

The Report of the Hispanic Economic Outlook Committee

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The American Society of Hispanic Economists (ASHE)—a member of the Allied Social Science Association—is a professional association of economists and other social scientists who are concerned with the under-representation of Hispanic Americans in the economics profession and with the lack of research generated on Hispanic American economic and policy issues. Our primary goals include:

1. Promoting the vitality of Hispanics in the economics profession through education, service, and excellence;
2. Promoting rigorous research on economic and policy issues affecting U.S. Hispanic communities and the nation as a whole; and
3. Engaging more Hispanic Americans to effectively participate in the economics profession.

For more information about ASHE, please contact our current president Fernando Lozano at fernando.lozano@pomona.edu or visit our website at www.asheweb.net.

Letter from the ASHE President

Fernando Lozano¹

Dear Colleagues,

I would like to start this letter with a personal anecdote. I was on the job market in January 2005. I remember being exhausted from interviews, yet also being amazed, as I was hanging out with Joseph Guzman, Mark Hugo Lopez, and Marie Mora. All three were economists whose work I knew well, and had cited in my dissertation. I was meeting them all for the first time. This was my first glimpse into the effort to create an association that promotes and supports economists with similar backgrounds and research interests to my own. I was bewildered by the fact that the AEA would not recognize ASHE because we didn't have a large enough membership – when one of the goals of ASHE was to overcome under-representation of Hispanics in the field. Notwithstanding, our efforts continued, and this year marks our ten-year anniversary as a recognized organization! An organization that promotes scholarship of Hispanics in the United States, and by Hispanics in the Economics profession.

I would be remiss if I did not recognize the efforts of so many of you during these ten years. I am not able to list everyone who has contributed to ASHE during these ten years, I would like to recognize the work by this year's Hispanic Economic Outlook (HEO) committee: Gerard M. Acosta, Alberto Dávila, Jose Fernandez, John Francois, Alfredo Romero Aguirre, and Isabel Ruiz. The HEO is our association's main vehicle for promoting and disseminating ASHE's goals and work. Assembling and editing the HEO is a large and time-consuming enterprise. I also want to thank Monica Garcia-Perez, Mary Lopez, Jose R. Guardado, Sandra A. Rivera, Alberto Dávila, and Sarah Jacobson for their contributions to this volume which explore different strategies to succeed as a professional economist. Finally, I want to thank past-president Luisa Blanco, who is rotating out of the Executive Committee, for all of her work; and to thank current president Susan Pozo for all that she has accomplished during the last year. ASHE is a much stronger association thanks to their commitment and efforts.

I look forward to taking on the role of president of our association during the 2019 ASSA meetings. My hope is that together we can continue building upon what so many of us have achieved since that evening in 2005. For the following year, I hope to build upon scholarship, and community:

Scholarship: I am committed to continuing ASHE's apolitical, non-partisan status, yet the current political and economic situation requires that we vigorously continue promoting evidence based-scholarship about the economic circumstances of Latinos in the United States and future prospects. I look forward to working with the HEO's communication and research committee to increase the

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reach of the HEO, and to ensure that the talent agglomerated in our organization is used for the advancement of our communities. I am committed to continue hosting sessions in major economics conferences: the ASSA's, the Western Economic Meetings, and the Southern Economic Meetings. I also want to explore our presence at other conferences, and to give more options to our membership of which conferences to attend.

Community: ASHE has been my professional community, and I hope to foster the same sense of belonging for recent PhD's and graduate students. First, besides the official sessions at different conferences I want to promote other opportunities for interaction, networking, and community-building. In addition, my hope during this year is to explore partnerships with organizations whose efforts are symbiotic to ours. I am convinced that among our membership there is a large enough talent pool, doing policy-relevant work, which can inform the work of our potential partners.

To close, I would like to thank you for your trust, and for giving me the opportunity to give back to ASHE during this year. I want to reiterate that I am always open for suggestions and comments.

