

RILEY K. ACTON
Curriculum Vitae

CONTACT INFORMATION

Department of Economics
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EMPLOYMENT

Assistant Professor, Miami University, Department of Economics, 2020 – present

PROFESSIONAL APPOINTMENTS

Research Fellow, Institute of Labor Economics (IZA), 2025 – present
Research Affiliate, Institute of Labor Economics (IZA), 2021 – 2024
Research Affiliate, College Crisis Initiative, 2020 – 2023

EDUCATION

Ph.D., Economics, Michigan State University, 2020
M.A., Economics, Michigan State University, 2016
B.S., Economics & Mathematics, Ursinus College, 2015 (*summa cum laude*, Phi Beta Kappa)

FIELDS OF INTEREST

Economics of Education, Labor Economics, Public Economics, Health Economics

PUBLICATIONS

Current & former Miami student coauthors underlined

“Distance to Opportunity: Higher Education Deserts and College Enrollment Choices” (with Kalena Cortes & Camila Morales). In: *Financing Institutions of Higher Education* (John Campbell & Kaye Husbands Fealing, Eds.), forthcoming.

“The Effect of Vaccine Mandates on Disease Spread: Evidence from College COVID-19 Mandates” (with Emily Cook, Wenjia Cao, Scott Imberman, & Michael Lovenheim). *Journal of Human Resources*, forthcoming.

“Is a Name Change a Game Change? The Impact of College-to-University Conversions.” *Economics of Education Review*, 88, 2022.

“The Influence of Peer Institutions on Colleges’ Decisions: Evidence from Fall 2020 Reopening Plans” (with Emily Cook & Allison Luedtke). *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 195, 2022.

“Do Health Insurance Mandates Spillover to Education? Evidence from Michigan's Autism Insurance Mandate” (with Scott Imberman & Michael Lovenheim). *Journal of Health Economics*, 80, 2021.

“Community College Program Choices in the Wake of Local Job Losses.” *Journal of Labor Economics*, 39(4), 2021.

“Effects of Reduced Community College Tuition on College Choices and Degree Completion.”
Education Finance and Policy, 16(3), 2021.

WORKING PAPERS

“Distance to Degrees: How College Proximity Shapes Students’ Enrollment Choices and Attainment Across Race-Ethnicity and Socioeconomic Status” (with Kalena Cortes, Lois Miller, & Camila Morales). NBER Working Paper No. 33337, Annenberg Institute EdWorkingPaper No. 24-1055 & IZA Discussion Paper No. 17338. Revisions requested at *Economics of Education Review*.

“COVID and Higher Education” (with Emily Cook). Book chapter in preparation for *AEFP Live Handbook on Education Finance and Policy Research*.

“Suspended from Work and School: Impacts of Layoff Events and Unemployment Insurance on Disciplinary Incidence” (with Jo Alkhafaji-King & Austin Smith). Annenberg Institute EdWorkingPaper No. 23-839 & IZA Discussion Paper No. 16423. *Under Review*.

“Returns to School Spending in Rural America: Evidence from Wisconsin’s Sparsity Aid Program” (with Cody Orr & Salem Rogers). Annenberg Institute EdWorkingPaper No. 23-724 & IZA Discussion Paper No. 15915.

WORKS IN PROGRESS

“Political Views & College Choices in a Polarized America” (with Emily Cook & Paola Ugalde Araya)

“Estimating the Value of a New Postsecondary Credential: An Audit Study of Community College Bachelor’s Degrees” (with Kalena Cortes, Lois Miller, Camila Morales, and Julia Turner)

“Abortion Access and Inequalities in Education and Labor Market Outcomes: Evidence from Texas Policy Changes” (with James Flynn & Jiee Zhong)

“Long-Run Effects of Public Investments in Higher Education Access: Evidence from the Community College Expansion Period” (with Emma LaGuardia & Gregory Niemesh)

“Inclusive Introductory Course Material to Broaden Participation in College Majors: A Randomized Curriculum Intervention” (with Peter Nencka, Carla Nietfeld, Aiday Sikhova, & Bruce Weinberg)

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS & INVITED SEMINARS

2025 (scheduled): Northern Kentucky University, Oberlin College, AEFP Annual Conference

2024: Bates College, AEFP Annual Conference, NBER Financing Higher Education Meeting, Miami University (brownbag), Kent State University, University of Tennessee, APPAM Fall Research Conference

