

# Kristin M. Vrona

Curriculum Vitae  
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Department of Economics  
Northern Illinois University  
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**NIU Job Market Coordinator**  
Dr. Anna Klis  
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Ms. Debbie Woolbright  
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## EDUCATION

Ph.D. Economics, Northern Illinois University, Expected July 2024  
Dissertation: “Analyzing Mental Health and Labor Supply”  
M.A. Economics, Northern Illinois University, 2018  
B.S. Economics, *summa cum laude*, Minor in Psychology, Northern Illinois University, 2016

**Fields:** Health & labor economics, econometrics, public sector economics

## DISSERTATION COMMITTEE & REFERENCES

Dr. Virginia Wilcox (chair)      Dr. Maria Ponomareva      Dr. Anna Klis  
Email: [vlw@niu.edu](mailto:vlw@niu.edu)      Email: [mponomareva@niu.edu](mailto:mponomareva@niu.edu)      Email: [aklis@niu.edu](mailto:aklis@niu.edu)

## RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

**NIU Institute for the Study of the Environment, Sustainability, & Energy**, 2022-present  
Sponsor: Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR); Project value: \$1.35 million

- Contribute to a multi-disciplinary team developing IDNR Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreational Plan
- Organize and facilitate focus groups with Illinois recreation stakeholders
- Advise IDNR in resolving inefficiencies in funding allotment using economic indices and GIS technology

### **NIU Department of Economics**

Independent Study, Supervisor: Dr. Anna Klis, Spring 2019

- Preliminary research on mechanism design within firms and optimal insurance packages
- Examined equilibrium outcomes of a multi-stage game where employers choose to fully comply with mental health parity legislation or to shirk compliance with cost containment methods like mental healthcare carve-outs; worker decisions on utilization of care depend on their need for care and on the signaling cost associated with opting-into a carve-out policy that may lead to suboptimal treatment

## PAPERS

### **Moderate to Severe Diagnosed Mental Disorders and Absenteeism** (*manuscript in preparation*)

This study examines the relationship between mental health, job factors, and work absenteeism. I examine the impact of diagnosed mental illness (identified using clinical classification code structure from the MEPS), as well as qualitative self-report measures of point-in-time mental health, on annual health-related work absences for working adults. It investigates how job factors may alleviate or exacerbate this relationship. Findings indicate that individuals reporting high mental distress with an official diagnosis exhibit fewer absences than cohorts exhibiting equivalent distress levels and no diagnostic history. Mental illness contributes to increased absenteeism, amounting to about one extra day annually. Additionally, we observe an indirect influence of benefit packages promoting worker wellness: while these benefits generally increase absenteeism by encouraging labor substitution for health-related time, they mitigate the impact of mental illness on absenteeism.

### **Mental Health & Productivity** (*in progress*)

I investigate the relationship between healthcare utilization and productive outcomes for workers with mental health issues. Using healthcare data, I analyze how the generosity of health insurance impacts productivity through two main channels: by increasing time away from work for healthcare utilization and by mitigating the impact of diagnosed mental illness on absenteeism. The findings suggest that higher healthcare utilization associated with diagnosed mental illness improves productive outcomes, highlighting the importance of proactive approaches to mental health care. Reactive cost-containment measures, such as managed care carve outs, may discount long-term cost implications, potentially leading to employee turnover and decreased commitment.

## EMPLOYMENT

- 2022-present Graduate Fellow, NIU Institute for the Study of the Environment, Sustainability, & Energy (ISESE)
- 2017-2022 Teaching Assistant, NIU Department of Economics
- 2016-2017 Cost Control Analyst, Department of Business Analysis & Planning, MOL America Inc.  
(Mitsui O.S.K. Liner North American Corporate Headquarters, Lombard, IL)

## AWARDS, HONORS, & FELLOWSHIPS

- 2024 Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society (awarded to selected students within top 10% of NIU Graduate School)
- 2023 Honoree, Illinois State Senate Hearing, February 5 (IESE team recognized for spearheading grant review funding allocations for largest round of recreational funding in IL history)
- 2022 Dissertation Completion Fellowship, Northern Illinois University (declined in favor of graduate fellowship opportunity through IDNR)
- 2018 Outstanding Graduate Student Award, NIU Graduate School
- 2017 **MOL Spot Award, MOL America, Inc.:** Recognized for revamping data processes and validation techniques for expensive ports, and training analysts from other departments to streamline invoice validation using the new methods

- 2017 Kellstadt Graduate Scholarship, DePaul University Kellstadt Graduate School of Business (declined)
- 2016 Dean's List, Northern Illinois University, 2014 - 2016
- 2015 Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society, Spring 2015 - May 2016 (Awarded to selected students within top 7.5% of the second-semester Junior Class)
- 2013 Academic Excellence List, Northern Illinois University, 2012-2013

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

- 2024 Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative: Human Subjects Research Training, February 22
- 2023 IDNR & Federal DNR Collaboration Meeting, February 5
- 2022 Primary Grant Reviewer, IDNR Open Space Land Acquisition and Development Program
- 2019 Attendee, Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago 12th Annual Risk Conference

## **CAMPUS & DEPARTMENTAL TALKS**

- 2021 Paper Presented: Moderate to Severe Diagnosed Mental Disorders and Absenteeism, NIU Department of Economics Graduate Colloquium Seminar, March 24
- 2018 Topic: labor productivity and health, ECON 700: Labor Economics I, NIU Department of Economics, November 27
- 2018 Paper Presented: Mental Health & Productivity, NIU Department of Economics Graduate Colloquium Seminar, November 23

## **DEPARTMENTAL & UNIVERSITY SERVICE**

- 2019 Academic Advisor, NIU Transfer Student Open House Days, October 18 & November 11
- 2019 Department Representative, NIU Major and Minors Fair, September 18
- 2018 Academic Advisor, NIU Transfer Student Open House Days, October 8 & November 12
- 2018 Department Representative, NIU Major and Minors Fair, September 12

## **TECHNICAL SKILLS**

R, R Studio  
 SAS  
 L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X  
 Microsoft Office

## **TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

### **Graduate**

Public Sector Economics I TA, Dr. Anna Klis | F20  
 Microeconomic Analysis I (instructional role) TA, Dr. Anna Klis | SP20, F18

## Undergraduate

Principles of Macroeconomics

**Instructor of record** | SU22, SU21, SP21

Intermediate Macroeconomics

TA, Dr. Evan Anderson | SP22

Basic Econometrics and Econometric Applications

TA, Dr. Maria Ponomareva | F21

Academic Advisor

TA, Dr. Tammy Batson | F19, SP19, SP18, F17