



# NEWS

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2021 ISSUE II

## A Conversation with Stephanie Aaronson, CSWEP's new D.C. Representative

Judy Chevalier

*Stephanie, I am so glad you have taken over the new D.C. rep role. The CSWEP board decided to add this position in part to better serve the large number of economists in the D.C. area. In D.C., there are so many active professional economists*

*in government, in think tanks, in the private sector, and in academia. And I have noticed that many of the economists there have transitioned among those sectors. We also wanted to have a D.C. rep to create more activities for professional economists outside academia, whether in D.C. or elsewhere. I want to thank you for embracing this new challenge. To help the readers of the CSWEP News get to know you, could you just recap for me a little about your background and career?*

Thanks! I became interested in the possibility of a career in economics when I worked at a D.C. think tank (Institute for Women's Policy Research) that studied economic issues facing women. I had actually been a history major as an undergraduate. In graduate school I studied labor and public finance, and when I graduated I had a choice between academic and nonacademic jobs. Since my interest in economics had really been driven by my interest in economic policy, I decided to go to the Federal Reserve Board, where I felt I would have an opportunity to do research and also contribute directly to policymaking. I spent 18 very rewarding years at the Fed, working with the dedicated staff and policymakers and focusing primarily on the labor market and potential output, but contributing to the overall forecast of the economy. I also spent a year as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Macroeconomic Policy at the Treasury Department. About



two and a half years ago I made the move to Brookings. I strongly believe in Brookings' mission of bringing high quality, independent research to bear on economic policy debates, and more generally believe that think tanks like Brookings play an important role in bridging the gap between the academy and policymakers. Coming to Brookings has been a bit like coming home, given that my economics career got its start at a think tank.

*I know I mentioned the reasons that the CSWEP board wanted to add this position. Tell me more about why you were eager to take it on.*

Let me start by thanking you so much for taking the lead on creating a designated position within CSWEP for women economists who are working outside of academia. From the events we have organized so far, it is clear that there is great interest among the women I have met in networking, supporting and mentoring each other, and also helping women just embarking in their careers to understand the broad array of work that economists do outside of the university setting. As for me, I

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## From the Chair

**Judith A. Chevalier**

I am pleased to present Issue 2 of the CSWEP News—the DCSWEP issue!

Readers may have heard that CSWEP has expanded our board to have an official position for a Washington, D.C., representative. On January 2, 2020, the day of our CSWEP Board meeting in San Diego, economist Jed Kolko tweeted data from the BLS showing that 43% of U.S. economists were located in the Washington, D.C., metro area. At that Board meeting, the Board discussed the idea of undertaking more initiatives to connect CSWEP with economists working in D.C. in particular, but also in government, the private sector, and think tanks more generally. Thanks to that board discussion and to the enthusiasm and initiative of Stephanie Aaronson of the Brookings Institution, CSWEP created the new D.C. rep position and Stephanie launched our DCSWEP group.

Some background: The CSWEP Board has been composed of the Chair, the Associate Chair for Mentoring, the Associate Chair for the Survey, regional representatives for the Eastern region, the Southern region, the Midwestern region, and the Western region, and at-large members. Our two CeMENT directors are also ex-officio members of our board. With the assistance of our committee coordinator, Rebekah Loftis, the board does the work of CSWEP. As part of their duties, the regional representatives organize events and sessions at regional economics conferences.

The CSWEP Board decided to expand by one position and to appoint a new regional representative for Washington, D.C. The goal was two-fold: first, to foster community and create resources for economists in Washington, D.C., and second, to increase CSWEP's activities targeted to economists working in government, nonprofits, and the private sector in any geographic location. CSWEP has always had board members from outside academia and often in

Washington, D.C. For example, Karen Pence of the Federal Reserve Board of Governors has been an at-large board member for the last two years. But, as Stephanie Aaronson points out in my interview with her in this issue, there are many ways that CSWEP can support economists who work in government, nonprofits, and industry. A dedicated representative will help us to do that. I recommend to you my interview with Stephanie in this issue of News. She describes her career path and the many activities that the DCSWEP group is already undertaking.

Our Focus section continues the theme of highlighting economists across sectors. It grows out of a session that Gray Kimbrough organized at the Society of Government Economists last May. In the session, Washington, D.C.-area economists with interests in policy described their jobs and career paths. We were lucky, with Gray's help, to receive written reflections from some of the panelists and then combine those with some short essays by two women who were panelists in the "Careers for Economists" panels that Stephanie Aaronson organized and hosted for CSWEP last summer. The five essayists describe their journeys into their particular economics careers. One of the writers, Jevay Grooms of Howard University, chose academia as a path to pursuing her interest in policy. Three of the writers went directly into government service after earning their Ph.D.s. One writer, Gbenga Ajilore, started his career in academia and transitioned to a non-profit policy institute. He writes from that perspective although he has since transitioned into a government service.