With my very best wishes for a productive 2019.

Yours,

Fernando Lozano

How to survive the Assistant Professor life: Hashtags strategies

Mónica García-Pérez¹

The first day as an Associate Professor I sat down in my office thinking about how I was able to go through the Assistant Professor life. As I am in a teaching university, research time is limited to non-teaching days or summer. I did not hesitate to concentrate my non-teaching days and summer on mainly research activities. During my first few years as an assistant professor, I concentrated research work only during those periods. I also used that time to plan for my sabbatical-after-tenure, and consider the projects and ideas I wanted to revisit, start, or kill. Furthermore, I used what I am going to call my ‘hashtags’ strategy.

#ReserveAday: Have a ‘Research Day’ where you only do research-related work and only respond to urgent matters related to teaching or administrative work. This is an easy strategy if you have a consistent schedule. Avoid using a day during the weekend. You will already be working during the weekends sometimes depending on the demands of your time, but it will force you to concentrate on your projects and advancement.

#StrategicService: As you think about service to the department, the university, and the community, I believe you must be strategic. There is no reason to feel guilty about saying no to activities that are not going to overlap with your main skills. If it is not possible, setup a maximum number of committees that you think you would be able to participate, check the regularity of the meetings, and the level of impact of the work of the committee. Up to two of such committees would be enough. For services that are more aligned with your research and general life interests, select also a maximum number. Committees are synonymous with meetings. If you are part of one, encourage the use of a timed agenda. Do consider participating in a committee that connects to the local community. This could make more sense for those in public policy related research. I believe it makes us better researchers, but it also helps us find the right words to explain our work and to target our research to be more impactful. Limit administrative work for after tenure, if it is something that interests you.

#StrategicTeaching: If possible, think strategically when selecting your courses. For those who are in teaching universities, there is not much flexibility in choosing what to teach each semester. Yet, there may be some room for considering upper-level courses that can overlap with your research interest or where incorporating your research would be natural. Students are generally happy when they have professors that bring their research to class, especially in more specialized courses.

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#StrengthenProfessionalNetworks: Before tenure, I participated in a fellowship sponsored by CSWEP that helped me to quickly learn about the value of attending this committee’s lunch and panel sessions. I highly recommend them to *everyone*. The discussions and strategies offered during these sessions help everyone in the profession. I also became a DITE fellow and ASHE member during my first years as an Assistant Professor. DITE was a great group to find future possible mentors and a strong network with colleagues from different parts of the country. ASHE helped me in finding spaces to present my work, create another strong network and friendships. In their events, I also had the opportunity to consistently meet people that became close colleagues and mentors. In addition, I maintained a continuous presence and participated in at least one national conference. At a national event, I was able to reconnect with other professionals and friends. Conferences can be used as veiled deadlines to advance projects.

#CreateNewConnections: Being open to meet people from other disciplines in other circles has kept my brain active. Occasionally, I look for events that are outside the typical gatherings for economists, either a conference or a workshop/training event. For this to be useful, one needs to be open-minded to benefit from looking at how other people approach themes/topics that we study. In my case, I searched for public health or educational planning activities that included policymakers and community members.

#UseofSocialMedia: With current technology, we cannot underestimate our presence in social media. Create an account on the major outlets and consider following major influencers. It is important to maintain a balance because the messages in these outlets are not necessarily exhaustive, but they are good at exploring the impact of your research, activities, and ideas. Consider professional social media as a public speaking venue and act accordingly. Do not use Facebook as a professional venue, unless you do have professional close friends.

