#### **ALLEGHENY COLLEGE**

### BRUCE R. THOMPSON CENTER FOR BUSINESS & ECONOMICS

# BUSINESS & ECONOMICS REVIEW

The Bruce R. Thompson Center for Business and Economics (CBE) prepares Allegheny College students to succeed in a diverse, global economy.

# LEADERSHIP, LAW, AND DATA: EXECUTIVE IN RESIDENCE, KAREN SKARUPSKI '83 BRINGS INDUSTRY EXPERTISE TO CAMPUS

The Center for Business and Economics welcomed Karen Skarupski '83, Senior Vice President of Human Resources at Erie Insurance as the 2025 Executive in Residence. During her busy two-day visit, Skarupski shared insights from her career in law, privacy, cybersecurity, and human resources.

For her first public talk, Skarupski presented "Essential Skills and Insights for Your Career Journey." Drawing from her leadership experience, she highlighted key career success factors such as adaptability, strong communication, ethical decision-making, and self-awareness. She explored common pitfalls like resistance to change and poor time management, offering advice for staying on track. Her talk underscored the importance of building professional networks and seeking mentorship.

Later that evening, she led a session entitled "Exploring Careers in Privacy, Cybersecurity, and Data Governance." As a former privacy officer, she shared her experience developing corporate policies, responding to data breaches, and navigating evolving regulations. She discussed emerging roles in privacy (e.g., data protection officers), cybersecurity (e.g., risk analysts, incident responders), and data governance (e.g., data analysts, knowledge architects), emphasizing the growing demand for professionals in these fields.

The next day she hosted a pre-law lunch for students interested in law school. She reflected on her own journey from Allegheny history major to practicing attorney and offered advice on the pre-law pathway.

Karen will continue to contribute to the Center of Business and Economics as one of our newest members of the Board of Visitors.



Executive in Residence, Karen Skarupski '83

Drawing from her leadership experience, she highlighted key career success factors such as adaptability, strong communication, ethical decision-making, and self-awareness.



After the Lunchtime Learning presentation with the CBE Fellows, from left: Colin Elder '25, Graham Kralic '25, Jose Cifuentes '87, Karen Skarupski '83, President Ron Cole '87, Zula Stenger '25, Jared Swisher '26

# FROM INTERN TO EMPLOYEE: WHY MENTORSHIP, CULTURE, AND COMPENSATION COUNT

According to research from Handshake, the internships that are most likely to lead to full-time offers share three essential qualities: strong mentorship, a positive team culture, and fair compensation. When these elements are in place, both students and employers benefit. For students, internships provide hands-on experience and help clarify career goals. For employers, they serve as an effective way to evaluate and invest in future talent. The following student experiences highlight how these key components come together to create internships that truly work—for everyone involved.

Internships are more
than resume builders—
they're powerful
gateways to long-term
career success.

#### GRAHAM KRALIC '25



Over the three months I spent with PNC last summer, I realized how valuable a career at PNC can be. The work we do in Treasury Management is on the cutting edge of fintech, with the backing of a bank with a longstanding reputation for excellence. Helping clients improve their cash flow efficiency presents rewards and challenges that result in a rewarding work experience. I'm excited to think about the growth opportunities I will be a part of in the coming years. The internship significantly impacted my future career goals. It illuminated my passion for banking and finance and gave me the knowledge and confidence to be a successful early career professional.

Formal and informal mentorship opportunities are abundant regardless of the line of business, which helps younger professionals grow through their internship and early career. Location was critical in determining whether or not I would accept a return offer. The Pittsburgh offices are beautiful new facilities that provide a state-of-the-art place to conduct business. The Pittsburgh offices are also in my hometown. Both factors made it easy to choose PNC's offer over others.

Compensation is often the only thing individuals look at when deciding whether to accept an offer. While PNC compensates very well, the more valuable perks are the emphasis on work/life balance, the ability to continue your education, the important service work with Grow Up Great, and the pride that comes from working for a company that is foundational for my community.

#### **NICHOLAS TYSIACHNEY '25**



Several things I discovered during my internship led me to accept Acutec's full-time job offer.