One theme that is reflected in several of the Focus pieces and that I have heard discussed at DCSWEP social events is the concern that Ph.D. advisors don't always have a clear picture of the opportunities available outside of academia and can struggle to mentor students who are interested in careers

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## Aaronson Interview continued from page 1

have always appreciated and supported CSWEP's mission to advance the status of women in economics. But at the same time, both when I was a young economist, and as someone who has mentored junior economists over the years, I have felt that economists with jobs outside of academia face different career choices and require a somewhat different set of supports than those at universities and colleges. So when you and I first discussed the Board's desire to create such a position, I could immediately see the need for the effort. In addition, in my final years at the Federal Reserve Board and since coming to Brookings, one of my primary interests has been working on projects to improve institutional diversity and inclusion and also projects related to improving diversity in the economics profession as a whole. This work with CSWEP perfectly aligns with those goals. Finally, I feel very grateful for the career that I have had, and believe nonacademic jobs can be great choices. I want to make sure that these careers are more widely understood and working with CSWEP offers this opportunity.

*We have informally started using the term DCSWEP for the activities that you are*

*leading. I think the name DCSWEP grew out of some informal get-togethers that Diane Lim put together a few years ago to bring together economists in the D.C. area who identify as women. I do love the name, by the way. What kind of activities are you starting to plan?*

Actually, I am glad you mentioned Diane and Susan Fleck's efforts from a few years ago. I definitely want to acknowledge that our work is building

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*On January 2, 2020, . . . economist Jed Kolko tweeted data from the BLS showing that 43% of U.S. economists were located in the Washington, D.C., metro area.*

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on the past efforts by many women in D.C. and elsewhere to provide community and support for economists working outside of academia. With respect to our activities, let me start by noting the series of panels that CSWEP and Brookings co-hosted last fall exploring jobs for economists

outside of academia, which people can [watch](#) at the CSWEP website. We have also scheduled regular happy hour networking events (Zoom, of course, for now). We are thinking about what types of mentoring programs would best serve our community. And similar to the regional CSWEP groups, we are linking up with the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management (APPAM) to sponsor panels at their annual conference, which is held in D.C. every other year. We are currently soliciting papers for the fall APPAM meetings in Austin. We have other ideas, that we hope to pursue at some point, including collecting more data on women in jobs outside of academia. And we would love to hear what other activities people would find helpful.

*If someone wants to get involved in DCSWEP, either by attending social gatherings or by helping out, they should send a note to [info@cswep.org](mailto:info@cswep.org). Stephanie, who is welcome at the DCSWEP social events?*

Obviously, economists working in jobs outside of academia are our primary audience—this could be in government, non-profits, or the private sector. As you mentioned, although we are a D.C.-based group, we are also interested in connecting with women working in these types of jobs outside of the D.C. area. In fact, at our first Zoom happy hour we had a number of people join from outside D.C.—New York and Chicago in particular. Women who think they might be interested in exploring jobs outside of academia, including those who are curious about switching sectors are also invited to attend, so they can learn more about what these careers look like. We are also thinking about some special events to link women working in nonacademic jobs in D.C. with women working in the local universities, since there are lots of opportunities for collaboration. The more the merrier!

*Stephanie, thanks so much for the hard work you are putting in toward this initiative! ■*

## From the Chair

in other sectors. I hope that this Focus section will be helpful for students interested in a variety of careers, for mid-career individuals considering a career transition, and for academics who are advising students but feel underinformed about career options.

In addition to our Focus section and interview, this issue contains information about upcoming calls for papers and about upcoming career development opportunities. In addition to the opportunities detailed in this issue of the News, be sure to check our website, your email, and [@aeacswep](mailto:@aeacswep) for additional events and opportunities that will be posted over the coming months. Specifically, look for opportunities to apply to the graduate mentoring

workshop being organized by Jen Doleac in conjunction with the Southern Economics Association Meetings, the graduate mentoring workshop being organized to support Ph.D. students specializing in health economics, our own CeMENT mentoring workshops and, of course, our ongoing webinar series. There are many CSWEP activities ongoing so please make sure you are on our mailing list. To sign up for our mailing list, to volunteer to be a mentor or CSWEP liaison, or to express interest in the activities being organized by the new DCSWEP group, please send an email to [info@cswep.org](mailto:info@cswep.org). Of course, we always welcome your feedback and ideas for new initiatives. ■

## FOCUS Introduction

# Alternative Career Paths in Economics

Gray Kimbrough

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, more than 40 percent of US economists work in the Washington, DC, metro area (<https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes193011.htm>). These economists perform research, develop surveys, regulate a range of industries, and impact economic policy.

