, opening doors for our students to gain transformative global experiences.

We are grateful to everyone who pitched in - whether it was a \$10 gift, the anonymous family who jump-started our matching program with a \$5,000 seed donation, the students and staff who poured energy into the awareness campaign, or the dedicated faculty, staff, and alumni who continue to champion OU Economics. Our support makes all the difference, and we are deeply appreciative.

Department Highlights

- **Our New Department VIP**

Ashley Rodgers has joined the Department of Economics as our new Administrative/Financial Coordinator. We are very happy to have her in the Team Economics and you can read more about her in our Newsletter.

- **Dr. Qihong Liu has become the new Graduate Liaison** (Director of Graduate Studies) for our Economics Ph.D. program. Please join me in welcoming him to this very important and equally demanding role.

- **A Record Day of Giving**

Thanks to your generosity, the 2025 Day of Giving was a resounding success! We raised over \$20,000. These funds are already making a difference by supporting need-based Study Abroad Scholarships. From the \$10 donors to the anonymous \$5,000 matching gift, every contribution made an impact. We are deeply grateful.

- **Welcoming New Faculty.** We are excited to introduce two outstanding new colleagues:
 - o *Dr. Ruoyun Mao*, joining us from the University of Arkansas, specializes in macroeconomics and computational economics
 - o *Dr. Victoria Mooers*, newly graduated from Columbia University, focuses on applied microeconomics and political economy.

Welcome and Department Update

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Faculty Achievements

- Dr. Qihong Liu was awarded the Presidential Professorship.
- Dr. Firat Demir (myself) was named a David L. Boren Professor.
- Dr. Jayash Paudel and his research team won \$4 million NSF grant award.
- Dr. Jayash Paudel is the new Managing Editor for World Development Perspectives & Dr. Myongjin Kim has just become an Associate Editor of International Review of Economics & Finance.
- Dr. Samantha Johnson has won the Norman Next under 40 award.
- An interdisciplinary team at the University of Oklahoma has received a \$1.2 million NSF grant to develop TREE-CARE, an AI driven framework that helps communities anticipate and mitigate risks from treefall during extreme weather. Our Economics faculty Greg Burge, Georgia Kosmopoulou and Chris Malloy will help analyze the social and economic impacts of treefall disruptions.
- Professor Tyler Ransom is awarded the Heritage Foundation Academic Prize. Dr. Ransom is among 14 distinguished scholars nationwide to receive this recognition.
- For his teaching contribution, University of Oklahoma awarded Dr. Daniel Nedelescu Merrick Foundation Teaching Award.

The department faculty continue to amaze. They have produced an enormous amount of scholarly output which has been prominently featured in the profession.

Celebrating Students

Our Spring Awards Banquet recognized over 20 students with scholarships and honors, with more than \$25,000 awarded thanks to your support. It was inspiring to see parents, faculty, and peers come together to celebrate our students' successes.

Graduate Program

We're thrilled to welcome seven outstanding new Ph.D. students and 4 M.A. students from across the globe to the OU Econ family. Our graduate programs continue to grow in size and strength, and we're proud of the remarkable success of our alumni. A highlight of Spring 2025 was our "Amazon Seminar," where three of our graduates shared their experiences and insights into Amazon's hiring practices—a wonderful opportunity for our students to learn directly from those who have walked the path before them.

Welcome and Department Update

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We were also delighted to celebrate the achievements of two of our Ph.D. students who graduated this year: Dr. Bill Townsend and Dr. Ahmed El Fatmaoui. Bill is beginning his career as an Assistant Professor of Agribusiness at California Polytechnic State University, while Ahmed is joining the University of Wisconsin–La Crosse as an Assistant Professor of Economics. We couldn't be prouder of their accomplishments and wish them every success as they embark on these exciting new chapters.