2023: ASSA Annual Meeting, University of Connecticut, AEFP Annual Conference, Conference on Skills and Postsecondary Response (University of Michigan)

2022: APPAM Fall Research Conference (delayed from 2021), University of Central Oklahoma, Ohio State University, NYU Wagner, Elon University, RAND Corporation, APPAM Fall Research Conference, NBER Education Program Fall Meeting

2021: University of Memphis, University of North Texas, AEFPP Annual Conference, SOLE Annual Meetings, University of Exeter, Liberal Arts College Labor & Public Conference, WEAI Annual Conference, Kansas State University, Davidson College

2020: University of Notre Dame, Miami University, Wake Forest University, Dickinson College, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, The Brookings Institution

2019: AEFPP Annual Conference, University of Michigan H2D2 Day (poster session), University of Toledo, SOLE Annual Meetings, UM-MSU-UWO Labor Day, APPAM International Conference, APPAM Fall Research Conference, American University, University of Michigan CIERS, University of Texas at Dallas

2018: AEFPP Annual Conference, University of Michigan CIERS, APPAM Fall Research Conference

GRANTS RECEIVED

Miami University Farmer School of Business Summer Research Grant: “Abortion Access and Inequalities in Education and Labor Market Outcomes: Evidence from Texas Policy Changes” (PI). May – August 2025. Funding: \$10,000.

Miami University Ryan Center for Educational Opportunity: “Political Views & College Choices in a Polarized America” (PI). May 2024 – December 2025. Funding: \$10,000.

Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation: “Impact of Sparsity Funding in State Formulas” (PI). August 2021 – August 2022. Funding: \$78,983.

FELLOWSHIPS, HONORS, & AWARDS

Creativity & Innovation Award, Miami University	2022
Honorable Mention, Jean Flannigan Outstanding Dissertation Award, AEFPP	2021
University Distinguished Fellowship, MSU	2015-2020
Department of Economics Excellence-in-Teaching Award, MSU	2018
Red Cedar Award (best third-year paper), MSU	2018
Compton-Rose Prize (top graduating economics major), Ursinus College	2015

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Miami University

ECO 415/515/630 Topics in Microeconomics (graduate)

ECO 315 Intermediate Microeconomic Theory

ECO 462 Economics of Compensation

Michigan State University

EC 480, Analysis of Labor Markets

EC 202, Introduction to Macroeconomics

ADVISING

Miami University

Undergraduate Honors Theses – with initial placement:

Maya Serrano – in progress

M.A. Theses – with initial placement:

John Waterhouse – in progress

Kailey Kraft, 2024 – Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago

Teresa Maloney, 2023 (co-advisor: Peter Nencka) – Deloitte

Emma LaGuardia, 2022 (co-advisor: Gregory Niemesh) – Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago

PROFESSIONAL & UNIVERSITY SERVICE

Professional Service

Mentor, Association for Mentoring & Inclusion in Economics (2022-2023)

Program Committee, AEFPP Annual Conference (2022, 2023)

Program Committee, APPAM Fall Research Conference (2023, 2024)

Session Organizer, APPAM Fall Research Conference (2018, 2019, 2022)

External Reviewer (ad hoc) for William T. Grant Foundation

University Service

Miami University

Member, FSB Dean's Faculty Advisory Committee (2022 – present)

Member, Economics Assistant Professor Search Committee (2022-2023)

Member, Economics of Disadvantage Project (2021 – present)

Member, Economics Graduate Studies Committee (2021 – present)

Member, Economics Visiting Assistant Professor Search Committee (2021)

Member, Economics Seminar Committee (2020 – present)

Member, Economics Diversity and Inclusion Task Force (2020 – 2021)

Advisor, Women in Economics Club (2020 – present)

REFEREE

Economics of Education Review (7), Education Finance and Policy (5), Journal of Public Economics (4), Journal of Policy Analysis & Management (3), Journal of Health Economics (3), Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis (2), Journal of Human Resources (2), Quarterly Journal of Economics (2), AERA Open, American Education Research Journal, Contemporary Economic Policy, Economic Inquiry, Education Economics, Higher Education, Higher Education Policy, Journal of Labor Economics, Journal of Political Economy Microeconomics, Journal of the European Economic Association, Labour Economics, Review of Economics and Statistics