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Selection Committee
National Bureau of Economic Research

Dear members of the search committee,

I am writing to apply to participate in the tutorial on Digital Economics and Artificial Intelligence to be held at Stanford University. I am an applied economist working in labor economics and public policy. I am currently a Postdoctoral Fellow at the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER), and I received my Ph.D. in Agricultural and Applied Economics from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in May 2026. Although I understand that the tutorial is targeted to graduate students, I am drawn to apply as I find the tutorial to be an opportunity to learn and get closer to the frontier on topics that are closely aligned with my research. I would be delighted to be considered to participate.

One of my lines of research studies the gaps minority groups face in labor markets. Together with my coauthors, I designed and implemented a correspondence study in Malaysia to test for the presence of discrimination, and the role of signaling soft skills in attenuating discrimination gaps. We find that Malay and Indian sounding names are 11 and 14 percentage points less likely to be contacted than Chinese sounding names. Then, we study how leadership and teamwork skills affect hiring. We find that soft skills on their own are not differentially demanded, but the teamwork skill narrows the discrimination gap by 33% for Malay sounding names and 43% for Indian sounding names. Our results suggest that signaling soft skills could be effective for candidates facing barriers to enter the labor market. The findings informed policy makers at the World Bank, and a previous version of this paper was published as a World Bank Policy Research Working Paper (No. 10755), and Institute of Labor Economics (IZA) Discussion Paper (No. 16993). In this project, I was able to implement the correspondence study and then track the actions taken by employers over time. However, this information is currently not part of the most recent version of our paper, and I think being exposed to research related to digital economics and AI can help me think more carefully on how to use tracking information to understand algorithms used for hiring.

Another paper in this theme aims to understand promotion gaps in US higher education. My co-authors and I use annual personnel records for faculty at 439 institutions, and construct

measures of race and gender and introduce novel image-based measures of skin tone using artificial intelligence tools. We establish that female faculty present lighter skin tones than male faculty on average, a difference that persists across race, rank, and discipline. We also find that career-progression gaps are substantial by race and gender. Then we use large language models to classify publication content, underrepresented and darker-skinned faculty publish disproportionately on topics associated with lower retention. This project has exposed me to work at the frontier of models and tools, and I will be presenting our research at the 2027 ASSA Annual Meeting. While this paper uses AI tools, there are certainly multiple angles that we can be overlooking given the amounts of information we have available and learning about AI uses in the field could be helpful to improve our uses of AI as a tool to carry a pipeline of tasks.

The two projects I described earlier are part of my dissertation titled "Essays in Labor Economics". My committee was formed by Professors: Sarah Janzen, Marieke Kleemans, Andrew Hultgren, and Nicholas Paulson. Relevant to this application, my graduate coursework included Econometric Theory, Applied Microeconometrics, and Big Data-Empirical Economics (Introductory Machine Learning). Hence, this opportunity is key to my commitment to staying current with modern methods, using AI as a research tool, and exploring questions that both connect with my interests, and expose me to new topics. Overall, I find this opportunity to be an excellent fit for my research agenda and goals.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if there is any additional information that I can provide. Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



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