

# The \$hort Run

Student News & Views from the Humboldt State Economics Department

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## The Transition to Working from Home

Over the course of the past year COVID-19 has forced many companies to transition to working online. This experiment made in response to the pandemic has proven to be valuable for gathering data on the viability of transitioning to telecommuting for companies worldwide. While some jobs have been transitioning out of the office for years, Professor Timothy Golden of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute called this a “watershed moment for telework.” Businesses were reluctant to allow employees to work from home as it was feared that productivity would suffer, but this has not necessarily been the case and it may be difficult to force workers back into the office.

### Challenges

Some of the major challenges businesses face with employees working from home are team planning, checking in and bouncing ideas off colleagues, and building a cohesive and engaging work environment. Managers have noticed that virtual teams have some advantages as they can put together a team of people regardless of location, but that a disadvantage is that the teams tend to spend less time planning and brainstorming and get immediately to work (uconn.edu). Because calling someone feels more obtrusive than walking over to a desk or office, fewer workers are bouncing ideas off one another in the workplace, and this too can drag on productivity. This problem can best be mitigated with a more robust planning stage and by having a welcoming team environment, though building this environment can be challenging virtually.

### Productivity

Overall productivity has increased as workers have transitioned to telework. It amounts to a roughly 5% increase in productivity, due in large part to the savings in commuting time (Bloomberg.com). However Bloomberg also notes that conventional measures of productivity will only capture a fifth of this productivity gain as the time savings of less commuting will not be measured. The ability to work from home disproportionately falls on the highly educated and well paid, leading to fears that the benefits will lead to further distress a widening economic gap between the average worker and those in the top income brackets.

### Beyond the Pandemic

In a recent poll conducted by Bloomberg it was found that 20% of full workdays will be performed at home after the pandemic compared to only 5% before. Many companies are ridding themselves of office spaces and opting instead for collaborative spaces and client meeting rooms. While working from home prior to the pandemic left workers less likely to receive promotions, this may not be the case going forward as telework is better incorporated into the economy. Telework will bolster some sections of the economy, as can be seen in the growing delivery services industry. It will also cause contractions in other industries, specifically storefronts in major cities such as Manhattan where asking rents have fallen by more than 20 percent (nytimes.com).

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# The \$hort Run

## Adam Smith Award Recipient: Rosa Campos



### What led you to HSU, specifically the economics department?

I chose HSU because I felt in love with the redwoods and the small community in Arcata. I came in with the intention to pursue a degree in Political Science however after taking my first economics course as a freshman at HSU I slowly started to convert over to economics before ultimately changing my major to economics. I enjoyed how small the department was because I was able to really get the help I needed from my professors. I felt supported and I was fortunate enough to learn much from every single professor.

### How would you describe your achievements in the process of getting this award?

I would say that I am very passionate about environmental economics and over the years at Humboldt state I have had the privilege to learn more and this has kept me gravitated towards working hard but also maintaining a balance between school and outside activities.

### What are your plans after graduation?

I am very excited for what is to come. I plan on working the rest of the year and intent to move to New York by the end of 2021. I am currently looking at different graduate programs and I plan on applying this fall with the hopes of finding a program in New York by the end of this year as well.

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## Kittleson Scholarship Recipient: Tineke Iris

### What led you to HSU, specifically the economics department?

I came here for a piece of paper to hang on a wall or keep in a drawer and tell people about so I could earn an extra dollar on my paycheck. But I also like a good adventure and got a bit lost in the massive volume of often conflicting perspectives on economic policy and institutions that I was exposed to. This information contributes to our collective vision for the future and seems to require a whole new language in which to communicate nuanced concepts. Since I preferred economic classes over accounting, the chair of the department convinced me it might be in my best interest to switch majors.

### How would you describe your achievements in the process of getting this award?

Grants and scholarships are part of the thin support net that includes people who would otherwise be excluded from the higher education market. I am grateful for the funding and would not be here without it. Educational institutions shape the future through cultivating thought, so I consider myself fortunate to attend one where our professors periodically check their assumptions and review their methods. Without their good example, I may not have applied myself to this particular path.