#SabbaticalisaNeededBreak: Depending on your university, or maybe your department, the philosophy on sabbatical could be different. However, as noted above, planning for a sabbatical leave after tenure during my years as an Assistant Professor was a good and inspirational decision for me. Taking a sabbatical at that point in our careers creates a natural break from the current workflow and forces us to reflect on what we have done up to then. Further, it creates a space for planning and inspirational thinking. For those new in their Associate Professor positions, I believe that taking a full year sabbatical is more impactful. Aim for it, and search for spaces where you would be working that are outside your current campus, and that complement your current access to resources. If you cannot take a year off, before applying for half a semester, search for funding opportunities that could make a full year possible either by making your application a more sounding and strong proposal or by financially complementing the reduction in pay due to the sabbatical leave. If you are in a teaching institution and you only get a semester off, your usual duties would still force you to use some of time off for planning the upcoming courses.

#LifeBalance: Yes, you should find your own balance. This is very personal and tailored to your own situation. If you are single, married, divorced, widowed, with kids, or without kids, the strategies you would take would depend on your own style. Most likely your best approach is to read and talk to everyone you know about how they manage their typical day. I believe on having a life outside our professional life. In my case, I have friends, spouse, and kids that are not in the profession. The first step is to check if you have a balanced life. Personally, I think this means that you are spending your time on things you want to spend your time on. That simple. The second step is asking yourself if you are satisfied with it. To change something, you need to want to change it. The third step, once potential changes are identified, then identify people in your network that could have been in the same position and ask them about their experiences. You must be open to share your experience too.

Like every piece written on professional or life advising, the ‘hashstags’ strategy I propose here has its limitations and could fall short in offering the advice you need at this moment. Also, the approach to each one of these issues has been different for many others. Nevertheless, a true constant exists: reading, listening, and asking about how senior colleagues approached their challenges during their transitions is key for junior and mid-career professionals in their development. Finding inspiration in others recharges us.

For advice on how to maintain your research agenda and work on research in non-teaching schools, I invite you to check the following CSWEP Newsletters: Winter 2011² and Winter 2014³.

² <https://www.aeaweb.org/content/file?id=585>.

³ <https://www.aeaweb.org/content/file?id=588>.

Navigating the Associate Professor Years

Mary J. Lopez⁴

It is no secret that associate professors have reported being some of the unhappiest faculty in academia (Wilson 2012, Monaghan 2017, Fitzgerald 2017). The immediate transition from assistant to associate professor may be accompanied by burnout from the tenure track years as well as a lack of a vision of where to go next. A lack of mentoring and guidance, mounting service requirements, decreased enthusiasm for teaching and research, and greater challenges balancing work with home life (e.g., child care, aging parents, health issues) can create a sense of discontentment and discouragement during the associate professor years (Blanchard 2012, Wilson 2012, Monaghan 2017, Fitzgerald 2017). However, as an associate professor at a liberal arts college who has experienced mid-career malaise, I find that the associate professor blues can be minimized by following the same general advice that one receives as an assistant professor: 1) establish and maintain a productive research agenda; 2) don't reinvent the teaching wheel; and 3) don't overcommit to service assignments. The post-tenure years pose different challenges than the pre-tenure years, but the strategies for success are essentially the same.

Develop a post-tenure research agenda. Tenure affords greater freedom and flexibility in the types of projects that associate professors can pursue. Associate professors may find it important to take a summer, an academic year, or a sabbatical to engage in intellectual wandering (Fitzgerald 2017). Taking the time to explore new avenues of research provides associate professors with an opportunity to rediscover their excitement and enthusiasm for their work, which may have waned with the urgency to publish in volume during the pre-tenure years. However, in the process of developing a new and meaningful research agenda, it is important to create an agenda that won't delay the opportunity to go up for promotion to full professor around the year in which one is first eligible to do so. Associate professors who are unable to go up for promotion at or shortly after the time they are first eligible may get discouraged and frustrated with each passing year. It is also important to think about a research agenda that maintains one's competitiveness for the job market. Even though tenure provides us with job security, it doesn't mean we no longer want the option to pursue another opportunity if one presents itself. The last thing we want is to feel trapped without opportunities for mobility. It is also important to think about expanding one's network of research collaborators. Working with new co-authors can be exciting and fosters continued scholarly growth which may ultimately spare faculty at liberal arts colleges the isolation they often feel when they are the only one specializing in their field. Finally, it is also helpful to include in your network of collaborators individuals who can provide feedback on your work. Receiving tenure doesn't change the fact that tenured faculty appreciate and need feedback on their new research ideas, papers, or grant proposals. As an associate professor, you will now be spending your time providing detailed

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feedback to junior faculty on their research projects, but it is still important to reach out to colleagues for feedback on your own work. This is particularly true for associate professors at liberal arts colleges who may need to rely on feedback from scholars outside their departments.

