

Kristin M. Vrona

Curriculum Vitae

May 3, 2024

DeKalb, IL 60115
Email: kvrona2@niu.edu

Homepage: kristinvrona.com
LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/kristin-vrona](https://www.linkedin.com/in/kristin-vrona)

EDUCATION

Ph.D. in Economics Expected July 2024

Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL

Dissertation Title: “Mental Health & Labor Supply: the Role of Benefit Packages”

Committee: Virginia Wilcox (chair), Maria Ponomareva, Anna Klis

M.A. in Economics 2018

Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL

B.S. in Economics (Minor in Psychology), *summa cum laude* 2016

Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL

Fields: Econometrics, health economics, labor economics

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Graduate Fellow 2022-present

Institute for the Study of the Environment, Sustainability, & Energy, NIU, DeKalb, IL

Sponsor: Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) | Project Value: \$ 1.35 million

- Contribute to a multi-disciplinary team enhancing the IDNR Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreational Plan (SCORP)
- Design and implement surveys and focus groups for IL recreation stakeholders & conduct rigorous analysis and interpretation of survey data
- Oversee the work of undergraduate students
- Acted as a primary grant reviewer for Open Space Land Acquisition & Development (OSLAD) Program in 2022, leading to highest funding for distressed communities in program history

Analyst, Business Analysis & Planning 2016-2017

M.O.L America, Inc., Chicago, IL

- Achieved 8% margin of error reduction in inter-coastal container and chassis movement cost projections within 3 months
- Presented model performance and updated projections to upper-management monthly
- Developed and led sessions to demonstrate streamlined standard operating procedures
- MOL Spot Award, May 2017

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Doctoral Researcher 2019-present

Department of Economics, Northern Illinois University

- Assessed models of firm and worker behavior when labor force participants’ preferences are affixed to employer-sponsored health insurance
- Explored the interaction between mental health and physical health in influencing productive outcomes
- Proposed a true causal estimate of mental illness’s impact on absenteeism for employed workers, distinguishing between time-invariant diagnoses and time-varying symptomatology
- Conducted extensive literature review of empirical studies examining the interplay of benefit packages, adverse selection, and the cost of switching jobs
- Analyzed equilibrium outcomes in scenarios where employers choose to comply or shirk compliance with federal mental health parity legislation

- Utilizing MEPS data, analyzed roles of healthcare quality, affinity toward risk, & trust in providers on health-related productive metrics

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Instructional

Macroeconomics, undergraduate	SU22, SU21, SP21 IOR: Kristin Vrona (self)
Public Sector Economics, graduate	F20 IOR: Anna Klis
Microeconomic Analysis, graduate	SP20, F18 IOR: Anna Klis

Non-Instructional (Tutoring/Mentorship)

Intermediate Macroeconomics, undergraduate	SP22 IOR: Evan Anderson
Econometric Analysis, undergraduate	F21 Maria Ponomareva
Government & Business, undergraduate	SP19 Tammy Batson

AWARDS, HONORS, & FELLOWSHIPS

2023	Honoree, Illinois congressional session (February 28) & gubernatorial press conference (March 1): <i>IESE team recognized for spearheading grant review funding allocations</i>
2022	Dissertation Fellowship, Northern Illinois University: <i>tuition waiver, year 2022-2023</i>
2018	Outstanding Graduate Student Award, Northern Illinois University, Graduate School, Department of Economics
2017	MOL Spot Award, MOL America, Inc., May: <i>received monetary award for streamlining data processes and developing standard operating procedures for cross-departmental implementation</i>
2017	Kellstadt Graduate Scholarship, DePaul University Kellstadt Graduate School of Business: <i>declined</i>
2016	Departmental Honors in Economics, Northern Illinois University
2014-2016	Dean's List, Northern Illinois University
2012-2013	Academic Excellence List, Northern Illinois University

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

2022	Primary Grant Reviewer, Open Space Land Acquisition and Development Program, IDNR
2022	The Committee on the Status of Women in the Economics Profession (CSWEP) Mentorship Seminar <i>selected based on submitted dissertation abstract.</i>
2020	CSWEP Successfully Navigating Your Economics PhD, November 20
2019	Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago 12th Annual Risk Conference
2019	Department of Economics ECONference, April
2017	NIU Department of Economics ECONference, April 26

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	Academic Advisor, NIU Transfer Student Open House Days, March
2018	Co-Organizer & Department Representative, NIU Spring Internship & Job Fair, February 20

Presentations & 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

SELECTED PAPERS

Manuscripts in Preparation

Moderate to Severe Diagnosed Mental Disorders and Absenteeism (Job Market Paper)

This paper investigates the influence of mental illness on health-dependent labor supply using data from the Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (MEPS) focusing on employed adults. It examines the effects of diagnosed mental illness and self-reported measures of mental well-being on health-induced absenteeism, considering job characteristics' role in amplifying or mitigating this impact. Results reveal a robust estimate of an additional day of absence per year attributed to mental illness or related symptoms. Furthermore, the study finds that employer-sponsored health benefits, while generally increasing absenteeism by promoting labor substitution for health-related needs, serve to alleviate the impact of mental illness on absenteeism. Notably, individuals reporting high mental distress alongside an official diagnosis exhibit lower absenteeism compared to cohorts with equivalent distress levels but no diagnostic history, eluding to the importance of promoting mental well-being among workers for firms aiming to optimize long run productivity.

Research in Progress

Health and Labor Supply: the Role of Fringe Benefits as Moderators

This study develops a comprehensive theoretical model integrating health production and time allocation within the context of an employed household. For an individual to enter the labor force, they must be offered an implicit contract that ensures the maintenance of some reservation level of health that can promote both household utility and adequate performance in the job position. Building upon this framework, empirical hypotheses are formulated to investigate the moderating role of fringe benefits on the relationship between health and labor supply.

Employer-Sponsored Insurance & Job Commitment

Reactive cost-containment measures, such as managed care carve outs, may discount long-term cost implications such as decreased worker commitment. Using the MEPS insurance component data, I analyze how the design of health benefit packages influences workers' propensity to job-switch.

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Statistical Software: Proficient in R & SAS; Familiar with STATA

Presentation & Reporting: Proficient in Microsoft Office — advanced use of Excel for data refinement and visualization with customized VBA macros

L^AT_EX(expert)

Intermediate knowledge of Python

Coursework experience with Java, C++, Maple, Matlab

AFFILIATIONS & PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

Phi Kappa Phi National Honor Society, Northern Illinois University Chapter

Institute for the Study of the Environment, Energy, and Sustainability, Northern Illinois University

REFERENCES

Dissertation Committee Members

Virginia Wilcox

Assistant Chair, Department of Economics
Northern Illinois University
Email: vlw@niu.edu

Maria Ponomareva

Department of Economics
Northern Illinois University
Email: mponomareva@niu.edu

Anna Klis

Department of Economics
Northern Illinois University
Email: aklis@niu.edu

Other References

Thomas Skuzinski (current supervisor)

Director, Institute for the Study of the Environment,
Sustainability & Energy
Northern Illinois University
Email: tskuzinski@niu.edu