

Kristin M. Vrona

Curriculum Vitae

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NIU Job Market Coordinator

Dr. Meg Cheng
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NIU Job Market Administrator

Ms. Debbie Woolbright
Email: woolbright@niu.edu

EDUCATION

Ph.D. Economics, Northern Illinois University, 2025
Dissertation Title: “An Analysis of Mental Health & Workplace Absenteeism”
M.A. Economics, Northern Illinois University, 2018
B.S. Economics, *summa cum laude*, Northern Illinois University, 2016

Primary Fields: labor economics, econometrics

Secondary Fields: health economics, public economics

REFERENCES

Dr. Virginia Wilcox
Email: vlw@niu.edu

Dr. Maria Ponomareva
Email: mponomareva@niu.edu

Dr. Jeremy Groves
Email: jgroves@niu.edu

Dr. Anna Klis
Email: aklis@niu.edu

EMPLOYMENT

Present Adjunct Instructor, Department of Economics, Northern Illinois University
2024-2025 Subject Matter Expert (labor, econometrics), Snorkel AI (contract)
2022-2024 Research Fellow, Institute for the Study of the Environment, Sustainability, and Energy,
Northern Illinois University, Sponsor: Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR)
2017-2022 Teaching Assistant, Department of Economics, Northern Illinois University
2016-2017 Business Operations Analyst, Department of Business Analysis and Planning, MOL
Logistics Inc. (U.S. corporate office, Lombard IL)

PUBLICATIONS

Manuscripts in Preparation

“Diagnosis vs. Distress: Reduced-Form Evidence on Absenteeism and Employment Selection” (Job Market Paper)

I model own-health absenteeism as a function of two distinct measures of mental health: pre-dated diagnosis and point-in-time symptomatology and how these measures interact to impact decisions on when to work. Using MEPS data files for years 2010 to 2014, I estimate negative binomial models with correlated random effects to account for the unbalanced panel design. Non-random selection into employment by unobserved factors is additionally considered. Findings suggest that diagnosed/high-symptom individuals miss fewer days than undiagnosed symptomatic peers; results are robust across model specifications. Results also indicate selection bias is present and is stronger in model estimates for women. Policy implications for employers is that encouraging early screening/access can reduce absenteeism without encouraging presenteeism.

Working Papers

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

This paper examines how job factors, including fringe benefits, influence absenteeism. Preliminary findings suggest that while fringe benefits may increase absenteeism initially, they help mitigate the long-term impact of mental illness on absence, supporting the value of wellness-oriented benefits in enhancing productivity.

“Labor Supply Dynamics Among Employed Workers with Mental Illness”

This research examines how physical and mental health interact to impact absenteeism, using standard negative binomial estimation and a correlated random effects negative binomial to account for the unbalanced panel of data and within-individual heterogeneity. Results indicate that medical intervention increases absenteeism on average, but simultaneously prevents severe absenteeism outcomes.

Web-based Publications

2022 Vrona, K. (In Press). *An Analysis of Mental Health and Workplace Absenteeism*. [Doctoral dissertation, Northern Illinois University]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

AWARDS & RECOGNITIONS

2022-2023	Dissertation Fellowship, Northern Illinois University
2018	Outstanding Graduate Research Award, Northern Illinois University
2017	Outstanding Master’s Student Award, Department of Economics, Northern Illinois University
2017	Kellstadt Graduate Scholarship, Kellstadt Graduate School of Business, DePaul University (declined)
2017	MOL Spot Award, MOL North American Operations, MOL Logistics Inc.

CONFERENCES & SEMINARS

Events Attended

2025	Annual Meeting of the Midwest Economics Association (MEAs) (Kansas City, MO), March 21-23
2024	Retirement Confidence Survey: Results and Insight Webinar, Employee Benefit Research Institute (EBRI) (remote)
2022	Mentorship Seminar, CSWEP (remote)
2019	Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago Risk Conference (Chicago, IL)

Papers Presented

2025	Scheduled to present , Mental Health and Absenteeism: Evidence on Labor Supply Responses to Health Shocks, Missouri Valley Economic Association Annual Meeting, October 23-25
2025	An Analysis of Mental Health and Workplace Absenteeism, Northern Illinois University Annual ECONference, April
2021	Moderate to Severe Diagnosed Mental Disorders and Absenteeism, Department of Economics Graduate Colloquium Seminar Series, Northern Illinois University, March
2018	Mental Health and Labor Supply, Department of Economics Graduate Colloquium Seminar Series, Northern Illinois University

LEADERSHIP & MENTORING EXPERIENCE

Teaching Experience (Northern Illinois University)

Graduate

Public Sector Economics I, TA	F20
Microeconomic Analysis, TA & Recitation Leader	SP20, F18

Undergraduate

Principles of Microeconomics, Instructor of Record (present)	F25
Principles of Macroeconomics, Instructor of Record	SU22, SU21, SP21, F20
Intermediate Macroeconomics, TA	SP22
Econometric Analysis, TA	F21

Guest Lecturing Experience

2022	Labor Economics I (graduate-level), Northern Illinois University; Topic: Labor productivity and health.
2020	Public Economics I (graduate-level), Northern Illinois University; Topic: Modeling externalities of healthcare utilization.
2019	Seminar in Health Economics (graduate and undergraduate mixed section), Northern Illinois University; Topic: Models of labor supply and labor demand by health status.

Mentoring Experience

2017-2019 Undergraduate Academic Advisor, Department of Economics, Northern Illinois University

SERVICE TO PROFESSION

Grant Reviewer, Open Space Land Acquisition & Development Program, IDNR, 2020

DEPARTMENTAL & UNIVERSITY SERVICE

2019 Advisor, Department of Economics, NIU Transfer Student Open House Days, October 18 & November 11
2019 Department Representative, Department of Economics, NIU Major and Minors Fair, September 18
2018 Advisor, Department of Economics, NIU Transfer Student Open House Days, October 8 & November 12
2018 Advisor, Department of Economics, NIU Transfer Student Open House Days, March 30
2018 Department Representative, Department of Economics, NIU Spring Internship and Job Fair, February 20

ADVANCEMENT & DEVELOPMENT

2024 Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative: Human Subjects Research Training, February 22
2023 IDNR & Federal Department of Natural Resources Collaborative Sessions, February 27-28

RELATED PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

R, R Studio
SAS
L^AT_EX
Microsoft Office (especially Excel and VBA)