Refresh, but don't reinvent your courses. At liberal arts colleges, the commitment to teaching is substantial. The exhaustion from performing at such a high level and the monotony of teaching the same courses repeatedly on the tenure track may cause some associate professors to feel dissatisfied and disinterested in their teaching. Again, tenure offers freedom to be creative and exploratory with teaching. It is important to find ways to (re)invigorate passion for teaching, especially at a liberal arts college where the teaching load is high. However, it is important to think about refreshing existing courses as opposed to taking on new preps, which will require a significant amount of time to teach well. Taking on a new prep might not be the best strategy for an exhausted, disinterested associate professor. However, refreshing an existing course by adding new activities and topics or adopting a new technology or adding a community based learning component may be enough to rekindle interest in teaching. Invigoration may come in the form of your interactions with students and not necessarily the intellectual content of your courses. For example, one might relish the opportunity to make a class more inclusive to women and underrepresented students. Alternatively, one might want to play a larger role in mentoring students who struggle to meet their full potential. Finally, it is important to pace out changes. At a liberal arts college, the high teaching load will continue until you retire or change institutions. There is no need to change everything overnight.

Use restraint when committing to service assignments. Departmental and college-level service commitments will certainly increase post tenure. That is something that is just unavoidable. As an assistant professor, senior faculty in your department shouldered much of the department's service load to allow you to have more time to focus on your research and teaching. Even at the college-level, assistant professors shoulder less service because some committees require tenure for membership because assistant professors are still learning about how their institutions function. However, as a tenured faculty member you are now responsible for protecting the time of junior faculty. As an associate professor, you may find yourself chairing a search for your department, serving on review committees, or even chairing the department. You also have greater knowledge of how the institution functions and may be asked to serve on or chair a time intensive college-level committee. Other departments on campus may also request your participation in service assignments—this is particularly true at small liberal arts colleges. In addition, as associate professors raise their profile in the field and become more established, they may also be asked to serve as mentors for junior faculty in the field, serve as associate editors for journals, serve as an external reviewer, or take on leadership roles in professional organizations. Being sought out is flattering and the potential to contribute is exciting. However, FOMO and flattery cause many associate professors to say yes to the point of over commitment, and usually at the expense of research. Having too much on your plate also makes it difficult to achieve a manageable work-life balance. Overextending oneself with high service loads may also cause associate professors to perform at a lower level,

further adding to their mid-career malaise. Because the expected base level of service is now much higher, it is important to use restraint when committing to additional service commitments. Think about committing to meaningful service assignments or assignments that will have the greatest impact. Perhaps the mentoring you received as an associate professor was instrumental in your professional development and you want to give back and share what you learned. Serving as a mentor in the field may have a bigger impact than serving as an external member of a search for another department at your institution.

Although the post-tenure years present a new set of challenges, associate professors can minimize mid-career malaise by following much of the advice they received as assistant professors. Doing so enables associate professors to enjoy the benefits that come with tenure, such as greater academic freedom in teaching and research and the ability to make impactful contributions to their institutions and the field.

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An Economist's Life Outside of Academia - Non Profit Organization

José R. Guardado¹

When I was in graduate school, my plan was to be a professor—just like the ones in my Department and the ones who would come to give talks. I wanted to do research, teach, publish and get tenure. Things didn't turn out that way. Initially a Research Economist, I am currently a Senior Economist in the Department of Economic and Health Policy Research at the American Medical Association (AMA) in Chicago. The AMA is an association of physicians and medical students. I have been at the AMA and this Department since obtaining a PhD in economics from the University of Illinois at Chicago in 2007, where I studied under Bob Kaestner and specialized in health and labor. My Department is composed of four economists. Our job is to do research to enable us to provide the AMA with facts, data and an evidence base to promote good health policy.