First off, was the aspect of management availability, even as an intern. Frequently, I had interactions with C-level executives and was often encouraged to simply "drop-in" if I thought that there was something worth discussing. This atmosphere showed that working at Acutec would not be a mindless corporate desk job, but a place where I could work directly with decision makers to get meaningful things done.

Another appealing aspect is Acutec's commitment to continuous improvement. Acutec always looks for ways to refine processes and remains open to change when new opportunities arise, rather than dismissing ideas with "we've always done it that way." This mindset of continuous improvement and growth also extends to employees. Acutec supports both past and ongoing education, offering reimbursement for individual courses, workshops, bachelor's degrees and will even pay for employees to get MBAs.

# NEW PLACES, NEW PERSPECTIVES: THE IMPACT OF STUDYING AWAY

CBE Fellow Lauren Schuch '26 spent the spring semester at the University of Cologne, Germany. We wanted to learn what she discovered during her study away experience - so we asked Lauren...

#### How did you learn about this experience?

I have always wanted to study abroad in Germany, so when I came to Allegheny I knew I wanted to do a study away program. The University of Cologne is currently the only program Allegheny offers, but I knew anywhere in Germany was good for me.

#### How did you prepare?

I met with other Allegheny students who previously studied abroad at the University in Cologne as well as the Global Education office. All of these people helped me be prepared for what to expect in terms of academics and living in Germany. I also researched on my own about living in Germany and improving my understanding of the German language.

## What classes did you take and how was that experience compared to taking classes here?

While in Germany, I took a number of classes in different facilities. I believe Allegheny's focus on an interdisciplinary education helped prepare me for these courses because I was able to adapt to multiple subjects I wouldn't have otherwise taken. I had courses ranging from sustainability in professional and academic settings to the study of indigenous peoples in Europe. In my opinion, the class structure and material is similar to how it is at Allegheny, so it was not hard to adapt. I did, however, have classmates from all over the world, so I was able to gain different perspectives on the subjects taught.

#### Do you feel more proficient speaking German after your experience?

My German has definitely improved since I've been in Germany, and I feel more confident in my speaking abilities. Not only was I able to improve grammatically, I have been able to build up my vocabulary, including words used by native German speakers.

## What is your advice for students contemplating a study away experience?

The advice I would give to students thinking about studying abroad is: "please do it." It is definitely a terrifying experience, especially if you have not traveled far distances before or out of the country, but it is definitely worth it. Don't be scared if you don't speak the language of the country you are studying in. I know lots of people who have zero German experience but are still thriving here. The language barrier and being far from home is definitely something I have been struggling with, but I feel the positive experiences and the friends I have met from all around the world have outweighed those cons. I would advise you to become well informed about the living situation and local living laws in your country. It is definitely worth it to get a head start on becoming familiar with the steps of staying in that country. If you are unsure, there are plenty of resources online as well as at the Allegheny College Global Education department.





Lauren Schuch '26

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## RESEARCH THAT MATTERS

# Advancing Knowledge, Mentoring Students, Impacting Communities

Faculty research in economics strengthens the academic reputation of Allegheny College while creating meaningful opportunities for students to engage in real-world analysis and policy exploration. By addressing pressing issues—from food economics to monetary policy to social policy—our faculty not only advance the field but also enrich student learning and contribute valuable insights to communities and decision-makers.

#### Here are the Business and Economics faculty publications for Spring 2025:



**AMELIA FINARET**Associate Professor of Global
Health and Clinical Dietitian

Finaret, A.B. & Masters, W.A. (2025). Food economics: Teaching for the future of agriculture, nutrition, and health. Applied Economic Perspectives and Policy.

Seidler, V., Utazi, C.E., Finaret, A., Luckeneder, S., Zens, G., Bondarenko, M., Smith, A., Bradley, S., Tatem, A.J., & Webb, P. (2025). Subnational variations in the quality of population health data: A geospatial analysis of household surveys in Africa. Nature Communications.



**XIAOHAN SUN**Assistant Professor of Economics



HANG ZHAO
Visiting Assistant Professor of
Economics and Computer Science

"The impact of anti-bullying laws on children's social-behavioral skills." Frontiers in Psychology 16 (2025): 1550736.