We are also very excited that we now have an official student organization for our graduate students at the university level: The Economics Graduate Student Association (EGSA) is Officially Launched! As of Fall 2025, the Economics Graduate Student Association (EGSA) is up and running! EGSA will coordinate graduate student events, workshops, and other activities, providing a vibrant space for professional growth, academic collaboration, and social connection. Join us to get involved, build your network, and make the most of your graduate experience.

Economics in London

Drs. Greg Burge and Cynthia Rogers led another unforgettable Economics in London program, offering courses in Urban Economics and World Economic Development while immersing students in the city. In Summer 2026, Dr. Kosmopoulou and I will co-lead the program, offering courses in World Economic Development and the Economics of Art and Art Markets.

A Century of Economics at OU

This year, we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Department of Economics! While economics was taught as part of the Department of Economics and Sociology as early as 1905, the stand-alone department was officially established in 1925 under Professor Arthur Adams. We are proud to continue this remarkable legacy with a year of centennial events.

International Conference

In July, I co-organized an international conference in Vienna with the help of the Security in Context, OU Center for Peace and Development and the University of Vienna, bringing together three dozen scholars from around the world.

As we celebrate our centennial year, I am both humbled and proud to serve as Interim Chair of this remarkable department. Thank you for being part of the OU Economics community and for your ongoing support that makes all of these achievements possible.

As always, if you're ever in Norman, please stop by for a visit! I'd love to treat you for a coffee/drink & hear how you are doing!

With gratitude and warm wishes,

Firat Demir
David L. Boren Professor
L.J. Semrod Presidential Professor
Interim Chair
Department of Economics

2025 Department News and Notables

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My name is Ashley Rodgers, and I joined the Department of Economics in the summer of 2025. I have seven years of experience in education and human resources, and I truly enjoy working in education, especially helping students succeed and being part of others' success stories.

Outside of work, I've been married for 17 years, and my husband and I have two children: Emma, who is 15 and in the 10th grade, and William, who is 12 and in the 6th grade. As a family, we stay busy traveling for sports and activities, cheering at OU games, and spending time relaxing at the lake.

I'm excited to be here and look forward to getting to know and working alongside all of you.



2025 Department News and Notables

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OU Economics Professor Tyler Ransom Receives Heritage Foundation Academic Prize

We're pleased to announce that Dr. Tyler Ransom was awarded The Heritage Foundation's 2025 Freedom and Opportunity Academic Prize. Dr. Ransom is among 14 distinguished scholars nationwide to receive this recognition.

The Heritage Foundation's Freedom and Opportunity Academic Prizes recognize higher education professionals whose innovative work contributes to important policy discussions. As part of the award, Dr. Ransom participated in a Summer Colloquium and Workshop in Washington, D.C., alongside fellow recipients from institutions including Georgetown Law, UC Berkeley, University of Pennsylvania, and Arizona State University.

Dr. Ransom's selection reflects his significant contributions to economic research and his commitment to advancing scholarly work that examines the foundations of economic freedom and opportunity. This recognition highlights the continued excellence of OU's Economics Department faculty and their impact on national policy discussions.

We congratulate Dr. Ransom on this well-deserved honor and look forward to the continued impact of his research and scholarship.

Link: [Here](#).



An interdisciplinary team at the University of Oklahoma has received a \$1.2 million National Science Foundation grant to develop TREE-CARE, an AI-driven framework that helps communities anticipate and mitigate risks from treefall during extreme weather. Led by Aikaterini Kyprioti (Civil Engineering and Environmental Science), with co-investigators from the School of Biological Sciences, Computer Science, Economics, and Native American studies, the project integrates advanced technologies with local and traditional knowledge to deliver holistic insights into tree risks. Partnering with communities such as Norman, Muskogee, and Ponca City, TREE-CARE will combine image recognition, fragility modeling, and economic and social impact analysis with community workshops and K-12 outreach. By uniting research and community engagement, the project aims to create scalable guidance for safe, healthy tree management in Oklahoma and beyond. Our Economics faculty Greg Burge, Georgia Kosmopoulou and Chris Malloy will help analyze the social and economic impacts of treefall disruptions.