Experience on the Job Market

I now discuss my experience on the job market, starting with the supply side. The pathway to my position was no different from the one to an academic job. I was on the market in search of an academic job, while the AMA was on the market for a PhD economist. I learned about the job from an AMA posting on JOE. The process on the market was the same as for an academic job. I sent an application to the AMA, which first invited me to an interview at the 2007 ASSA meetings. At the second interview (the "flyout"), I gave a seminar at the AMA and met with several of my future colleagues. Shortly thereafter, while still interviewing at other schools, the AMA made me an offer I couldn't refuse, and I began work in June 2007.

The following year I was on the other (demand) side of the market—in New Orleans. My Department was again in search of a person with a PhD in economics. When my Department needs an economist, it also posts a listing on JOE. This was quite an experience, given that I had just been on the market myself. Over the course of both years, I got to see labor economics in action. We ended up not hiring anyone that year, but the whole process of searching for and then interviewing candidates was very illuminating. Years later in 2016, we were once again on the market and made a hire in June 2017. The search and interview process, especially for my type of position, is somewhat different than, say for an academic job. Since graduate school, it had usually been my experience that PhD economists are in search of an academic job, or if not academic, still one where one mainly conducts time-intensive, peer-reviewed research, such as in a think tank (e.g. RTI) or government body (think CBO). This is natural for a few reasons, including the fact that that's what our advisors do, and that that's what we've been doing in graduate school. The goal of many is to publish and ultimately get tenure. Thus, when we interview candidates, we need to make them aware that this is not that type of job.

¹ José R. Guardado, PhD is Senior Economist at Economic and Health Policy Research Department of the American Medical Association.

Role of Research in my Position

This gets me to discussing the role of research in my position. Research underlies all my work. I answer questions, though the research and time required to answer them varies from question to question, from relatively little research and time to time-intensive research to be published in a journal. As a health economist, I conduct research that relates to physicians and health care, such as competition in health care markets, and medical liability markets. I analyze and summarize data—data we collect through surveys of physicians as well as data we purchase. For example, I produce the AMA's annual *Competition in Health Insurance* study (Guardado and Kane 2018).² A key question is whether health insurers possess and exercise market power—vis-à-vis consumers in output markets or health care providers in their input markets. We address this question by looking at health insurers' market shares and measures of market competition (HHIs) in MSAs and states across the US.

My research—peer-reviewed or otherwise—helps affect public policy. For example, my work on competition in health insurance markets helped the AMA oppose the recently proposed Anthem-Cigna and Aetna-Humana mergers. My analyses were utilized by the president of the AMA in Congressional Hearings as well as provided to government regulators. The Department of Justice subsequently sued to block the mergers, and after intense battle in the courts, the mergers were ultimately abandoned by the merging parties.

I also provide analytic support and expertise to other AMA units on economic, health policy, data and statistical issues. In essence, I am an internal consultant to the AMA. I help it understand the language of economists. As mentioned above, the research varies across a wide spectrum. Some research may not end up in a published paper, but rather feeds into other end products. For example, AMA antitrust attorneys recently consulted with me in their assessment of the competitive effects of the proposed merger between Aetna and CVS. The goal was to help the AMA determine whether to oppose the merger. This took me into new territory, as I went from thinking about horizontal to vertical issues. My research consisted of acquiring and providing the economic knowledge to ensure that the facts, literature cited, data and economic arguments in AMA Statements to Congress and government regulators were strong and sound. That could consist of reviewing extant literature, the Federal Trade Commission/Department of Justice Vertical Merger Guidelines and other important work on vertical mergers.