**TIMOTHY BIANCO**Assistant Professor of Economics

Bianco, T. & Herrera, A.M. (2025). Monetary policy and credit flows: A tale of two effective lower bounds. Journal of Economic Dynamics and Control.

## **EXPLORING IDEAS, BUILDING FUTURES:** WHY STUDENT RESEARCH MATTERS

Student research is a defining part of the Allegheny experience, giving students the chance to explore real-world questions through hands-on inquiry and faculty mentorship. These opportunities build critical skills and confidence, preparing students for success in graduate study, professional careers, and beyond.

Here's three great examples of how student research provides students with these unique opportunities:

#### Student Alumni Research

Zachary Wyse '25 and Roger Willis '80 presented their joint research project, "Oil, Energy, and Politics: Give Credit Where Credit Is Due," in March. The project explores the evolution of the oil and natural gas industry over the past 50+ years, analyzing the historical interplay between politics, oil prices, and their combined impact on the economic success of the United States.

Roger Willis, a member of Allegheny's Class of 1980 and a geology major, has spent 45 years in the oil and natural gas industry. We asked Roger, what inspired you to embark on this research?

"I have been working on the concept of how geology drives economic success for years. As a geologist I have been interested in exploring the role petroleum geoscientists, and hydrocarbon bearing rocks, have had on our country's economic history. Zack has been aiding me this year to research and develop an understanding of economic metrics that relate to this question. I have to thank professor Stephen Onyeiwu for connecting me with Zack Wyse, the senior Allegheny economics major who has been so very helpful in my efforts to fully develop the topic of my research. Zack has aided me in a myriad of ways involving research, compiling, and presenting the information he and I have been discovering."

#### **Economics Scholars Program hosted by** the Cleveland Federal Reserve Bank

The Economic Scholars Program is a student led economic research conference. This hybrid event allows undergraduate students to share their work, understand what it's like to participate in an economic research conference, network with peers, and discover internship and employment openings with the Federal Reserve.

Three Business and Economics students participated in this important conference: Zachary Wyse '25, Gabriel Xavier Saccoccio '27 and Shayan Colabawalla '27.

Zack presented his paper, mentored by Professor Oneyiewu: The nexus of income inequality and structural transformation in Africa. He commented, "presenting at the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland was a wonderful experience. I got to meet impressive student researchers from many other schools, as well as some senior research economists who work at the bank. It was especially significant to me because economic research is a career I would love to pursue".

Gabriel and Shayan attended the conference to discover more about research in economics. Gabriel served as a session chair commenting, "It was an amazing opportunity to connect with like-minded individuals, meet Research Economists from the Federal Reserve and students from various universities, all of whom gave fascinating presentations."

#### Sigma IX Undergraduate Research and Creative Accomplishment Conference

The Penn State Behrend-Sigma Xi Undergraduate Research and Creative Accomplishment Conference provides an opportunity for students to present their research and creative accomplishment results in a public setting. Among the group of students from Allegheny College, Zachary Wyse '25 sponsored by Profs. Nonnenmacher and Onyeiwu, won 2nd place in the category of Mathematics.

Zack Wyse, an economics major who graduated this spring, plans to continue his education by pursuing a Master's degree in Econometrics and Quantitative Economics at the University at Buffalo.



Student researchers in Cleveland from left: Zachary Wyse, Shayan Colabawalla and Gabriel Xavier Saccoccio.



Zach Wyse and Roger Willis and staff in Quigley

# STUDENT INNOVATORS COMPETE FOR \$30,000 AT THE ZINGALE BIG IDEA COMPETITION

The Campus Center buzzed with entrepreneurial energy this spring as 48 students from 25 teams across seven institutions gathered for the 2025 Zingale Big Idea Competition. Hosted annually by the Bruce R. Thompson Center for Business and Economics, this two-day event invites undergraduate students to pitch innovative business ideas and compete for \$30,000 in prize money.

This year's participants hailed from Allegheny College, Grove City College, Franciscan University, Northwestern University, PennWest University, the University of Chicago, and the University of Southern California. The competition, designed for seed-stage business ventures, simulates a startup environment akin to the popular CNBC show Shark Tank—but with a heart. At the Zingale competition, a panel of distinguished judges offers mentorship, coaching, and encouragement.