I organized a panel at the Society of Government Economists 2019 annual meeting in DC for students and early-career professionals to learn more about careers for economists in the area. This panel featured four economists whose work touches on economic policy. Each of the panelists described the path to their current job and what they like about it and provided advice for people who are interested in similar opportunities. Subsequent to the panel, two economists who participated in the CSWEP “Jobs for Economists” webinar series contributed reflections about their careers as economists in government in Washington, DC.

In this Focus section, we present three perspectives on Alternative Career Paths in Economics—three from the DC panel and two from the “Jobs for Economists” webinar series. First, Gbenga Ajilore describes his work at the Center for American Progress and provides advice to junior economists interested in a career in public policy. We continue with the perspectives of economists from three government agencies—Laura Feiveson of the Federal Reserve Board of Governors,

Laura Tiehen of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Economic Research Service, and Dani Sandler of the Center for Economic Studies at the Census Bureau. These contributors describe their paths to work as government economists, the nature of their work, and advice to junior economists considering a career in the government sector. Finally, Jevay Grooms of Howard University describes the benefits of

being an academic focused on policy-relevant research.

We hope that you enjoy this Focus section, and that it provides information that is useful both to those who are approaching their last year of graduate school and pondering their options as they prepare for the job market and to those who may be considering a career transition. ■

## The Transition from the Ivory Tower to the Halls of Government

Olugbenga Ajilore

I am a senior economist at the Center for American Progress (CAP).<sup>1</sup> I have recently transitioned to the policy world from academia, having been at CAP for a little over a year and a half. Prior to that, I was a tenured economics professor at the University of Toledo, Ohio.

For my undergraduate studies, I attended UC Berkeley and for my graduate program I attended Claremont Graduate University. I came to economics because as an undergraduate I liked math and majored in math, but I wanted to do something more applied. I found economics and really loved it. To achieve my goals, I realized that I needed to go on to a Ph.D. program. After getting my Ph.D., I was on the market for three years. In the interim, I was at Cal State Fullerton in a visiting position with a heavy teaching load but eventually landed a tenure-track job at the University of Toledo.

My academic work focused on the racial impacts of government spending, focusing on school district spending

and police spending. After Ferguson, I became particularly concerned and interested in policing and the use of force. I wanted to contribute to policy debates as an academic and so I did a one-year fellowship in the Justice Policy Center at the Urban Institute here in DC. As I was finishing up at the Urban Institute, someone at the Center for American Progress reached out to me about an economist position.

In academia, I felt that I wasn’t able to fully contribute to the policy debate. It seemed to me that papers had to be published in a top 5 journal to attract policy attention and I didn’t have the connections or profile to get into top 5 journals. I was at a stage where I was struggling with some publications and I also wanted to innovate in my teaching and that turned out to be a struggle as well. Both the negatives in my academic life and the positives of the policy option led me to think, “What am I doing? Why am I here?”

When I started at CAP, it was an opportunity to contribute in a different way. In academia, you are very focused on a single topic and your work goes into depth on that topic and you become

<sup>1</sup> Gbenga Ajilore wrote this piece as a senior economist at the Center for American Progress. He has recently been appointed as a Senior Advisor to the United States Department of Agriculture. The views expressed herein are his own and not those of the USDA.

# Working at the Federal Reserve Board

Laura Feiveson

I started my Ph.D. in economics without having taken any economics courses in college, where I majored in math. Because of my lack of an economics background, it took me a longer time than some of my classmates in graduate school to figure out what my focus was after the first couple years of coursework, and I struggled to find my dissertation topic. I ended up

deciding to take a year off and applied to be a junior economist at the Council of Economic Advisers (CEA). That was 2009 to 2010, which turned out to be one of the most influential years of my time in graduate school.

My experience working on analyzing the Recovery Act at the CEA convinced me that my passion was policy. The setting made me feel energized; I

liked working on a team with people; and I was motivated by the short-turn around questions that we were asked to tackle. By the time I returned to graduate school to finish my degree, I knew I eventually wanted to come back to do economic policy. I spent the last year of my graduate program at the International Monetary Fund while finishing my dissertation and applying for jobs. I was lucky to get a job at the Federal Reserve Board, and I've been here since then.

## from Tower to Halls

an expert on that. If the media becomes interested in that sliver of the world, you are the expert. It is much different in the policy world. As in academia, a senior economist still has a primary focus, but in policy you also have to maintain some level of expertise on a variety of topics.