My job is not to *primarily* engage in time-intensive, peer-reviewed research. It is possible to conduct such research, but publishing is not a principal objective of the job. The job is meant to be responsive to the needs of the AMA. To be sure, one must be able to conduct original, high quality research, but

² Accessible at https://www.ama-assn.org/system/files/2018-11/competition-health-insurance-us-markets_1.pdf. This and all our research on competition in health insurance markets can be accessed at: <https://www.ama-assn.org/about/competition-health-insurance-research>

publishing is neither encouraged nor discouraged. However, if the AMA is interested in a question that is amenable to research, then I can conduct it subject to other demands for my time. In fact, this has happened. The AMA was interested in the question of the effects of health insurer mergers on premiums, on which there was not much literature. Thus, it was important enough to the AMA for us to spend the time and resources on that. We bought data on premiums, did the research and ultimately published a peer-reviewed paper titled *The Price Effects of a Large Merger of Health Insurers: A Case Study of UnitedHealth-Sierra*, which examined the effects of that merger on premiums.³

I also study, among other issues, trends in medical liability claims, premiums, and costs, as these are issues of importance to physicians. As an example, last year I wrote a paper on medical liability claim frequency. I used original data from own Department's Physician Practice Benchmark Survey.⁴ Although that paper was not-peer reviewed or published in a journal, I especially liked producing it because I got to run some regressions! It explores variation in the likelihood of physicians getting sued. It finds that 34% of physicians have had a claim filed against them during their careers and that claim frequency varies by certain factors, particularly age, specialty and gender.⁵

My job also requires that I stay abreast of the latest, cutting edge research. Thus, in addition to monitoring the literature, I also attend seminars and conferences. The job also affords the opportunity to work with external economic consultants to the AMA. For example, in the past I got to work closely with David Dranove, a professor at Northwestern. In short, the job keeps me on my toes. One characteristic of the job is the need to be able to predict what subject matter will be in demand in the future, and thus what knowledge I need to have or acquire in order to anticipate what the AMA will need from me in due course.

Advice to Others Seeking Jobs Outside of Academia

One of the most interesting aspects of my job is the collaboration with non-economists. I am like a professor and student, as I interpret economic data and concepts to them as well as learn from their own expertise. The position helps develop communications skills perhaps more than an academic job since one has to explain economic concepts to persons from different backgrounds.

Thus, given all the work and communication with non-economists, here is some advice to others interested in this type of employment. First, they should develop abilities to communicate their own (and others') work and research to non-economists. In graduate school (and likely afterward in academia), I believe we are accustomed to just speak economics jargon, usually among ourselves—

³ This is also available at: <https://www.ama-assn.org/about/competition-health-insurance-research>

⁴ Information on the Physician Benchmark Surveys can be found at: <https://www.ama-assn.org/about/physician-practice-benchmark-survey>

⁵ This and other medical liability research I do can be found at: <https://www.ama-assn.org/about/medical-liability-market-research>

e.g. marginals and utility. Here it is extremely valuable (and necessary) to translate such things into plain English. Second, it is also valuable to see and communicate the relevance of the work and research to public policy. What are the policy implications of research findings? Finally, it is important to be able to interpret and critique research and findings *per se*. For example, when a paper of interest comes out, particularly if it gets cited in the media, I need to assess whether the paper really finds what people or the media say it does. Note for example that research that is of a non-causal nature sometimes gets interpreted in the media or elsewhere as causal. My job is to assess the paper and summarize the important findings and limitations and provide guidance on what can and cannot be inferred from it. Can the findings be plausibly given a causal interpretation? Or are they just descriptive?

In sum, my job has both similarities and differences to academic jobs. The job market process is the same, though the differences between the jobs must be conveyed there, thereby sorting out interested and disinterested persons in this type of job. Research underlies all my work, as much of my job consists of answering questions. The type of questions and research necessary to answer them varies, ranging from relatively little time and research required to time-intensive papers that might be published in a journal. Even though publishing peer-reviewed research is not a primary objective of the job, we still must be able to conduct such research if the need arises, as well as assess the quality of others' research in order to give good internal economic advice. Finally, the ability to interpret and communicate economics jargon and research to non-economists is an invaluable skill to possess in this type of job.

