



The Department of Business and Economics Bulletin

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From the Department Chair



Hello B&E alumni, students, and friends,

As we head into winter, wrapping up another semester of learning and living together, it is my pleasure to introduce you to the second edition of our newsletter. Thanks to the hard work of our department's administrative assistant, Meg Riefer, we have another issue packed with outstanding news of what we've achieved over the last year.

Inside this issue, you'll read about the achievements of our community bank case study competition team; recent alums making an impact in the worlds of business and economics; the U-Imagine Center, the Economics Ambassadors, and more. And as the Thanksgiving holiday has us thinking about what we are grateful for, we continue to appreciate the contributions of generous alumni, coming back to talk about their careers, watching class presentations, giving feedback to our co-curricular programs, having one-on-one conversations with our current students exploring careers, and sharing job postings. In Silicon Valley, they would say we have an ecosystem of support, and I think we should all be proud of what we've done to develop it.

Thanks to the continued efforts by our department's faculty to create a caring and challenging classroom environment, the applied economics major continues to grow in popularity. In the classes of 2019 to 2022, we typically graduated 40-50 students in the major; the coming three classes have 60-70 majors each -- at a time the size of the college's student body as a whole

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has held roughly constant or possibly shrunk. Along with the math and computer science department, we've created a new program in data analytics that will allow students to obtain a minor in the field after taking a series of courses in coding, statistics, and database management -- all infused with the college's humanistic perspective. There are people behind those numbers, after all. And in the near future, we hope to have news for you about significant changes to our major and the rest of our minors.

The other big news for me is that, after four and a half years as department chair, I'm passing the baton to Jennifer VanGilder, who will lead the program going forward. We look forward to her positive energy as she takes over this important role. Whenever there's a leadership change, it's natural to wonder if there was a palace coup or some other scandal. Unfortunately, there's nothing of the sort to report. Department chair is a service job, and I've been happy to serve. But now I'm looking forward to an overdue research leave for the spring semester and then shifting the focus of my service emphasis more towards UCIMCO, our student-managed investment fund.

Thanks for taking some time to stay up-to-date with the department, and, please, stay in touch. We love to hear from all of you!

Scott Deacle

Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Jennifer VanGilder, New Department Chair

It gives us great pleasure to announce our next Business and Economics Department Chair, Dr. Jennifer VanGilder.

An active scholar, Dr. VanGilder's research focuses on facial symmetry and skin tone discrimination and has appeared in numerous journals including *Economic Letters*, *International Journal of Sport Finance*, and the *Journal of Sports Economics*. This research received national attention in numerous media outlets including the *Wall Street Journal* and *Inside the NFL*, and was featured during an episode of *NFL Films Presents*. Her previous research includes topics such as gender differences in perceptions of female faculty in postsecondary education, functional impairments and choice of college major, and the role of childhood sexual victimization in the occupational choice of adults. Before joining Ursinus College, she was chair and Associate Professor of Applied Economics at California State University Bakersfield. Her passion, however, lies in teaching in a liberal arts setting, which is what drew her to Ursinus.

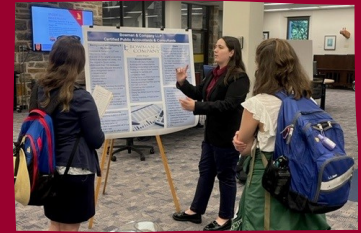
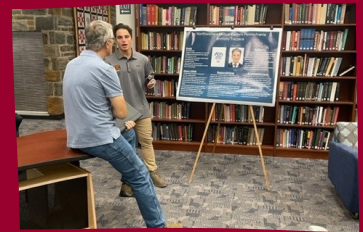


"I am honored to be selected as the next chair for the department and grateful for the support and trust of my colleagues," VanGilder shared. "I am excited for the chance to support the inspiring research of our faculty, the many talents of our students, and the remarkable success of our alumni."