# HERE ARE THE **2025 WINNERS!**

#### First Place (\$10,000)

Leslie Manson, University of Chicago - Trottr, a personalized life compass startup helping people discover where they come alive

#### Second Place (\$7.500)

Joseph Shin & Liam Grossman, Grove City College – Thymely.ai, an Al-powered venture empowering student engagement

#### Third Place (tie – \$4,000 each)

Piece of Sober – Joe Fugagli, Merrell Sheehan, Daniel Bekele & Hemani Alaparthi, Allegheny College, an app the prevents people who are inebriated from sending unwanted texts

Gesturism – Jacklyn Pham, Allegheny College, a movement based digital painting application

#### Honorable Mentions (\$2,000)

KRS Creations - Katie Rose Rankin, Westminster College, a photography brand

AFFIRRO – Arina Otbliesk, Allegheny College, a personal financial management app

GAltor - Oleksandra Shafran, Allegheny College, Al-based chatbot for data gathering by college researchers

#### Next Big Idea Awards

AZ-Boost Digital Marketing – Davaka Namjilsuren, PennWest Clarion, marketing consulting company

Elytra Robotics - Rochan Kavulli & Christopher Luey, University of Southern California, autonomous drones for waste management with a mission to pick up 1 million pieces of trash

Safe Horizon – Shayan Colbawalla & Miguel Orti Vila, Allegheny College, Al-powered disaster preparedness and response platform

"The Zingale Big Idea Competition was designed to teach students how a business operates. Allegheny College is a learnby-doing institution, so the competition is the perfect marriage of classroom and cocurricular activities. Finally, the only things that are meaningful are those that are difficult. This competition is tough, so I'll bet our students can carry this grit into their jobs. Plus, it's fun!"

- Chris Allison '83, Entrepreneur in Residence

As the capstone event for the Entrepreneurship program, the Zingale Big Idea Competition reflects the center's mission to prepare students to succeed in a dynamic, global economy through hands-on learning and professional development. Beyond the chance to win prize money, student participants leave with something even more valuable: the confidence, skills, and mindset to turn ideas into impact.



The 2025 panel of judges brought extensive professional experience across industries. Judges from left Steve Geimer, Medical Technology Executive, Brian Slawin, Director at Ben Franklin Partners, John Golden, Professor Emeritus, Clayton Morris '15, Commercial Real Estate Developer, Sponsor Lance Zingale '77, Retired Executive at Sykes Enterprises, Liana Leja '17, RN/Clinical Research Coordinator, Paley Orthopedic & Spine Institute, Byron Rich, Assistant Provost for Academic Innovation; in attendance but not included in this photo: Lisa Frankovitch, CEO of Growth Companies, Emerging Ventures Champion and Strategic Advisor.

The next Big Idea Competition will be held on April 9, 10 and 11, 2026 in Quigley Hall.

The Big Idea Competition has been made possible through the generosity of Lance and Karen Zingale.

# EXECUTIVE ROUNDTABLE EXPLORES POLICY SHIFTS AND MARKET TRENDS IN U.S. METAL INDUSTRIES

Nerves of Steel: The Evolving American Steel Industry

The Executive Roundtable, hosted annually by the Department of Business and Economics, brings together prominent leaders from business, government, higher education, and related fields to explore timely issues of regional, national, and global importance. This signature event offers students a unique opportunity to engage with distinguished professionals whose insights and experiences enhance both academic learning and career preparation.

This spring's Executive Roundtable featured a thought-provoking discussion on the current state of the U.S. steel and aluminum industries and how evolving policies may influence metal markets. The panel included Elisabeth Smith, President and CEO of Acutec Precision Aerospace, Jerome Nelson '83, Principal at Carnegie Steel Partners, Rob Smith '73 Executive Chairman, Acutec Precision Aerospace, and Terry Hartford '81, Vice President, ATI Defense and Global Markets

The conversation, facilitated by Executive in Residence, Chris Allison '83, focused on the key challenges and opportunities facing the metals industry in the year ahead. Drawing on decades of leadership experience, the panelists provided valuable insights into the forces shaping one of the nation's most critical industrial sectors.