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An Economist's Life Outside of Academia - Federal Agency

Sandra A. Rivera¹

As an international economist working outside academia for the vast majority of my 20+ year career, I have enjoyed working for the federal government at both the U.S. International Trade Commission (USITC), and Office of the U.S. Trade Representative. My career began as a Research Economist at the USITC with some time at USTR in the North America Office and Purdue University at the Center for Global Trade Analysis and later back at the USITC doing strategic planning and supervising economists. The experience of working as an economist for the federal government has changed in unexpected ways over that time, and I have found it to be rich with learning opportunities. Twenty years ago, the type of trade analysis that policy makers expected was far simpler, and success was achievable with expertise in just one area of trade policy. Now, however, discussions around trade policy have grown more complex as U.S. production becomes more reliant on imported intermediate inputs, and the importance of trade barriers shifts away from trade taxes towards differences in market access, be it environmental regulations or rules of origin clauses. Policies change, and issues evolve, more quickly. One must be agile and innovative in analysis. For me, this ever-changing dynamic is what makes working on trade for the federal government both exciting and intellectually interesting.

Herein, I offer you my perspective on how working in a federal agency differs from other opportunities (i.e. business, university, nonprofit), what we look for when seeking new international economists for our team, and the role of research at the USITC. I will close with advice for those seeking non-academic employment.

How working for a federal agency differs from an academic job

The USITC is an independent, quasi-judicial federal agency. At the USITC, economists analyze conditions of competition in trade remedy investigations and provide expert industry and technical economic analysis to Congress and USTR on competitiveness and international trade issues. The USITC has roles for several types of economists, including positions focused on trade, foreign direct investment (FDI), labor, and industrial organization. While the principle focus of our agency is international trade, strategic research at the USITC often involves additional areas of expertise that may influence or impact trade policy, such as labor, industrial organization, and modeling techniques such as gravity, partial or general equilibrium. Moreover, our agency adjudicates trade remedy investigations, requiring economists to understand and explain foreign and domestic market realities. Research produced at the USITC is uniquely related—and closely tied—to current events and potential trade agreements, and the practical or theoretical implications therein.

¹ Sandra A. Rivera, PhD; Associate Director, Office of Economics; U.S. International Trade Commission.

Our agency emphasizes research collaboration much more than one might expect in an academic position, where research can be more individually-driven. In fact, nearly every research project at the USITC takes advantage of this collaborative environment, which contributes to the rapid pace and innovative nature of the research our economists publish.

An academic job, even for an international economist, may involve teaching a greater variety of courses outside of trade, especially at colleges and teaching institutions. Rather than teaching students, a federal agency trade economist might find herself explaining technical economic issues to attorneys or Commissioners. Rather than having a wide swath of fields, as one finds in a typical Economics Department at a university, here at the USITC, there are dozens of economists that contribute to working groups focusing on mutual areas of interest within trade.

Service to committees is an important factor in both academia and government agencies. In government agencies, we value contributions that make the agency a better place to work or help to develop new employee policies.

What we look for when seeking new talent for our economist pool

When seeking new talent for our research or analytical teams, we look for innovative problem solvers who can effectively communicate the complexity of trade research as it relates to the issues of the day. The best candidates are those who enjoy collaborating with a multidisciplinary team to find innovative solutions to challenging questions. We continue to earn the bipartisan respect of our customers--USTR and House Ways and Means Committee--by providing responsive and timely research that they can count on when considering questions of trade policy. We seek diversity of thought, experience, education and skills, as broad experience and thinking contributes positively to creativity and innovation.

