Sarah Robinson

Application for Health Economics Research Boot Camp for Graduate Students (2019)

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Recommendation Letter Writer:

Youssef Benzarti
Assistant Professor of Economics, University of California Santa Barbara
Faculty Research Fellow, NBER
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Sarah Robinson

2015 North Hall
University of California
Santa Barbara, CA 93106
sarahrobinson@ucsb.edu

Research Interests Healthcare Economics, Public Economics, Behavioral Economics

Education

University of California, Santa Barbara

Ph.D., Economics — Expected 2022
M.A., Economics — 2018

Fellowships & Awards:

Research Quarter Fellowship, 2019
Gretler Fellowship, 2019
Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award, 2019
Microeconomics Preliminary Exam: Ph.D. Pass with Distinction, 2018
Mortimer Andron Fellowship, 2018 – 2022
Regents Fellowship, 2017 – 2018

Research Assistant Experience:

Research assistant for Prof. Alisa Tazhitdinova & Youssef Benzarti, 2019
Research assistant for Prof. Youssef Benzarti, 2019

Courses Taken:

Fall 2019	Tax Incidence & Behavioral Public Finance	
Spring 2019	Econometric Theory	
	Environmental Economics	
Winter 2019	Labor Economics	
	Behavioral Theory	
Fall 2018	Health Economics	*(audit; only offered at undergraduate level)*
	Public Finance	
	Experimental Economics	
	Numerical Methods & Dynamic Optimization	
	Natural Resources	
2017 – 2018	Microeconomic Theory	*(3 quarters)*
	Macroeconomic Theory	*(3 quarters)*
	Econometrics	*(3 quarters)*

Claremont McKenna College, Claremont, CA

B.A., Philosophy, Politics & Economics, *magna cum laude* — 2013

Senior Thesis: "Is There a Right to Healthcare? An Analysis from the Perspective of Liberty and Libertarianism"

Fellowships & Awards:

Phi Beta Kappa

Edward J. Sexton PPE Fellow

Robert C. Byrd Honors Scholar

Dean's Honor List, 2010 – 2013 (3.91 GPA)

Experience

Deloitte Consulting LLP, San Francisco, CA — August 2013 – October 2016
Strategy & Operations

Consultant

- Worked with private sector clients, such as healthcare providers, high technology, and pharmaceutical & consumer products companies, as well as social sector clients, including foundations and nonprofits
- Project experiences include consumer analytics and insight development, operational metric improvement and cost reduction, and growth strategy and strategic choice making
- Conducted data analysis, data visualization, financial modeling, market analysis, and client interviews; developed and presented deliverables; and managed teams, timelines, and client relationships

Claremont McKenna College — September – December 2012
Robert Day School of Economics

Statistics Tutor

- Reviewed material, answered questions, and graded work

The Boeing Company, Seattle, WA
Operations, Analysis, Modeling & Simulation

Summer Intern — Summer 2010 & 2012
Part-Time Student Engineer — August – December 2010

- Performed policy analysis for internal and external customers using simulation (system dynamics) modeling
- Responsibilities included literature research, statistical analysis, model development, and sensitivity analysis

Software

STATA, Python, MATLAB, SPSS, Microsoft Office (Excel, PowerPoint, Word)

Sarah Robinson

The Health Economics Research Boot Camp is an extraordinary opportunity for me to learn from active researchers and sharpen my long-standing interest in the field. As a third year student at UC Santa Barbara, I would particularly benefit from this chance to be exposed to the frontier of the literature, and I am eager to use my experience at the workshop to improve my current and future research in health economics.

I am currently working on a project, joint with Professor Youssef Benzarti, on the effect of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) Medicaid expansion on hospitals. As this Medicaid expansion is expected to cost the federal government $62B in 2019 (CBO 2018), it is critical to understand the beneficiaries of this spending. In particular, hospitals that had been providing uncompensated care can now capture new revenue because the expansion reduced the population of uninsured. We compare hospitals in states that expanded Medicaid to those in states that did not, and further exploit the heterogeneity in pre-ACA Medicaid eligibility and expansion timing by state. By controlling for quantity of care provided, we can separate the effect of newly covered individuals consuming more care from the effect of reduced uncompensated care. Furthermore, detailed information on hospital finances allows us to identify the downstream incidence of this increased revenue – how it is divided between wages, capital improvements, etc. We plan to also explore heterogeneity in response by hospital type, such as urban vs. rural or hospital ownership status.