[Link: Here](#)



With the support of a \$4 million grant from the National Science Foundation Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR) Research Infrastructure Improvement Program, Jayash Paudel (Co-Principal Investigator) from the University of Oklahoma will collaborate with Mojtaba Sadegh (Principal Investigator and Associate Professor of Civil Engineering) from Boise State University that will lead the effort in partnership with the University



of New Mexico, Navajo Technical University, Northwest Nazarene University as well as the US Forest Service, US Geological Survey, and the Fire Science Exchange Network, in addition to other EPSCoR states, including Nevada.

Paudel's previous extensive research on the economics of natural disasters documents that untamed wildfire can cause large economic damage, including several indirect effects on different sectors of the economy. This project will enhance understanding of the feedback between low-intensity managed fires and socio-environmental systems to address critical scientific and practical challenges in wildfire resilience. Centered on social science and economics, this project will develop novel, use-inspired research on the benefits of managed fires for wildfire burdened communities and identify barriers, including bureaucratic processes, skilled labor shortages, and perceptual and legal constraints, to widespread adoption of wildfire resilience measures.

Paudel will advise a Ph.D. candidate in economics (funded by the project for three years) at the University of Oklahoma and collaborate with the entire research team on co-authoring at least three research articles to be submitted to high-impact peer-reviewed journals for publication. In collaboration with an Economics graduate student, Paudel will provide economic assessments of managed fires and integrate

these data into cost-benefit analyses to improve decision-making. By synthesizing economic, social, hydrological, and ecological insights, the project will create transformative decision-support tools to optimize the timing, extent, and frequency of managed fires.

“Last March, wildfires destroyed over 300 homes, burning over 170,000 acres of land in Oklahoma,” said Paudel. “Because this project focuses on multi-dimensional, multi-sector impacts of managed fires, I believe findings from this research have direct implications to the whole nation. This work will create engaging opportunities for students to use their training in economics in solving one of the major challenges in the western U.S. Findings from student research can be disseminated to relevant stakeholders, which creates newer opportunities for students to be effective leaders in the real world.”

This material is based upon work supported by the U.S. National Science Foundation under award number 2521103.

Dr. Qihong Liu is named President's Associates Second Century Presidential Professorship

'The Presidential Professorships were established to recognize those faculty members who excel in all of their professional activities and who relate those activities to the students they teach and mentor.'

Dr. Firat Demir is named the David L. Boren Professor.

'The David L. Boren Professorship is one of the University of Oklahoma's highest honors, recognizing faculty who have made truly exceptional contributions to the mission of a public research university. To qualify for the Professorship, a faculty member must have consistently demonstrated outstanding teaching, research and creative activity, and leadership in professional and public service. The holders of this distinctive honor should demonstrate effective mentoring and engagement of students in advancing knowledge creation and making a positive difference in the world.'

Link: [Here](#)

Dr. Daniel Nedelescu received the OU Merrick Foundation Teaching Award

Link: [Here](#)



MERRICK FOUNDATION TEACHING AWARD

DANIEL M. NEDELESCU, DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS, DODGE FAMILY COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Dr. Samantha Johnson has won the Norman Next under 40 award.

Norman Next is an organization for young professionals focused on connecting, collaborating, and bettering their community. To win this award, Samantha had to demonstrate that community development and how it benefitted Norman and its citizens. Their entire purpose of this group is to better the community they live and work in, and she was incredibly honored to be recognized for all the hard work she had done!



Dr. Shaun Ledgerwood

My name is Shaun Ledgerwood. I graduated with a B.A. (1986), M.A. (1990) and Ph.D. (1997) in Economics from OU, as well as a J.D. from UT-Austin (1989). I work as a Principal and Director of The Brattle Group (Brattle), an economic consulting firm with eleven offices worldwide.