At CAP, I am the person who can speak on macro issues, which is a real shift because I hadn't studied macro since grad school. I'm also the point person for regional economic development and disparities in the labor market. In my job, I need to learn a bunch of areas and be able to talk about them. If you can invest in learning to become 2% more of an expert than someone else, then, because of that 2%, you are the expert. The way I look at my job now is instead of creating that original research that goes into journals, I'm able to take the research that's already done, translate and disseminate that for audiences such as the press, Capitol Hill, and state and local officials. I'm the bridge between academics and policymakers.

For people who want to get into this kind of work, an important question is whether you need to have a Ph.D. In policy work, and especially in DC, a Ph.D. is not always necessary to do the work. But in my case, it has helped in terms of how people receive the work (which is not fair, but true). The Ph.D. also gives you the flexibility of moving between the policy world and academia

or the private sector as well as some flexibility in terms of fields of specialization. In policy, you never know where your path is going to take you. I know many people who started out in one field and moved to a different field. I took the macro qualifiers in grad school but then didn't pursue it in my academic job. Now, it is part of what I do in my job.

If you want to contribute to policy, one of the best things to do is actually be in DC or be in the state capitals and do the actual work. Starting out, the main opportunities are internships, which are an important way to learn what you do like or what you don't like and to watch what people do. In graduate school I did two paid internships—one at the Urban Institute and another at the General Accounting Office. These were helpful to me in learning about policy work.

Use networks to find these opportunities. Find people you want to model your career after and involve them. Use whatever groups your university offers or other groups you can find that offer networks, such as CSWEP and CSMGEP. There are networks everywhere. On #EconTwitter, there are many people like me who have been through the search process and have these jobs and are "lifting as we climb." We have done well and we know that is because people have helped us. We've turned back to help other people. Try to find those networks to tap into.

The work at the Federal Reserve Board is a mix of policy work and academic research, and one of the terrific things about the job is that new economists do not need to know which track they want to focus on when they first arrive—both research and policy are highly valued. There are some economists at the Fed who are extremely well-published in peer reviewed journals, and their day-to-day workflow consists of more research than policy. There are other economists who tend to broaden their policy portfolio and shrink their research portfolio over time. Of course, there is often a large overlap between research and policy, which is motivating for both types of work.

In my own career, I have focused more on the policy track than longer-term research. I prefer the faster pace and more team-oriented nature of policy work and I am motivated by the mission of the Board and the sense that I am contributing to a clear goal. For example, I was the analyst working on the forecast of household consumption at the time that COVID-19 took hold of the U.S. in March of 2020. Household spending makes up two-thirds of GDP and it was the sharp contraction in household spending that led to the economic crisis resulting from the pandemic—people were no longer traveling, eating out at restaurants, attending shows, or the like. At the time, we didn't know

## Working at the Fed

how large the contraction would be. My team had to acquire and analyze high frequency data and to do back-of-the-envelope calculations: how big are these sectors, how much will people constrict their spending within them, and what does that mean for GDP and unemployment? We can now look at published aggregate statistics and know that the unemployment rate soared to 15 percent in April of last year and that GDP contracted by an unprecedented 31 percent (annual rate) in the second quarter. But in real time, those statistics were not yet available, and it was our forecast that was informing the Board as they made their crucial decisions about monetary policy. I have been grateful to feel so connected to the policy response during this crisis.

I have also found that the Fed has been a terrific place to work while raising a family. It is rare to find workplaces that are intellectually stimulating and with a fulfilling mission that still afford the time and mental space to have a life outside of work. During my time at the board, I have had two daughters (now elementary school-aged). I can say that the work-life balance has been fantastic for me, and I know for a lot of others here as well.

I have been inspired by the precedent set by women leaders at the Fed such as Stacey Tevlin, who is now the division director of the Research and Statistics division, and Stephanie Aaronson, who was my section chief when I first arrived. One thing that I have learned from them and from others is that there is no one way to succeed in economics and that there is no one “right” career path. Many of my career choices were driven by my own preferences, such as the preference for faster-paced and more interactive work than is typically associated with academia. It took me time to figure out what works best for me and I’ve ultimately found my career much more fulfilling than I could have imagined back in the times that I was struggling the most in graduate school.

## Conducting Research and Informing Policy at the USDA

### Laura Tiehen

I was very happy to participate with other federal government economists in one of the webinars in a series on “Jobs Outside of Academia for Economists” organized by CSWEP and the Brookings Institution. There are so many rewarding career paths for economists in the federal government, and I appreciated the chance to bring more attention to them. I am a senior research economist at the Economic Research Service (ERS), an agency that is part of the research arm of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). It was my first job out of graduate school, and after 20 years, it still provides interesting opportunities and new challenges.