### What are your plans after graduation?

I'll likely keep doing what I do now for some time; work, study and go on adventures on Wiyot land. My 7-year-old just re-wrote the rules of Catan so it can actually be fun as a cooperative game, so I may be playing even more Catan in the near future

# The \$hort Run

## Academic Achievement Award: Aowyn Crailhardt

### What led you to HSU, specifically the economics department?

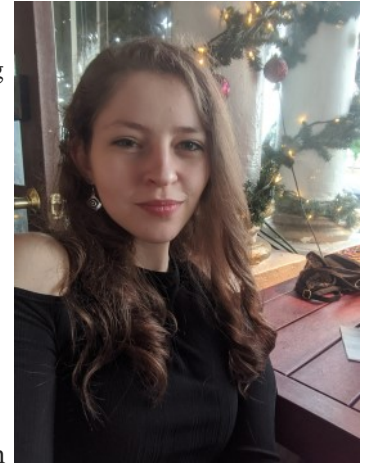
I originally started as a Business Administration major. I took Nicola Matthew's ECON210 as part of my business course requirements without really even understanding what economics was. I really liked that course and fell in love with economics, and added it as a second major. As for HSU, I came here because it's in my hometown and was convenient. My parents are HSU alumni and met each other in the dorms. I'm glad I came here because I was able to have a variety of hands-on learning opportunities through the Department of Economics as an Instructional Student Assistant, a Student Research Assistant and a Student Intern for various local economic development organizations. These experiences helped me refine my career goals in the field of economic development, and practice applying what I had learned in my coursework to the real world.

### What are your plans after graduation?

I'm not graduating for three more semesters, but I will most likely apply for PhD programs in economics. In the meantime, I'm just hoping my study abroad program in Japan doesn't get cancelled again. I envision myself working for a government agency or international non-government organization that focuses on economic development in the future.

### Within economics, what is your favorite subject or the topic you find most interesting?

I'm really interested in economic development. The project I worked on for the Humboldt County Office of Economic Development addressed issues of tribal sovereignty, homelessness, environmental sustainability, community, caring for the elderly and a variety of other important topics, all in connection to a single origin development initiative. In the future I hope to learn more about economic development in less developed countries, specifically in relationship to financial institutions. Economic development has become something I wish to continue to participate in throughout my professional life.



# The \$hort Run

## Excellence in Teaching Award: Will Fisher

### What led you to teaching here at Humboldt State?

The short answer is that I had a couple of job offers and my top pick was Humboldt State. Having grown up in Portland the climate and natural beauty were really familiar and appealing to me. I think I'm stealing this phrase from Steve Hackett but Humboldt isn't really California, it's the Baja of Oregon. I have a West Coast elitism that nothing cool could exist east of the Rockies and Humboldt felt like a perfect lifestyle fit for me. On a professional level, I was really intrigued to be able to teach the wide array of environmental courses that the department offers. Having been here now for 8 years I don't regret my choice at all. The department has been very collegial and supportive, the students are great and the area is beautiful.

### What are some of the best parts of your position?

My favorite thing about the position is being in the classroom. It is a lot of fun to teach environmental economics classes to hippies who care about the environment. It is also really fun to have students that come are taking their first econ class and think it is going to be awful and then they realize that they actually like it. Economics is so important for being able to understand the world but a lot of people don't think they will like to study it for some reason.

### What have your challenges been over the past 12 months due to the pandemic and online classes?

The biggest challenge has been to try to make my courses still feel as close to the in-person experience as possible and keep the students engaged. Since the shut-down the economics department made a very conscious and concerted effort to try to do this, agreeing to offer all of our classes "live" (synchronous). While I think that is far superior to asynchronous classes, it is still tough to maintain student engagement while online. In addition, it took a good deal of creativity and a hell of a lot of work to transition everything to online platforms.

### Outside of the classroom, what are some of your favorite things to do?

Pretty much anything outside. My favorite hobby is fly fishing. I grew up doing it and could fly fish every day of my life and die a very happy person. I spend most of my summer in Montana and get to fish a lot during that time. As my workload lightens a bit I plan to explore a lot more of the rivers in this area. I have fished a number of the rivers here but definitely don't have them dialed in. On a normal day I enjoy hiking or walking on the beach with my dog, grabbing food and a good beer at a local restaurant or brewery.

### Any advice for past, present, or future students?

For present and future students, don't waste your time here! You can get so much out of this institution if you learn to organize your time. With good organization you can have a great social life, party with friends, join clubs, and get good grades. Attending class every day (and paying attention) is probably the single most important thing a student can do for getting good grades. College is more important than just getting grades but learning and getting good grades are really important. Life is uncertain and you don't want to preemptively shut doors. I never thought I'd get a PhD after getting my undergraduate but when I decided I wanted to, my grades were good enough that the door was open.

For past or soon to be past students, be confident and stick up for yourself. You are now professionals and have important things to offer. If you can afford to don't necessarily jump at the first offer if it is not a good fit or if the offer is a bad one. Don't be afraid to ask for things from your employer. I had a professor at Portland State who I took almost all of my supply and logistics classes from and he would constantly tell us this. When you get your first job offer, ask for something, a bit more money, an extra week off, something. (Do it strategically and I would be happy to talk with people about this). He had never heard of an offer being revoked by asking for something and I haven't either. The worst I have heard is that they say no. Remember that almost all of your raises will be percentage raises so your starting salary is really important. Also, if you are at a job for a while and are performing well don't hesitate to ask for a raise.

