

## Ruinan Zhao

Department of Economics, University of California, Riverside  
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Work Authorization: U.S. Permanent Resident

### Education

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#### University of California, Riverside

Ph.D. in Economics

*Expected 2026*

M.A. in Economics

*2021*

#### University of California, San Diego

B.A. in Economics, *Highest Distinction*

*2019*

### Research Interests

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Labor Economics, Economics of Education, Applied Microeconomics, Public Policy.

### Publications

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- “The Impact of Granting Undocumented Immigrants Driver’s Licenses on Fatal Crashes.” *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, Early View (2025). doi:10.1002/pam.70053

### Job Market Paper

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- “How Does a Four-Day School Week Affect High School Students? Evidence from Colorado” (with Meng Song).

*Abstract:* We examine the impact of moving to a four-day school week on high school students’ outcomes using comprehensive administrative data from Colorado, the state with the highest prevalence of this schedule in the United States. Our dataset spans nearly two decades of entry cohorts and more than one million unique student records, offering an unprecedented opportunity to study the policy’s long-run effects. Leveraging quasi-random variation in adoption across districts within a difference-in-differences framework, we provide the large-scale causal evidence on how a shortened school week shapes students’ educational trajectories. In contrast to much of the existing literature, we find modest improvements in standardized test performance, lower dropout rates, and increases in both on-time and overall graduation. The timing of exposure proves important: students first experiencing the shorter week prior to high school see particularly strong gains in persistence and attainment. At the same time, heterogeneous effects suggest that disadvantaged groups may benefit less, raising concerns about widening achievement gaps. These findings challenge the common perception that a shorter school week harms student learning, showing instead that, when implemented carefully, it can enhance outcomes. Given growing policy interest in alternative calendars, this study provides timely and rigorous evidence to inform district and state decision-making.

### Working Papers

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- “Faculty Gender Attitudes and Their Impact on College Students’ Academic Achievement” (with Ozkan Eren and Zhuoyu Qiu).

- “Higher Education in the Trump Era: Impacts on College Student Outcomes” (with Ozkan Eren and Zhuoyu Qiu).

## Works in Progress

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- “From Prison to Employment: The Effects of P2E Program on Recidivism and Labor Market Outcomes” (with Ozkan Eren).
- “Asylum-seeking Youth in U.S. Schools: Early Insights from the Buslift” (with Kevin Shih).

## Research and Policy Experience

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**Research Assistant, Presley Center of Crime & Justice, UC Riverside** 2022–Present

- Managed restricted, sensitive individual-level administrative data from the California Department of Justice and the California Department of Corrections across multi-year panels; built longitudinal datasets through large-scale merging, cleaning, and variable construction.
- Delivered policy-focused statistical and econometric analysis; produced clear summaries for research center reports and briefings.

**Colorado Department of Education — Policy Report (Four-Day School Week)** *In progress*

- Use 2003–2024 statewide administrative data covering over one million unique student records; construct linked longitudinal datasets and technical documentation.
- Conduct rigorous econometric analyses of student achievement, dropout, and graduation outcomes; translate results into policy briefs and presentations.

## Teaching Experience

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### Instructor, UC Riverside

Econ 003: Introduction to Microeconomics	Summer 2025
Econ 102: Intermediate Microeconomics	Summer 2024
Econ 153: Labor Economics	Summer 2023; Spring 2024
Econ 162: Managerial Economics	Summer 2022

### Teaching Assistant, UC Riverside

Econ 107: Introductory Econometrics	Fall 2023; Summer 2024; Fall 2024
Econ 102: Intermediate Microeconomics	Spring 2022
Econ 105: Intermediate Macroeconomics	Spring 2025
Econ 003: Introduction to Microeconomics	Winter 2022; Winter 2025; Summer 2025
Econ 101: Statistics for Economics	Fall 2021

## Fellowships and Awards

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Graduate Student Award, Southern Economic Association	2025
Conference Travel Grant	2025
Outstanding Teaching Assistant, UC Riverside	2024
Dean’s Distinguished Fellowship, UC Riverside	2020–Present
Magna Cum Laude, UC San Diego	2019
Phi Beta Kappa Honor Society, UC San Diego	2019
Provost’s Honors, UC San Diego	2017–2019

## Conferences and Seminars

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Southern Economic Association Annual Meetings (Department Nominated)	Tampa, FL, 2025
Applied Economics Seminar	UC Riverside, CA, 2025
Chinese Economist Society Annual Meetings	Guangzhou, China, 2025
Applied Microeconomics Workshop	UC Riverside, CA, 2025
All-California Labor Economics Conference (Poster)	UC Santa Barbara, CA, 2023
Graduate Student Brownbag	UC Riverside, CA, 2022 & 2023

## Journal Referee

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Journal of Labor Research; Journal of Policy Analysis and Management

## Skills

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**Programming:** Stata, R, Python, MATLAB, SQL,  $\text{\LaTeX}$ .

## References

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### **Ozkan Eren (Chair)**

Professor of Economics  
University of California, Riverside  
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### **Michael Bates**

Associate Professor of Economics  
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### **Kevin Shih**

Associate Professor of Economics  
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