The agency’s mission is to inform public policy and private decision-making related to agriculture, food, the environment, and rural America. Our work covers a broader range of fields than some might associate with the USDA, like environmental, labor, and health economics. My degree is in public economics and I specialize in understanding the causes and consequences of participation in U.S. food assistance programs, which are administered by USDA.

I studied Economics and Spanish at Lake Forest College, a small liberal arts college, and went to graduate school at the University of Wisconsin planning to find a teaching-oriented faculty position. Over the course of graduate school, I began to enjoy research more than I had expected, especially applied work with clear policy implications. When I went on the job market, I was initially a little surprised when USDA contacted me and had to remind myself that, of course, they run the food assistance programs in the U.S. and so it’s relevant to somebody who wants to work on anti-poverty programs.

ERS has an intramural research program and we also support outside research through our data development

and research funding efforts. These activities are often quite interconnected. For example, we developed a public-use database to track changes in how states administer the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which has been used by researchers both inside and outside ERS to examine how these policies influence household participation and to identify the effects of program participation on outcomes such as food insecurity.

We publish our research in both ERS reports and peer-reviewed journals, and I like the fact that my work primarily consists of longer-term research projects rather than quick-turnaround analyses. ERS is also structured so that you can advance to a senior position without taking on a traditional management role. As a senior economist, I am expected to lead research projects and guide other researchers, but I don’t (for example) have to conduct annual performance evaluations. One aspect of my job that may differ from many academic jobs is the time I dedicate to communicating research findings to a non-technical audience, through both written work and briefings to policymakers. I find this aspect of the work to be exciting and gratifying, though I am glad that I still have significant time for the underlying research.

One thing that I have always loved about ERS is the collegial environment. The staff are very dedicated and work hard but are encouraged to maintain a work-life balance. You can be productive and make a difference within a reasonable work schedule. It has always been a very collaborative environment where teamwork is highly valued. As we rebuild after the loss of many staff in 2019, I believe that we are on the road to restoring that environment once again.

Disclaimer: The views expressed here are those of the author and should not be construed to represent any official USDA or U.S. Government determination or policy.

I am a Senior Economist at the Center for Economic Studies at the U.S. Census Bureau. I started in economics mostly because of a really great high school economics teacher who taught that economics is about human behavior. I started and finished undergraduate studies wanting to be an economist and went directly into graduate school to get my Ph.D. I went to UC Davis and finished there in 2012.

My husband is also an economist and we did the joint job market search in 2012, applying for jobs all over the country. We had both had lost interest in teaching at that point, so we really applied everywhere. We knew that Washington, DC, would be a good place for us because there are so many jobs in DC and so many non-teaching jobs in DC.

My husband got a job at the Federal Trade Commission from our first job market search. I had a little bit more of a bumpy ride. On my first time on the job market, I got a job offer from a government contractor. Unfortunately, the government contractor didn't have any contracts for me to be on, so I didn't actually have a job. I did independent consulting for the next several months and then went back on the job market the following year. The Census Bureau had a hiring freeze at the time, so I briefly took a job at Freddie Mac, but then started at the Census Bureau in 2013.

I have had a few unique transitions in my career. I started in a position running a Census Research Data Center (now a Federal Statistical Research Data Center), helping with external proposals and helping with operations in the computer lab. After a few years, I moved to being a Census staff economist. Now, I am going through the normal stages of a career at a government agency. Typically in an agency, new Ph.D.s start out as junior economists who work on

some big projects that are generally led by someone more senior. Gradually, junior economists transition into more senior roles. For example, now I have projects where I have research assistants and more junior people working with me. However, for other projects, I'm still the more junior person. Eventually some staff economists at government agencies transition into management, while others opt to stay as staff economists. The path one takes depends in large part on preferences for or against management roles and the roles that need to be filled.

Jobs in the non-academic sphere vary a lot in the extent to which writing papers for journals is an important part of the job description. At the Census Bureau (in contrast to some of the other policy jobs) we write academic papers and we're trying to get published. There is no tenure, so there's not as much pressure to publish in the so-called "top five journals." In my job, we get lots of congratulations for really good publications but the job doesn't depend on having papers published in top journals. The research feels very academic, and we often work with academics. Collaboration is supported with the Federal Statistical Research Data Centers (FSRDCs). We're working with the same data and we're writing very similar papers as the people that are working in FSRDCs.