Executive Roundtable Panel from left: from left: Elisabeth Smith, President and CEO of Acutec Precision Aerospace, Jerome Nelson '83, Principal at Carnegie Steel Partners, Rob Smith '73 Executive Chairman, Acutec Precision Aerospace, Terry Hartford '81, Vice President, ATI Defense and Global Markets and Chris Allison '83 Executive in Residence at Allegheny College.

The Executive Roundtable is supported by the Earl W. Adams, Jr. Endowment, established by Allegheny College Trustee William H. Brown, Jr., Allegheny Class of 1980, in honor of Professor Earl William Adams, Jr. – teacher, mentor and friend



Adam Auerbach '05

#### FROM STUDENT TO SCHOLAR

Auerbach '05 Highlights Political Engagement Among India's Urban Poor

The Center for Political Participation and the Department of Business and Economics welcomed Adam Auerbach '05 back to Allegheny College this spring for a special presentation on his acclaimed research into India's urban poor and their political engagement.

Auerbach, now a faculty member at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, shared insights from his co-authored book, Mi grants and Machine Politics: How India's Urban Poor Seek Representation and Responsiveness (Princeton University Press). His talk challenged conventional narratives that depict slum residents as politically passive or manipulated. Instead, Auerbach revealed how these communities actively build political networks and demand accountability in India's rapidly urbanizing cities.

The presentation was especially meaningful, as Auerbach's academic journey began at Allegheny—his interest in Indian politics and economic development first took root in his senior comprehensive project two decades ago. The event celebrated the return of a scholar whose work is reshaping how we understand grassroots politics in South Asia.

#### **VOLUNTEER INCOME TAX ASSISTANCE (VITA) PROGRAM WITH** ALLEGHENY COLLEGE AND THE MEADVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY

#### A COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP MAKING A DIFFERENCE

For over a decade, Allegheny College and the Meadville Public Library have teamed up to offer free tax preparation services to senior citizens and low-income residents in Meadville and the surrounding areas. The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program (ECON-501 Meadville VITA: Tax 4 credit Internship) has grown significantly over the years, providing invaluable support to those in need while offering a hands-on learning experience for Allegheny College students.

#### A Growing Volunteer Workforce

This year, the program saw an impressive expansion in its volunteer workforce. With 11 dedicated students from the Department of Business and Economics, nearly double the number from the previous year, the program was able to provide even more assistance to local taxpayers. These students underwent rigorous training in January, completing IRS certification exams to ensure they were fully equipped to serve the community.

The volunteers were trained in the advanced level of certification, enabling them to perform a variety of roles, including greeters, tax preparers, and tax return reviewers. Graham Kralic '25 earned a Site Coordinator certification, which allowed him to oversee the program, ensuring smooth operations even when key staff are unavailable.



Jill Waugh is an Assistant Professor of Business and Economics leading the Accounting and Tax Preparation curriculum for the Department of **Business and Economics** 

#### Teamwork in Action

The VITA program operates twice a week in the afternoons, with each session structured to maximize efficiency and accuracy. A typical session involves five tax preparers, five reviewers, and one greeter. The tax preparers work directly with clients to complete their returns, while the reviewers ensure the accuracy of each return and explain the forms to the taxpayer. The greeter helps clients fill out intake paperwork, and answers any initial questions.

Thanks to this well-coordinated structure, the program was able to prepare almost 300 returns resulting in refunds totaling nearly \$158,000 - refunds that directly go back into the Meadville economy. This high level of productivity has been a key factor in the program's continued success and its ability to serve a growing number of community members.

#### Looking Ahead: A Promising Future

The growth of the VITA program is a testament to the commitment of the student volunteers and the ongoing support of the Meadville Public Library, who together are helping to ensure that local taxpayers have access to the resources they need to file their returns.

The program's success is not without its challenges, however. One of the key hurdles continues to be the need for an answering service to handle the volume of calls from taxpayers seeking to schedule appointments. As the program grows, it is clear that additional resources will be needed to ensure continued success. The program this year was fortunate to be able to borrow twelve laptops from Pelletier library. Going forward, technology assets and access to an answering service for scheduling are the top priorities for the program.