After graduating from OU in 1997, I joined my thesis advisor's economic consulting practice at Guernsey, an architecture and engineering firm in OKC that (among other things) designed electric power plants, transmission lines and distribution systems. While there, I worked on regulatory and competition issues tied to electricity and natural gas markets. I also taught law and economics classes at OU during this time. In 2008, I moved to Washington, DC to join the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), where I worked as an economist and attorney in the FERC's Office of Enforcement to assist its prosecution of the anti-manipulation rules put in place after the (Enron-related) Western Power Crisis. While at the FERC, I met several folks with Brattle, who invited me to join their firm to build a consulting practice tied to manipulation-related litigation. I joined Brattle in 2011 and have been there ever since.

While I still work out of DC, my spouse Kristine and I moved back to the OKC area to be closer to family and to reconnect with old friends, including the OU Economics Department. We are loving the kind & friendly people, great restaurants, lack of traffic and (generally) slower pace here, as well as the ability to regularly use our OU football tickets—inherited from my parents, who first bought season tickets in the 1960s.

Alumni Highlights - Shaun Ledgerwood

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My time studying and teaching at OU was fantastic, with life-long friendships made with several classmates. Moreover, the faculty of the Economics Department provided opportunities that I believe would not have been available elsewhere—e.g., Dr. William Clark, who hired me as an undergraduate to teach labs for his Macroeconomic Principles classes (which gave me the “teaching bug”); Dr. David Huettnner, Chair of my dissertation committee, who championed my ability to write an interdisciplinary thesis on the economics of contractual remedies (RIP, Dave); and Dr. Donald Murry, whose practice I joined at Guernsey that launched my consulting career. The interpersonal interactions and investments that these (and other) folks made in me and my education provided the key building blocks that shaped my future, for which I truly am grateful.



Dr. Shaun Ledgerwood as a special guest during Government Relation to Business course during Fall 2025.



Dr. Dean Spears

Economist and OU graduate Dean Spears recently spoke at the University of Oklahoma about the potential consequences of a declining global population. Drawing from his book *After the Spike: Population, Progress and the Case for People*, coauthored with Michael Geruso, Spears argued that falling birth rates could lead to rapid depopulation, which may have wide-ranging social and economic impacts. He emphasized that humans rely on one another to solve complex problems, such as climate change, and questioned whether smaller populations in the future would be able to generate the innovation and collaboration needed to address pressing global challenges.

Spears noted that population decline is already visible in countries where fertility rates have fallen below replacement level and warned that reversing this trend would be unprecedented. He explained that while depopulation may occur, it is too slow to significantly influence climate outcomes, as per-person emissions reductions will have a greater effect than population size. Spears also highlighted gender inequities in care work as a factor contributing to lower birth rates, emphasizing that the unequal distribution of labor often discourages people—especially women—from having more children.

https://www.normantranscript.com/news/ou-grad-warns-of-population-decline-climate-change/article_ebef70d5-73bd-41f3-b3e1-ef8ea7d09039.html

OU grad warns of population decline, climate change

Sam Royka Transcript Staff Reporter Oct 14, 2025

Since last April, the Econ Club has been busy!

Before the spring semester ended, we hosted Ken Miller, former state treasurer, with the JCPenney Leadership program, and held a minimum wage panel with State Representatives, local activists, and professors. Finally, we held our semesterly Alumni conference and were able to connect, both in person and digitally, with OU Economics Alumni.

Now that the first half of the semester is over, it's a good time to review what we've accomplished thus far and what we have planned for the rest of the semester. Since the start of the semester, the club has planned eight events. These events have drawn interest from both major and non-major students; attendance for the semester has already exceeded 300 students!