Economists outside of academia generally have some duties that are "paying the bills." At Census, instead of teaching, we are building and documenting data. Half my time right now is spent on a project that supports the decennial census. An awesome part of being at a government agency is that there are always at least a dozen people that are doing similar work with similar data. So, if I find something weird going on, I can ask them about it. Right now, due to COVID-19, I am working

at home and it makes me appreciate the interaction with colleagues that I normally have at the agency.

At the Census, I'm in the interdisciplinary research area of the Center for Economic Studies. We are mostly Ph.D.s, but not all economists. It is an interdisciplinary group from a variety of disciplines. I work with a bunch of sociologists and demographers, a historian, and several data scientists. The data work itself doesn't necessarily require a Ph.D., the Ph.D. is a fast track to getting to do the interesting, innovative data and research work. There are a few people with whom I work who have a master's degree, but they had to be really exceptional and have many years of building expertise to get to the level of contributing to research projects.

For graduate students who are interested in this kind of work, it is important to research the various agencies and find people who are working in them. I had a great advisor; she's fantastic. However, being in academia, she didn't have a lot of advice specific to nonacademic jobs. That is an important reason why students should try to reach out to people at the agencies that specifically interest them. Sometimes it is difficult for government agencies to tell which applicants truly would be a good fit for a job outside of academia. If a student has already signaled interest by reaching out ahead of time to find out what the job is like, that is a positive indicator to the agency that they are truly interested in working there. A federal statistical agency is an excellent place to work as a research economist, and I encourage anyone who is interested to reach out to us working there to learn more about our role in the government and the profession.

I'm a second-year assistant professor at Howard University. I'm originally from Los Angeles, California and I attended Loyola Marymount University for undergrad. I attended the University of Florida for my Ph.D. I did a postdoc at University of Washington for two years before coming to Howard.

When I was an undergraduate, I always thought I wanted to pursue a degree in law to help "save the world." I wanted to help address issues that are particular to people who look like me—Black communities and other vulnerable populations. I thought the best way to accomplish that was via the legal system and changing laws. I got started in economics because I was taking a principles of microeconomics class and the professor made a comment that economics majors score better on the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT) than pre-law majors. Based on that, I started taking economic courses and soon double-majored and then eventually fell in love with economics.

I was lucky that in my undergraduate development class with Professor Andrew Healy, we read an Esther Duflo paper and I was blown away. Her research opened my eyes to the various manners in which economics could be used to directly address poverty and attempt to help vulnerable people. That was the start of my abandoning the law school idea and switching to economics and eventually getting a Ph.D.

My Ph.D. research focused on developing countries with an emphasis on health. When I graduated I realized that I also wanted to focus on domestic issues. I grew up in LA during the crack epidemic and witnessed its impact on families and neighborhoods. The way in which the epidemic ravaged minority communities felt like common knowledge among minorities and was often discussed. It was also well understood that policies were part of the problem. Fast forward to graduate school, the opioid epidemic

started. A colleague, Alberto Ortega, and I started researching it, even though it had nothing to do with either of our dissertation topics. We spent time brainstorming research ideas of particular interest to Black and Hispanic communities and also trying to understand how lessons from the past could help address the current drug epidemic.

It is very clear that the policy and public reaction to the opioid epidemic was dramatically different than the reaction to the crack epidemic of the 1980s. That motivated me to focus more on domestic health as I began to formulate my research agenda. My current body of research focuses on health disparities across race and gender, as it relates to substance use disorders and mental health. I have research that looks at Medicaid expansion; admissions to treatment facilities; physician prescribing behavior; and the mental health treatment of children across different races. The bulk of my research efforts are targeted at the intersection of health and racial disparities.

I am motivated to create new knowledge that is relevant to policy. While a doctoral degree in economics is not necessary to make meaningful contributions, I needed the technical foundation of a Ph.D. to be able to do research. Since starting my Ph.D., it was always my intention to use it to help address issues of importance to vulnerable populations domestically and abroad.

I am also trying to contribute through my teaching and outreach to students. I have a website [jevaygrooms.com](http://jevaygrooms.com) that has a page dedicated to providing resources to undergraduate and graduate students in economics. The resources are designed to support students as they pursue and continue to work toward a doctorate in economics. My page links to summer research opportunities, graduate fellowships, visitation programs, fee

waivers for graduate applications, and mentoring programs.

For students who are thinking about economics, if you aren't certain you want to go into economics, assistantships are a perfect way to get exposed and see if this is what you really want to do. If you're going to spend time before graduate school working, you might as well spend the time working to better understand economics to determine if this is the career path you really want to take.

Another way to find opportunities is to network. Even if you have a great advisor, creating a network of support can be very useful. I found it beneficial to have a wide range of networks, whether it was through women's organizations, minority organizations, or field-specific organizations. Now I am connected with a wide range of individuals and I get emails all the time from people saying, "Hey, you should look at this opportunity." Often, that is an opportunity that my advisor likely wouldn't have known about. Casting a wide net, within reason, can make you aware of opportunities that you otherwise would not know.

