Anna Esenther
Allston, MA
annaesenther@g.harvard.edu
508-215-9655
January 2025

Dear Professors Bryan, Ganguli, and Meyers,

I am writing to apply for the 2025 NBER Innovation Research Boot Camp. I am a second-year PhD student in Economics at Harvard University, where my primary area of interest is women's health economics. My recommendation letter will be provided by Professor David Cutler.

My current interests focus on how women's health affects economic outcomes. Since it is clear to me that women's health does indeed have large economically important effects, a natural follow-up question is what innovation policies are most likely to be transformative for women's health and therefore economic outcomes. My hope for the boot camp is that by teaching me the key models, ideas, data sources, and research strategies in innovation economics and exposing me to the past and present questions innovation scholars are tackling, I will learn how to expand my research agenda in women's health to include innovation economics.

Thank you for considering my application. I look forward to the possibility of attending this program and identifying useful research directions in innovation as they relate to women's health. Please contact me at annaesenther@g.harvard.edu for any additional information.

Sincerely,
Anna Esenther

Anna Esenther

annaesenther@g.harvard.edu
508-215-9655
Allston, MA

Education

PhD in Economics, Harvard University	2023 – Present
MSc by Research in Statistics, Oxford University	2021 – 2022
MSc in Neuroscience, Oxford University	2020 – 2021
MEd in Early Childhood Education, Moreland University	2019 – 2020
BS in Economics, Michigan State University (MSU)	2015 – 2019
BA in Education (Elementary Math Specialization), MSU	2015 – 2019
BA in Statistics, MSU	2015 – 2019
BS in Psychology, MSU	2015 – 2019
BA in History, MSU	2015 – 2019

Positions Held

Extended Term Substitute, First Grade, Graham & Parks, Cambridge, MA	2024
Predoctoral Fellow for Joseph Altonji, Yale University Department of Economics	2022 – 2023
Nursery Afterschool Club Teacher, Grandpont Nursery School, Oxford, UK	2021 – 2022
First Grade Teacher, Inca Elementary, Buckeye, AZ	2019 – 2020

Fields of Interest

Health Economics, Labor Economics, Human Capital

Works in Progress

The Menopause Penalty: The effect of the menopausal transition on labor market outcomes

- Will travel to Denmark in summer 2025 to analyze data on reproductive health, menopausal symptoms, and general health from a survey completed by 22% of women in Denmark aged 45-59, linked to administrative data with employment history

Postpartum Physical and Mental Health Consequences of C-Sections

- With hospital collaborators, will instrument for C-section delivery by doctor's propensity to perform C-sections in low-risk cases to study postpartum effects of marginal C-sections

Masters's Thesis

Econometrics Thesis advised by Professor Frank Windmeijer, Oxford 2022

- Assumption violations in instrumental variables regression: weak instruments in subvector testing under heteroskedasticity and assessing the exclusion restriction

Awards

- 2020 Rhodes Scholar
- Presidential Scholar, Harvard
- University Distinguished Scholar, MSU (4-year merit-based full-ride scholarship)
- Outstanding Senior in Economics 2019, MSU

PhD Coursework

Fall 2023
- Microeconomic Theory
- Macroeconomic Theory
- Principles of Econometrics
- Labor Market Analysis

Spring 2024
- Microeconomic Theory
- Macroeconomic Theory
- Econometric Methods
- History and Human Capital

Summer 2024
- Computing for Economists

Fall 2024
- Public Economics and Fiscal Policy
- Corporate Finance and Banking
- Experimental Economics
- Sparse Inference

Spring 2025
- Theory and Empirical Perspective on Entrepreneurship and Innovation
- Health Economics
- Topics in Econometrics (Causal Inference)
- Macro-Finance: Rational and Behavioral

Personal Essay

My research interests center around human capital, including its development, deployment, and depreciation. Within this agenda, the economics of women's health is currently the topic of most interest to me and my main research project at present involves studying the labor market outcomes of women undergoing the menopausal transition. I have a collaborator in Denmark who will help me access Danish administrative data, linked to the results of a survey about menopause completed by 22% of Danish women aged 45-59, to characterize the impact on women's earnings and labor force participation.

Despite the well-known existence of a variety of unpleasant menopausal symptoms (e.g. hot flashes, night sweats, depression, irritability, anxiety, reduced cognitive performance, vulvovaginal atrophy and sexual dysfunction, incontinence, weight gain, joint pain, fatigue, and difficulty sleeping) and the fact that most women experience at least one menopausal symptom, research in this area, as is the case for many women's health topics, is sparse. There are so many basic questions about female biology that remain unanswered: What causes labor to start? How do estrogen and progesterone affect the brain? What drives the decline of egg quality over time? Why is chronic vulvar pain so common? How do the vaginal microbiome and gut microbiome influence female health conditions? Why are some women so sensitive to normal hormonal fluctuations? Is it safe to take menopausal hormone therapy indefinitely? What causes uterine fibroids, PCOS, endometriosis, brain fog, and other common but poorly understood female ills?

Women's health is an area greatly in need of innovation.

While my current research agenda focuses on estimating the effects of women's health shocks, we clearly need more scientists to study the functioning of the female body and devise treatments, including pharmaceuticals and consumer products, for the troublesome and too often debilitating symptoms of female health events and conditions. This observation has led to my new interest in entrepreneurship and innovation.

Although I have not yet conducted work directly on the drivers of innovation in women's health, I'm currently enrolled in an economics of entrepreneurship course and I've started thinking about the key questions I would like to see answered in this space. For instance, how complementary or substitutable are public research funding and private entrepreneurship in driving innovation and under what circumstances? What types of investments are likely to generate the largest, most impactful innovations and what does optimal innovation policy in women's health entail? Attending this boot camp would help me figure out what questions I should be asking and how to approach them rigorously, through learning from the past and present work of innovation scholars.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS

DAVID M. CUTLER
Otto Eckstein Professor of Applied Economics

LITTAUER 226
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138
(617) 496-5216 FAX: (617) 495-7730
dcutler@harvard.edu

January 31, 2025

To Whom It May Concern:

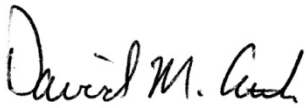
I am writing in recommendation of Anna Esenther for the Innovation Boot Camp. I recommend Anna extremely highly.

Anna is a second year PhD student in the economics department at Harvard. She is interested in studying women's health and its intersection with labor and health markets. Anna has noticed the paucity of research on women's health issues and wants this to factor into her research. Why is there so little research on women's health, and what is the impact of research when it is done? She is also interested in child health and cognitive ability and has been working on the Harvard Center for the Developing Child. Her research tastes involve use of secondary data, collecting new administrative data, and possibly collecting new data.

Anna is a phenomenal student. She is bright, hard-working, and extremely engaging. Although it is very early in her graduate school career, Anna has the potential to be a superstar.

For all of these reasons, I recommend Anna Esenther very highly for the Innovation Boot Camp. Please contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,



David M. Cutler