

MERRILL WARNICK

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ADVISORS

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PRIMARY RESEARCH FIELDS

Labor Economics, Applied Econometrics, Public Economics, Economics of Education

EDUCATION

2019 – Stanford University, PhD Economics (Candidate)

2012 – 2018 Brigham Young University, BS Mathematics and Economics with Honors

PUBLICATIONS

A Design-based Perspective on Synthetic Controls (with Lea Bottmer, Guido Imbens, and Jann Spiess), 2023, *Journal of Business and Economic Statistics*. [\[link to paper\]](#)

Why Have College Completion Rates Increased? (with Jeffery T. Denning, Eric Eide, Kevin Mumford, and Richard Patterson), 2022, *AEJ: Applied*. [\[link to paper\]](#)

Divisibility Properties of Coefficients of Modular Functions in Genus Zero Levels (with Victoria Iba, and Paul Jenkins), 2019, *Integers*. [\[link to paper\]](#)

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

Instructor Value-added in Post-secondary Education (with Jacob Light and Anthony Yim)
(Job Market Paper) [\[link to paper\]](#)

Estimating post-secondary instructors' value-added is challenging because college students select their courses and instructors. In the absence of sound measures of value-added, universities use subjective student evaluations to make personnel decisions. In this paper, we develop a method to estimate instructor value-added at any university. The method groups together students who have previously taken similar courses and estimates value-added based on differences in outcomes for students in the same group and same course who have different instructors. Using a unique policy at a large public university in Indiana, we show that our non-experimental method controls for selection just as well as methods that exploit conditional random assignment of students to courses. We next show that our method reduces forecast bias in a wider variety of institutions using data from nearly all public universities in Texas. We find that individual instructors matter for students' future grades and post-college earnings in many subjects and courses. On average, moving to a 1 standard deviation better instructor would increase a student's next semester GPA by 0.13 points, and earnings six years after college entry by 17%. Strikingly, value-added is only weakly correlated with student evaluations. An instructor retention policy based on value-added would result in 2.7% higher earnings for students attending Texas universities.

The Costs and Benefits of Multi-Dimensional Grading Leniency (with Jeffrey T. Denning, Rachel Nesbit and Nolan Pope) [\[link to paper\]](#)

The Importance of Non-Major Courses in Predicting College Students' Post-graduation Outcomes (with Jacob Light)

Performance-based Funding and Grading Standards in Higher Education

FELLOWSHIPS, GRANTS, AND AWARDS

2024	Leonard W. Ely and Shirley R. Ely Graduate Student Fellowship
2024	Stanford H&S GRO Grant (with Jacob Light)
2024	Stanford IRiSS Research Data Grant
2023	Stanford H&S GRO Grant (with Jacob Light)
2023	George Schultz Dissertation Grant (with Jacob Light)
2023	Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award
2022	George Schultz Dissertation Grant (with Jacob Light)
2022	Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award
2012	Heritage Scholarship, Brigham Young University

TEACHING AND RESEARCH ASSISTANCE

2022-2024	Econ 271 Intermediate Econometrics II (graduate level)
2024	Econ 102b Applied Econometrics II
2024	Econ 43 Intro to Financial Decision Making
2020-2023	Research Assistant for Dr. Guido Imbens
2023	MgtEcon 540 Data Science and Experimentation (MBA)
2023	Econ 146 Economics of Education
2023	Econ 1 Principles of Economics
2022	Econ 270 Intermediate Econometrics I (graduate level)
2019	Research Assistant, BYU Record Linking Lab, Dr. Joseph Price
2018 – 2019	Research Assistant for Dr. Brigham Frandsen
2017 – 2019	Research Assistant for Dr. Jeffrey Denning
2018	Econ 588 Advanced Econometrics
2017	Econ 388 Introductory Econometrics

PRESENTATIONS

2024	Stanford Applied Economics Workshop
2024	BYU Economics Graduate Student Conference
2023	Stanford Applied Economics Workshop
2022	BYU Economics Graduate Student Conference
2021	Econometric Society North American Summer Meeting

REFEREEING

2022	Journal of Labor Economics
2022	Economics of Education Review