I am glad I chose the academic path, but I chose my institution wisely. Where you work is very important. For many of us in the profession our job is a big part of who we are—it is not a typical 9-5 job. It is important not to succumb to pressure to accept a job at an institution that doesn't mesh with your wants and needs in life. I am lucky to be at Howard University. I knew who I was working with before I came to Howard. I knew the culture at Howard. I have a very supportive department, especially the senior faculty and our chair Omari Swinton. In choosing a job it was imperative that I situated myself at an institution/company which respected me as an economist and valued my research, but also that the institution/company found me as an integral member of the team and treated me as such. Being supported makes it much easier to focus on research, teaching and mentoring. While where you work matters, I would argue that who you work with is equally as important. ■



# Calls, Announcements, and Sessions at Upcoming Meetings

## Call for Applications: CeMENT Mentoring Workshops for Junior Faculty

**APPLICATION DEADLINE: August 15, 2021**

### Workshops for Junior Faculty: 9–11 January 2021 in Boston, MA

CSWEP will be hosting two CeMENT Workshops for junior faculty following the 2022 ASSA meetings in Boston: one for junior faculty in Ph.D. granting institutions and one for junior faculty in non-Ph.D. granting institutions. Each workshop mentors women and non-binary junior faculty in tenure-track positions in economics departments or at other institutions with similar research, teaching, and service expectations.

The workshops will consist of a two-day program, beginning directly after the 2022 ASSA meetings in Boston, MA, and ending at 2 pm on Tuesday, January 11th. The AEA will pay for participants' lodging and food during the workshop, but attendees must arrange their own transportation. Participants will be arranged into small groups and assigned to mentors based on their research area. Group members and mentors discuss and offer feedback on the participants' research. In addition, the workshops include a number of larger how-to sessions on topics such as: publishing, managing service, effective and efficient teaching, developing a tenure case, and networking.

We are excited about the opportunity to continue CSWEP's tradition of mentoring female junior faculty. We hope you will apply and look forward to seeing you at one of our workshops.

For more information and application details please visit: <https://www.aeaweb.org/about-aea/committees/cswep/programs/cement-mentoring-workshops>. We look forward to seeing you there!

## Call for Nominations for the 2021 Carolyn Shaw Bell Award

**DEADLINE: 15 September 2021**

The annual **Carolyn Shaw Bell Award** is given to an individual who has furthered the status of women in the economics profession, through example, achievements, increasing our understanding of how women can advance in the economics profession, or mentoring others. Nominations should include a nomination letter, updated CV and three or more supporting letters, with preferably at least two from mentees. Nomination letters should be focused on examples of how the nominee has fulfilled the criterion of advancing the position of women in economics, rather than strictly on academic achievements.

A CSWEP-appointed committee reviews nominations and the prize will be awarded at the January 2022 AEA Meetings in Boston, MA. The Award Committee automatically retains and considers applications for a period of three years, and previous nominators are encouraged to update nomination packages if appropriate. **Nominations are due September 15, 2021 and will open in May.**

For more information and a list of past recipients of the Bell Award, visit: <https://www.aeaweb.org/about-aea/committees/cswep/about/awards/bell>.

**Nominations for these awards may be sent to:**

Rebekah Loftis,  
CSWEP Committee Coordinator  
American Economic Association  
[info@cswep.org](mailto:info@cswep.org)

## CSWEP Sessions @ Western Economic Association Virtual 96th Annual Conference

**27 June–1 July 2021 via ZOOM**

Program available at: [www.weai.org](http://www.weai.org)

## Immigrants and Immigration Policy

Session Chair and Organizer: Catalina Amuedo-Dorantes (University of California, Merced)

**Monday, 28 June 2021  
8:00–9:45 am PDT**

### *Family-centered immigration policy and marital instability*

Eva Dziadula (University of Notre Dame)

Discussant: Alejandro Gutierrez-Li (North Carolina State University)

### *Effect of the 1996 welfare reform on undocumented immigrants*

Sakshi Bhardwaj (University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign)

Discussant: Jocelyn Wikle (Brigham Young University)

### *Life out of the shadows: impacts of amnesty programs on migrant's life*

Sandra Roza (University of Southern California), Ana María Ibañez (Inter-American Development Bank) Andrés Moya (Universidad de Los Andes), María Adelaida Ortega (Inter-American Development Bank), and Marisol Rodríguez Chatruc (Inter-American Development Bank)

