

Kristin Vrona

Curriculum Vitae

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NIU Job Market Coordinator

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NIU Job Market Administrator

Ms. Debbie Woolbright
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EDUCATION

Ph.D.	Economics, Northern Illinois University	Expected Winter 2025
	Degree specializations in econometrics, labor economics	
	Dissertation Title: “An Analysis of Mental Health and Labor Productivity”	
M.A.	Economics, Northern Illinois University	2018
B.S.	Economics, <i>summa cum laude</i> , Northern Illinois University	2016

EMPLOYMENT

Research Assistant	2022 - 2024
Institute for the Study of the Environment, Sustainability, & Energy (IESE)	DeKalb, IL
• Project sponsor: Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR); project value: \$1.35M	
Teaching Assistant	2017 - 2022
Department of Economics, Northern Illinois University	DeKalb, IL
Cost Savings & Operations Analyst	2016 - 2017
M.O.L. America, Inc.	Lombard, IL

RESEARCH

In Progress

“Labor Supply Dynamics Among Employed Workers with Mental Illness” (Job Market Paper)

This study explores the complex relationship between mental health, physical health, and absenteeism in employed adults, with a focus on how a prior mental illness diagnosis, combined with current distress levels and physical health conditions, predicts absence behavior. By examining interactions between mental health diagnoses, a physical health index, and chronic physical conditions, the study reveals distinct behavioral patterns across gender. Notably, men and women first exposed to a mental health diagnosis show fewer absences under higher distress and physical health challenges, suggesting that diagnosis may prompt preemptive health management or influence cautious behavior aimed at minimizing health risks. Gender differences emerge as well: while women’s absence behavior remains stable regardless of physical health fluctuations, men exhibit marked sensitivity to declines in physical health, indicating gender-specific responses in the intersection of mental health, physical well-being, and workplace attendance. These findings contribute to understanding how mental health diagnosis timing and gender interplay shape absenteeism and underscore the need for tailored mental health support in workforce policies.

“Mental Health and Absenteeism: the Role of Fringe Benefits as Moderators”

This paper analyzes the effect of mental illness on absenteeism for employed adults utilizing data from the Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (MEPS) for years 2010 to 2014. Empirically, I estimate the effect of diagnosed mental illness on absenteeism while conditioning on heterogeneous degrees of symptom severity and utilize a rich set control variables to account for many other sources of heterogeneity at the individual, family, regional, and macroeconomic level. I also analyze how various job factors may either enhance or relieve some of the impact of mental illness on annual days absent from work. Results suggest that fringe benefits mitigating the cost of losing a day of work in the interest of rebuilding health stock results in greater absenteeism at face value. However, there is also evidence that this type of benefit acts as a mitigator to the magnitude of the impact of mental illness on absenteeism across time, supporting the hypothesis that benefit packages that promote worker wellness is an investment that improves productive outcomes of employees and reduced turnover over time.

“Causal Effect of Mental Health on Employment Duration”

Using duration analysis and a building a latent model of health demand, this analysis pieces apart how mental health in particular impacts one’s labor market outcomes in the form of employment duration as well as durations of lay offs that result in long term unemployment.

AWARDS, HONORS, & FELLOWSHIPS

Academic Awards & Recognitions

- 2022 Dissertation Completion Fellowship, Northern Illinois University Graduate School
runner-up, received tuition-waiver for 2022-2023 academic year.
- 2018 Outstanding Graduate Student Award, Northern Illinois University Graduate School
(May)
- 2017 Kellstadt Graduate Scholarship, DePaul University
declined in favor of Graduate Assistantship offered by NIU Department of Economics.
- 2012-2016 Departmental Honors, NIU Department of Economics; Dean’s List, NIU College of
Liberal Arts & Sciences; Academic Excellence List, NIU

Professional Awards & Recognitions

- 2023 IL congressional session (Feb 28) & gubernatorial press conference (Mar 1)
ESE team honored for management of \$59 million in grant funds across IL parks projects.
- 2017 MOL Spot Award, MOL America, Inc. (June)
recognized for innovating data querying processes across departments and training colleagues on new procedures.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 2024 Retirement Confidence Survey: Results and Insight Webinar, Employee Benefit Research Institute (EBRI) (June 25)
- 2024 The EBRI & American Benefits Council: 2024 Spring Policy Forum (May 16)
- 2023 IDNR & Federal DNR Collaborative Sessions, February 27-28
- 2023 Primary Grant Reviewer, Open Space Land Acquisition and Development Program, IDNR
- 2022 The Committee on the Status of Women in the Economics Profession (CSWEP) Mentorship Seminar
- 2020 CSWEP Successfully Navigating Your Economics PhD, November 20
- 2019 Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago 12th Annual Risk Conference

2019 NIU Department of Economics ECONference, April
2017 NIU Department of Economics ECONference, April 26

Certifications

CITI Program Human Subjects Research Training Certification (February 2024 - February 2029)

CAMPUS & DEPARTMENTAL TALKS

2022 Paper presented: Labor Productivity and Health, ECON 700: Labor Economics I, NIU Department of Economics, November 27
2021 Paper Presented: Moderate to Severe Diagnosed Mental Disorders and Absenteeism, NIU Department of Economics Graduate Colloquium Seminar, March 24 2021
2018 Paper Presented: Mental Health & Labor Supply, NIU Department of Economics Graduate Colloquium Seminar, November 23 2018

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Northern Illinois University

Principles of Macroeconomics, undergraduate Summer 2022, Summer 2021, Spring 2021

- Acted as sole instructor of record (IOR) for classes of 38 - 52 students
- Utilized various teaching methodologies to enhance student engagement
- Received top scores in student student evaluations for effective teaching and clear communication of complex economic concepts

Intermediate Macroeconomics, undergraduate Spring 2022

Econometric Analysis, undergraduate Fall 2021

Public Sector Economics I, graduate Fall 2020

Microeconomic Analysis I, graduate Spring 2020, Fall 2018

- Led weekly recitation sessions for 8 to 12 graduate students

Economics of Government & Business, undergraduate Spring 2019

SERVICE TO PROFESSION

2022-2023 Primary Grant Reviewer, IDNR Open Space Land Aquisition and Development Program

DEPARTMENTAL & UNIVERSITY SERVICE

2019 Academic Advisor, NIU Transfer Student Open House Days, October 18 & November 11

2019 Department Representative, NIU Major and Minors Fair, September 18

2018 Academic Advisor, NIU Transfer Student Open House Days, October 8 & November 12

2018 Academic Advisor, NIU Transfer Student Open House Days, March

2018 Co-Organizer & Department Representative, NIU Spring Internship & Job Fair, February 20

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Proficient in R & SAS; **Familiar** with STATA

Proficient in Microsoft Office — **advanced** use of Excel for data refinement and visualization with customized VBA macros

L^AT_EX(**expert**)

Intermediate knowledge of Python

Coursework in Java, C⁺⁺, Maple, Matlab

REFERENCES

Dissertation Committee Members

Virginia Wilcox

Assistant Chair, Department of Economics

Northern Illinois University

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Maria Ponomareva

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Other References

Thomas Skuzinski

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