In welcoming Dr. VanGilder to her new position, the department also thanks Dr. Scott Deacle who has served the department and college as chair with great dedication and leadership these last four and a half years and has been an avid champion for students, faculty, and research in the department.

Student Internships

This fall, our students had the opportunity to share their summer internship experiences with students, faculty, staff, and friends. Students reflected on their time before, during, and after their internships. Our majors have experienced a wide range of internships across many fields – finance, marketing, management, public administration, accounting, customer service, and more. These internships offer students the opportunity to explore a career path, develop and refine skills, and network with professionals in the field.



Summer Fellows

The Summer Fellows program at Ursinus allows sophomores or juniors to pursue an independent scholarly project under the close tutelage of a faculty mentor when both the student and the professor have more time to devote exclusively to research. We are proud to highlight our 2022 Summer Fellows: (simply click the title link to learn more about their research)

Samuel Taffet, 2022 Whitman Scholar - Mentor: Dr. Andrew Economopoulos
[How Does the Free-Market Affect Our Economy?](#)

Elizabeth Kandler - Mentor: Dr. Jennifer VanGilder
[How are Economic Outcomes Depressed When the Economic Agent is Depressed?](#)

Sasha Heasley - Mentor: Dr. Jennifer VanGilder
[The Implications of Population Decline in Japan](#)



Community Bank Case Study Competition

The Ursinus team, represented by TJ Stanton, Theo Karas, and Michael Magargee, with guidance from Dr. Andy Economopoulos, faculty advisor, placed 3rd in Pennsylvania for the 2022 CSBS Community Bank Case Study Competition.

The Community Bank Case Study Competition, facilitated by the Conference of State Bank Supervisors (CSBS), is a nationwide academic competition for undergraduate students. Through this competition, student teams partner with local community banks to conduct original case studies on relevant topics. For this year's competition, teams were asked to analyze the banking environment over the last ten years to identify the most significant developments for community banks and attempt to predict the most significant changes that will impact the industry over the next decade.



New Data Analytics Minor

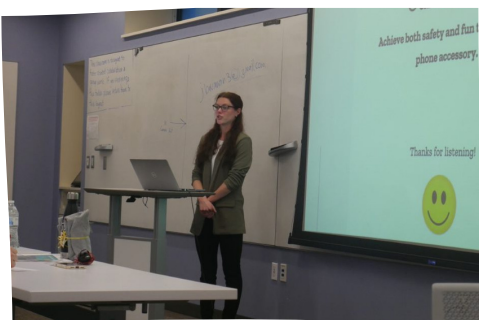
Data analytics at Ursinus College is an interdisciplinary minor that combines statistics and computer science, preparing students to understand how to ask questions and present answers about a world in which exponentially growing amounts of quantitative data are becoming available.



The field requires the application of certain techniques and software packages to process, analyze, and interpret large data sets. Our courses are developed to ensure that students are familiar with those techniques and software packages. Relatively few liberal arts colleges offer data analytics programs. Ursinus College is one of just a few to offer a minor in this burgeoning field. [Learn More.](#)

UC ImagineFest

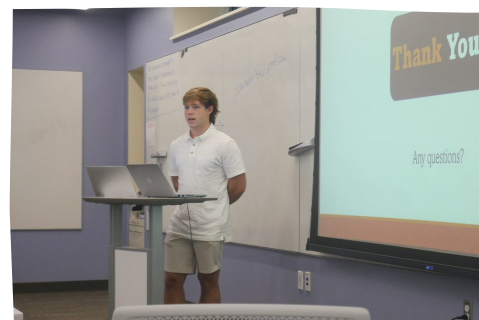
The UC ImagineFest is a 15-hour marathon event where students work together to find innovative and creative solutions for existing problems. Students work to develop their solutions and pitch their final plan to a panel of judges. This year, UC ImagineFest kicked off Global Entrepreneurship Week at Ursinus with a 2-day innovation sprint focused on developing tech-inspired solutions to today's problems. With tech becoming more advanced, there are more opportunities than ever to utilize its capabilities to enhance quality of life. Students showcased their creative thinking at this year's competition!