Discussant: Sakshi Bhardwaj (University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign)

### *Child citizenship status in immigrant families and different parental time investments in siblings*

Jocelyn Wikle (Brigham Young University) and Elizabeth Ackert (University of California, Santa Barbara)

Discussant: Eva Dziadula (University of Notre Dame)

### *Business ownership and Mexico-US immigration*

Alejandro Gutierrez-Li (North Carolina State University)

Discussant: Sandra Roza (University

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## Calls, Announcements, Sessions

of Southern California)

### Gender, Social Networks, Labor Markets and COVID-19

Session Organizer and Chair: Catalina Amuedo-Dorantes (University of California, Merced)

**Monday, 28 June 2021**

**10:00–11:45 am PDT**

#### *Out of labor and into the labor force? The role of abortion access, social stigma and financial constraints*

Tom Zohar (Stanford University) and Nina Brooks (Stanford University)

Discussant: Teresa Molina (University of Hawaii at Manoa)

#### *The gender gap among business executives*

Teresa Molina (University of Hawaii at Manoa), Wolfgang Keller (University of Colorado, Boulder), and William W. Olney (University of Hawaii at Manoa)

Discussant: Babita Archibong (Barnard College)

#### *Opening borders: Peru's expected utility on Venezuela's immigration: a social network analysis*

Jorge Guerra (Claremont Graduate University)

Discussant: Tom Zohar (Stanford University)

#### *Impacts of the COVID-19 on green energy*

Babita Srivastavan (William Paterson University)

Discussant: Belinda Archibong (Barnard College)

#### *We are not guinea pigs: the effect of negative news on vaccine compliance*

Belinda Archibong (Barnard College) and Francis Annan (Georgia State University)

Discussant: Jorge Guerra (Claremont Graduate University)

## Brag Box

*"We need every day to herald some woman's achievements . . . go ahead and boast!"*  
—Carolyn Shaw Bell

**Anna Mikusheva**, Associate Professor of Economics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, was one of two MIT faculty members honored as "Committed to Caring" (C2C) for her compassion for and advocacy of her graduate advisees. In nominating her for the award, her students attest to her generosity with her time, and the mentorship that she provides in helping them to prepare for a career in academia. Congratulations Anna!

We want to hear from you!

Send announcements to [info@cswep.org](mailto:info@cswep.org).

## Join the CSWEP Liaison Network!

Three cheers for the 150+ economists who have agreed to serve as CSWEP Liaisons! We are already seeing the positive effects of your hard work with increased demand for CSWEP paper sessions, fellowships and other opportunities. Thank you! Dissemination of information—including notice of mentoring events, new editions of the CSWEP News and reporting requests for our Annual Survey and Questionnaire—is an important charge of CSWEP. For this key task, we need your help. Visit [CSWEP.org](http://CSWEP.org) to see the list of current liaisons and departments for whom we'd like to identify a liaison. We are also seeking liaisons from outside the academy. To indicate your willingness to serve, send an e-mail with your contact information to [info@cswep.org](mailto:info@cswep.org).

## What is CSWEP?

CSWEP (the Committee on the Status of Women in the Economics Profession) is a standing committee of the American Economic Association charged with serving professional women economists in academia, government agencies and elsewhere by promoting their careers and monitoring their progress.

CSWEP activities endeavor to raise the awareness among men and women of the challenges that are unique to women's careers and can be addressed with a wide variety of actions, from inclusive searches to formal and informal mentoring activities. CSWEP freely disseminates information on how the profession works as well as advice to junior economists. We intend this information to be of value to all economists, male or female, minority or not.

### Annually, CSWEP

- Organizes mentoring workshops, paper presentations sessions at the annual AEA Meetings, and professional development sessions at the annual meetings of the four regional economics associations (the Eastern, Mid-Western, Southern and Western);
- Conducts a survey and compiles a report on the gender composition of faculty and students in academic economics departments in the United States;
- Publishes four editions of the *CSWEP News*, containing a feature section written by senior economists that highlights career advice or other topics of interest to the economics profession; and
- Awards the Carolyn Shaw Bell Award, given to a person for their outstanding work to promote the careers of women economists as well as the Elaine Bennett Research Prize, given biennially to a young woman economist for fundamental contributions to academic economics.

Our business meeting is held during the annual AEA Meetings and is open to all economists. It is a time for us to confer awards and celebrate recipients, present the Annual Report on Women in the Economics Profession and to hear your input on CSWEP's activities. The CSWEP Board meets three times yearly and we encourage you to attend our business meeting or contact a Board Member directly to convey your ideas for furthering CSWEP's mission.

Visit [cswep.org](http://cswep.org) for more information.