Below is a brief highlight of this semester:

- Dr. Burge presented on racism in athletics.
- Crisis Night, groups of students had to create proposals for how their assigned city would respond if all oil disappeared.
- Jeff Moore, Director of the Irani Center for the Creation of Economic Wealth, spoke about how to stand out in an increasingly competitive job market and encouraged students to apply for internships at the center.
- Aldwyn Sappleton from the Oklahoma Department of Commerce presented on the work his department does.
- The Club hosted a recruiting event from Midfirst Bank. Econ Alumnus Will Miller attended and spoke about his current role at Midfirst.

Couple of events for the remainder of the semester will be Alumni Conference and a panel on AI and its impact on the Economy.



2025 Department News and Notables

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2025 July Economics in London Study Abroad Program



Economics in London



Program Overview

SUMMER PROGRAM

July 3 – 27, 2026

Take two upper division ECON courses in one of Europe's leading centers for international business and commerce. Visit local museums, financial attractions, and spend your free time exploring the rich cultural offerings of London.

Primary Location

London, United Kingdom (with excursions to other cities)

Academics

ECON 4853: World Economic Development
ECON 3880: The Economics of the Art Market

Cost

Program Leaders: Firat Demir and Georgia Kosmopoulou

OU Tuition & Fees (6 hours)

Program Fee (incl. housing, in-country travel, some meals)

Scholarships & banked hours apply

Deadline

Priority Deadline: December 1, 2025

Final Deadline: March 1, 2026

Get Started

Step 1: Study Abroad 101

Step 2: Drop-In Advising



Explore more information about this program, how to get started, scholarships, and more at studyabroad.ou.edu. Questions?

Email ea@ou.edu.

2025 Department News and Notables

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Fall Picnic 2025



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Research and Development

OU Economics Faculty Research Interests

Gregory Burge

Urban Economics
Public Economics

Firat Demir

International Finance
Development Economics

Pallab Ghosh

Labor Economics
Econometrics

Joan Hamory

Economic Development
Health Economics

Nghiem Q. Huynh

Development Economics
International Trade

Samantha Johnson

Agriculture
Industrial Organization
Applied Microeconomics

Benjamin Keen

Monetary Economics
Macroeconomics Applied
Time Series

Ibrahim Kekec

Econometrics
Machine Learning
Labor Economics

Myongjin Kim

Industrial Organization
Applied Econometrics

Georgia Kosmopoulou

Microeconomic Theory
Industrial Organization

Judith Liu

Health Economics
Public Economics
Labor Economics

Qihong Liu

Industrial
Organization
Applied Microecon.

Chris Malloy

Energy Economics
Environmental Econ Law
Economics

Daniel Nedelescu

Industrial Organization
Experimental Economics

Brent Norwood

Public Policy
Education

Jayash Paudel

Environmental Economics
Development Economics

Tyler Ransom

Labor Economics
Urban Economics
Education

Cynthia Rogers

Urban Economics
Public Economics
Public Policy

Hewei Shen

International Economics
Macroeconomics
International Finance

Ruoyun Mao

Monetary and Fiscal Policy
Information Frictions in
Macro
Applied Time Series

Victoria Mooers

Political Economy
Social Networks
Public Economics

Stay Connected to OU Economics



Please send us updates to be included in the next newsletter. You can send news, announcements, photos and more by sending an email to ashley.rodgers@ou.edu

You also may participate with OU Economics by mentoring a student, recommending an internship or sharing how you've used your economics degree with our student organization. Please contact Christine Caliendo at Christine.M.Caliendo-1@ou.edu or (405) 325-4307.

The power of an economics degree from the University of Oklahoma helps our graduates “Be in Demand.”

Support our department's efforts to provide an outstanding foundation for success.

You may use the form below, or click here to [give online](#).

I would like to make a gift of \$_____ to the Department of Economics Endowed Fund (43099)

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP Code: _____

Email: _____

Please make your check payable to the University of Oklahoma Foundation and send it and this form to:
University of Oklahoma Foundation, Inc., PO Box 258856, Oklahoma City, OK 73125-8856

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