Attending the Boot Camp will be an especially beneficial opportunity for me, as my department at UCSB has limited resources in this field. Because there are no graduate-level courses offered in health economics, I audited the undergraduate-level course taught by Professor Ted Frech during my second year. I have been working with Professor Heather

Royer and other students to begin a reading group focused on health and healthcare in the department. Beyond these, there are very few opportunities for me to learn from active researchers. I hope to use the Boot Camp to become more familiar with influential and new literature, identify important research questions, and learn to better speak to the community and interests of the field.

Prior to starting graduate school, my work experience in the private sector shaped my interests in healthcare markets. As a strategy and operations consultant with Deloitte, I worked with clients across the healthcare industry, including hospitals, pharmacies, and pharmaceutical companies. I gained institutional knowledge on how their businesses run, as well as a deep understanding of how actors across the ecosystem interact. I also learned that my passion isn't in helping individual firms maximize profits, but rather in studying the network of complex relationships between providers, insurers, manufacturers, and consumers. I chose to pursue a PhD in Economics in order to gather powerful tools and experience. I am particularly interested in how consumers make purchasing decisions in insurance and care markets; distortions and imperfections in cost and quality information; and the effects of government interventions in healthcare. Alongside my completed coursework in public economics and behavioral economics, the Boot Camp will be an important catalyst as I pursue a career of research in health economics.

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I am writing this letter in strong support of Sarah Robinson's application for the NBER Health Economics Research Boot Camp. I will cut straight to the chase: Sarah is truly impressive and would, without a doubt, greatly benefit from attending the boot camp. Below I explain (1) why I think she is outstanding, and (2) why, coming out of UC Santa Barbara, she would greatly benefit from being exposed to leading Health Economics researchers.

I got to meet Sarah during my first year at UC Santa Barbara (I recently moved there from UCLA). Sarah independently reached out to me, while in her second year, to discuss research ideas. Over the course of a few meetings, Sarah came up with what I thought was an idea worth pursing, which aims at analyzing the labor supply responses of low income individuals to a Medicaid income threshold. Sarah came up with a clean and precise identification strategy and a source of data to implement it on. Unfortunately, the dataset she had at the time was not good enough. So I decided to put her in touch with an economist at the US Department of Treasury who works on Health Economics, in order to access the US Tax data. Sarah has reached out to him and they have been exchanging emails, which hopefully will result in her accessing the tax return dataset and implementing her research design. Needless to say, I was truly impressed by Sarah's skills while working on this project: (1) her ability to find an interesting and policy relevant question (2) her ability to come up with a clean, precise and implementable identification strategy and (3) her drive to explore any possibility to acquire new sources of data. In my opinion, these are the three most important skills for an applied researcher and the fact that Sarah mastered them already in her second year is truly outstanding. Since then, I have also been working with Sarah on another project, which estimates the effect of the Affordable Care Act Medicaid expansion on hospital activity. She describes the project in her application.

Sarah is truly outstanding: she is by far the best student I have interacted with at UCSB. And she truly shines compared to most UCLA graduate students I have interacted with during my two years there. That being said, given that UCSB is relatively isolated research-wise, she will and does suffer from not being exposed to cutting-edge health economics research, which, I am worried, will prevent her from realizing her true potential. This is why I think she would greatly benefit from attending this boot camp and I really hope you will take that into account when considering her application.

To summarize, Sarah is truly outstanding, will undoubtedly make a great applied micro researcher and would greatly benefit from being exposed to leading researchers in Health Economics.

Yours Sincerely,

Youssef Benzarti, Assistant Professor of Economics

University of California, Santa Barbara and National Bureau of Economic Research