Congratulations to Carlie Shiller (Econ '25) who won second place for Cozy Case, a temperature-controlled phone case that keeps cell phones from losing battery life from overheating or from extreme cold. Third place went to Dominic Nottoli (Econ '25) who created a fitness app called Complete Fitness: a one-stop shop for catered workouts, cardio plans, and nutrition plans.

Special mentions go out to Tyler Griffith (Econ '26) and Kylee Helmetag for a high tech baseball base that calls outs electronically with 100% accuracy, Mitch Garber (Econ '26) for his car safety solution, and Sarah DiLello (Econ '24) and Charlotte DiLello (Physics '25) for the environmental awareness solution Green Scale.

Students learned the process of ideation, developed their communication skills, and were surprised by the discovery of their entrepreneurial spirits.



Economic Ambassadors

Economic Ambassadors are a group of student ambassadors who are passionate about economic ideas and are selected to work alongside faculty advisors to help organize and promote community-wide events. This year's Economic Ambassadors are Mackenzie Owens '23, Alexandra Heasley '23, and Ben Henwood '23. Their goal is to foster an interdisciplinary conversation that incorporates diverse perspectives. Events and participation are open to anyone across the College who is interested in political economy.



This October, the Economic Ambassadors hosted Dr. Sanford Ikeda of Purchase College SUNY to discuss and learn about the economics of the “housing paradox” - exploring how housing prices have gotten so high, how housing policies failed, and land use regulations.

Upcoming events, open to all students, faculty, staff, alumni, and the local community:

Visit the [online calendar](#) for the latest details on upcoming events.

Price Transparency: How it Lowers Costs and Creates a Competitive, Functional Real Market Economy in Healthcare

Tuesday, January 24, 7:00-8:30 pm, Olin Auditorium - Guest speaker Cynthia Fisher

Cynthia Fisher '83 is a life sciences entrepreneur, independent investor, and corporate board director. She is the founder and chairman of PatientRightsAdvocate.org, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization focused on ushering in systemwide healthcare price transparency.

The State of Education

Thursday, February 16, 7:00-8:30 pm, Olin Auditorium - Guest Speaker David P. Hardy

David is a Distinguished Senior Fellow with the Commonwealth Foundation and co-founder of the Latin School in Philadelphia which provides a world-class college preparatory academic program for historically underserved boys. He actively pursues alternative options in education so those in the greatest need can have choices about bettering their circumstances.

Seminar Series Hosted by UC Alum

Our department was pleased to welcome back George Psaradakis '21, who offered a free, three-part financial literacy seminar series to students. Open to all, regardless of major, the seminars offered a solid foundation to help students navigate personal finance basics and provided the tools needed to be better prepared for life at and beyond Ursinus.



George graduated from Ursinus with a degree in finance and minors in psychology and communications. As part of the pursuit of his degree, George conducted research about student investment behavior across these three disciplines and became one of the first Distinguished Honors recipients in the Department's history. It was during his time at Ursinus that he realized that formal personal financial education was not widely taught and decided that he would pursue a career in financial services, as a financial advisor and planner. George's goal was to be a resource for people and help them to better understand their finances.

"Growing up in a low-income family, financial literacy is something that is personal to me," shares George, "especially when it comes to the stigma surrounding investing that one has to make a certain salary to be able to invest their money."

Partnering with Dr. Scott Deacle, the Business & Economics department, and UCIMCO allowed George the opportunity to bring this information to students and help them better understand topics that we weren't taught prior, such as the importance of budgeting, insurance, investing, etc. Now in his day-to-day responsibilities as a paraplanner, George works with financial planners to help their clients achieve their financial goals and to help better understand the wide variety of financial topics, as well as the economic conditions we find ourselves experiencing.

