JACOB LIGHT

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EDUCATION

Stanford University   *2018 - 2024 (Expected)*
Ph.D. in Economics

- Fields: Labor and Public Economics

- Dissertation: Essays in the Economics of Education

University of Michigan   *2011 - 2015*
Bachelor of Science, Mathematics and Economics (Highest Honors)

- Summa cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa (inducted as a junior)

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

Prof. Caroline Hoxby (Primary)
Economics Department, Stanford University
(650) 723-9678
choxby@stanford.edu

Prof. Nick Bloom
Economics Department, Stanford University
(650) 725-7836
nbloom@stanford.edu

Prof. Eric Hanushek
Hoover Institution, Stanford University
(650) 736-0942
hanushek@stanford.edu

Prof. Petra Persson
Economics Department, Stanford University
(650) 723-4116
perssonp@stanford.edu

PUBLISHED WORK

SES-Achievement Gaps in Historical Perspective, (with Eric Hanushek, Paul Peterson, Laura Talpey, and Ludger Woessmann), Fall 2022, *Education Finance and Policy*

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

Student demand and the supply of college courses [Working Paper]

I introduce new facts on how universities adjust course offerings to meet student demand. Utilizing a novel dataset that covers 14 million courses from 450 US universities over two decades, I explore the relationship between course supply and demand. The data reveal substantial stickiness in universities' responses changing demand: a 10% demand surge leads to only a 2.8% rise in course supply. This responsiveness is asymmetric: course supply is more adaptive when enrollment is increasing, but extremely unresponsive when enrollment is decreasing. As a result, the course supply is largely stable: 65% of courses offered today have been offered for at least a decade. Nevertheless, course content evolves gradually to reflect students' interests. Curricula have gradually become more oriented towards current events, social justice, and job-related skills, primarily through the introduction of new courses. Additionally, elite institutions offer more current and less vocational content compared to their less-selective peers, indicating universities may align their offerings based on the anticipated needs and capabilities of their student body. Selective institutions offer a curriculum that is less sticky, more topical, and less vocational compared to less-selective institutions, consistent with a model where universities tailor their objectives and constraints based on the anticipated abilities and needs of their students.

Anatomy of labor market distress (with Eric Hanushek, Simon Janssen, and Lisa Simon)

This project documents variation in earnings losses after mass layoffs and the adjustments driving these differences. We studied workers from firms in West Germany that closed between 2000-2005. For each laid-off worker, we created a synthetic control from similar workers with matching earnings trajectories who weren't laid off during that period. Consistent with prior research, laid-off workers generally experience a significant, persistent earnings drop. However, we show that the distribution of these losses is highly skewed. A small number of workers experience catastrophic losses, while most workers recover quickly. Which workers experience the greatest losses is not a priori predictable based on fixed characteristics, but is associated with post-layoff adaptability, like switching professions or relocating. Consequently, pre-layoff targeted policies to assist these workers might not be as effective as post-layoff interventions.

The importance of non-major courses in predicting college students' post-graduation outcomes (with Merrill Warnick)

In the United States, college students have substantial discretion over the courses they take in college. Often, only one-third of courses a student takes are in their major and the remaining courses are at the student's discretion. This project studies how the substantial variation in college course selection impacts students' outcomes in the labor market. Using administrative data containing transcript-to-employment linked records for all students attending public universities in Texas, we investigate how a student's college course composition impacts their career outcomes. First, we use machine learning techniques to demonstrate that non-major courses explain up to 30% of the unexplained variation in occupation choice among students with the same major. To estimate causal effect of non-major courses on a student's occupation choice, we study course selection and labor outcome effects resulting from natural experiments in the form of changing distribution requirements at Texas universities.

Instructor value-added in higher education (with Merrill Warnick)

The labor and education effects of employer-sponsored higher education benefits (with Nick Gebbia)

PRESENTATIONS

2023: All-California Labor Economics Conference, CSQIEP Virtual Seminar, Stanford Applied Economics Workshop
2022: AERA Annual Meeting, Stanford Applied Economics Workshop

TEACHING AND RESEARCH ASSISTANCE

ECON 43: Introduction to Financial Decision-Making *Spring 2021*

Outstanding TA Award

ECON 144: Family and Society *Winter 2021*

Outstanding TA Award

ECON 1: Principles of Economics *Fall 2020*
Research Assistant for Professor Caroline Hoxby *2019 - 2020*

GRANTS, AWARDS, AND FELLOWSHIPS

Leonard W. Ely and Shirley R. Ely Graduate Student Fellowship	*2023*
Stanford IRiSS Dissertation Fellowship $11,000	*2023*
NAEd/Spencer Dissertation Fellowship Semifinalist and Alternate	*2023*
Stanford H&S Graduate Research Opportunities Grant (with Merrill Warnick) $5,000	*2023*
George Shultz Graduate Research Fellowship (with Merrill Warnick) $3,000	*2022*
Patricia Liu McKenna and Kenneth McKenna Graduate Fellowship	*2021-22*
Stanford Outstanding Teaching Award	*Spring 2021*
George Shultz Graduate Research Fellowship $12,500	*2021*
Stanford Outstanding Teaching Award	*Winter 2021*
Stanford IRiSS Research Data Grant $2,000	*2020*
Stanford IRiSS Center for Computational Social Science Grant $1,500	*2020*
Stanford Economics First-Year Ph.D. Fellowship	*2018*
NSF Graduate Research Fellowship, Honorable Mention	*2018*
Ferrando Honors Prize, University of Michigan Economics Department	*2015*
Sims Honors Scholarship, University of Michigan Economics Department	*2015*
Gerald Ford Public Service Prize, University of Michigan	*2015*
Outstanding Achievement in Math, University of Michigan Math Department	*2015*

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Research Engineering Intern - Core Data Science, Meta	*2021 - 2022*
Menlo Park, CA	
Senior Research Analyst, The Brattle Group	*2015 - 2018*
Washington, DC	

SERVICE

Advanced Tax Preparer, IRS Volunteer Income Tax Assistance	*2015 - 2021*
President, Stanford Graduate LGBTQ+ Affinity Group (GradQ)	*2019 - 2022*
Applied Economics Workshop Coordinator, Stanford Economics Department	*2020 - 2022*
Social Chair, Admitted Student Day Liaison, Stanford Economics Department	*2019 - 2020*

CITIZENSHIP

United States