#### A Win-Win for Students and the Community

For the student volunteers, the VITA program offers a unique opportunity to gain practical, real-world experience in tax preparation, customer service, and nonprofit work. These skills not only enhance their academic studies but also provide a meaningful way to give back to the community.

For the local residents who benefit from the service, the program offers peace of mind knowing that they have access to professional, accurate, and free tax preparation assistance. Whether it's filing for the first time or navigating a complex tax situation, the VITA program is an invaluable resource that continues to make a tangible difference in the lives of many in the Meadville community.

#### 2025 Student Volunteers

Haaris Ajaz '25 Tyson Bryant-Dawson '25 Renen Frank '26 Cozmo Gallegos '27 Matthew Jennings '25 Graham Kralic '25 Cole Litman '26 Dyllan Mbane '26 Cade Moffatt '25 Aaron Moon '26 Nicole Stock '25



### ATTENTION UNDERGRADUATE WOMEN!

#### JOIN WOMEN IN BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS (WIBE): A SPACE TO EMPOWER. CONNECT, AND LEAD

Are you passionate about business or economics and looking for a welcoming, inspiring community on campus? Women in Business and Economics (WiBE) is relaunching during the fall semester with new leadership and fresh energy and we want YOU to be part of it!

WiBE is a student-led organization focused on empowering students, especially women and underrepresented groups, to thrive in the fields of business and economics. Our mission is to inspire engagement, support academic and professional success, and create a space where meaningful leadership and representation matter.

This year, we're excited to bring back fun and impactful events, including guest speaker sessions and networking opportunities with alumni and industry professionals. Whether you're a first-year just starting out or an upperclassman with experience to share, there's a place for you in WiBE — and yes, membership is open to all students, not just those majoring in Business or Economics.

The WiBE Board for the upcoming 2025/2026 academic year:

Co-President: Hemani Akaoarthi '27

Co-President: Lauren Schuch '26

Vice President: Anna Hill '27

Public Relations: Alexandria Richard '27

Club Advisor – Assistant Professor of Economics, Aisha Yusuf

We're looking for members, event planners, and even future board members so if you want to lead, grow, or just connect with others in business and economics message @alleghenywibe on Instagram.

Our special thanks to Forever Fellow Zula Stenger '25 for her visionary leadership, and to the new Board for picking up the mantle of leadership

# **SCHOLARS OF DISTINCTION:** HONORING STUDENTS FOR **ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE**

Acknowledging individuals whose academic performance has set them apart as leaders in learning.

#### 2025 BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS HONOR STUDENTS

Business Outstanding Junior Major Prize Nathan Meyers '26

Economics Outstanding Junior Major Prize Samantha Mura '26 and Chloe Bonson '26

Business Senior Project Prize Isabella Cohen '25 and Sarah Hoplock '25

Economics Senior Project Prize Nicolas Tysiachney '25 and Zachary Wyse '25

Graduate Student's Prize in Business and Economics Zachary Wyse '25

Outstanding Achievement Prize in Business Olesksandra Shafran '25

Outstanding Achievement Prize in Economics Graham Kralic '25

John L. Porter Prize for best thesis in Political Economy Zula Stenger '25

The Prize of the Pennsylvania Institute of Certified Public Accountants Nicole Stock '25

## SAVE THE DATE: SEPTEMBER 19, 2025

Blue & Gold Weekend at the Center for Business and Economics: Reconnecting Through Leadership, Fellowship and Networking

welcome the Center for Business & Economics (CBE) Board of Visitors and Forever Fellows back to



Thank you for reading our latest news. Please let us know how we're doing, we love hearing from you.

Stay up-to-date with department news by following us on LinkedIn at our Business and Economics Showcase page.



Tomas Nonnenmacher '90, Department Chair, Professor of Economics Chris Allison '83, Entrepreneur in Residence, Allegheny Trustee and Co-Director, Center for Business and Economics

Chris Finaret, Assistant Professor of Economics and International Studies, Co-Director, Center for Business and Economics

Beth Ryan, Program Coordinator, Center for Business and Economics