Most importantly, the ability to communicate complex ideas effectively to a technical, non-economist audience is a particularly important talent we seek. As we provide advice to our clients, we need economists that can listen intently and collaborate easily with others to produce our products. Although listening can seem simple, doing it well and demonstrating the emotional intelligence to understand team dynamics and how to move challenging processes forward is highly valued.

Role of research

Both in the Office of Economics and Office of Industries, economists aim to publish, on average, one article per year. While refereed publications are highly valued in maintaining one's relevance to the field, they are not a sufficient condition for promotion; additional leadership and connections with

key stakeholders are also valued. For example, the USITC rewards those who develop expertise and can be called upon for advice when faced with questions related to a particular subject area.

The Commission also values those who have the ability to communicate and transfer knowledge throughout the organization, such as when working alongside industry analysts, junior economists, or non-technical support staff. Mentoring and working with junior research economists and interns, for instance, is highly valued, as well as mutually beneficial. While publishing in refereed journals is important, conducting exceptionally well-documented and written research for our statutorily required investigations is valued even more highly.

It is not uncommon for the public to misinterpret our mission, of providing policymakers with technical and trade expertise, with policymaking. We are independent of the administration, and while we provide guidance and research, the USITC does not make policy. This point may appear to be subtle; this very distinction is what allows our economists to engage in cutting-edge research for statutory studies and non-statutory publication without having to bow to a given administration's leanings. It is due to this independence that we are able to report the results of our studies without seeking permission from our clients. Our clients may ask questions, but they do not influence our reported results and cannot change those results when they do not align with the administrations' leanings. Thus, the USITC international trade economist need not worry that the rigor of their findings will be tempered by political pressure from the current administration.

Advice on non-academic job market

At the USITC, the candidates who find the greatest satisfaction are those who truly enjoy collaborative teamwork. Every assignment is staffed with peers from around the Commission to ensure our statutory research proceeds with a diversity of thought, be it an industry analyst, a lawyer, or an investigator.

The three pieces of advice I would give to those interested in pursuing a non-academic position are: (1) justify your interest in the particular position in a credible way; (2) market your communication skills; and (3) demonstrate independent and innovative thinking about research topics that are both current and relevant to trade policy makers.

Regarding the first point, my colleagues and I always appreciate having an understanding of what part of working for the federal government and in particular our agency, interests the candidate. Be sincere. Go beyond general statements such as "I have always been interested in trade." To help your panel understand your thought process, share what inspired you to apply to work with us. What reports sounded interesting? What issues in those reports seem particularly relevant that we may not have considered? Just weigh in! On the second, if you have substantial teaching experience, explain how it will help you translate complex technical ideas to an educated, but non-technical

audience, such as those who work in Commissioner Offices and other high-ranking government officials. Third, convey how you came up with your newly published or recent innovative ideas. What inspired you? Telling me that your major professor recommended the topic is even less helpful to us than it sounds. Help us by walking through your thinking so we can better understand how your digest challenging issues.

In summary, I have shared some of my ideas on how working for a federal agency is different from other academic positions. I have also tried to shed light on what the day-to-day life is on the job and how we seek out new talent. Though my experience on the job market is not comprehensive, from assessing hundreds of applications, I have learned that innovative, flexible and collaborative researchers find this work most satisfying and ultimately stay the longest. If you are considering a different path for your career, consider the benefits (and costs) associated with working for a federal agency, especially one that is independent.

So You Want to be an Administrator?

Alberto Dávila¹

As an academic administrator for over 20 years, who served as department chair of economics and finance at the University of Texas-Pan American for over 18 years, as associate dean for research, graduate studies and administration at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley for over 3 years, and currently as dean of Harrison College of Business and Computing at Southeastern Missouri State University, I would like to share some tips if you are seeking (or are pressed into) this type of appointment or already have one and are interested in learning about someone else's perspective. A good way to frame this discussion is to ask the following question: if I knew then what I know now before taking on an administrative appointment, how would I approach my new position?

First of all, I would read the "First 90 Days" by Michael D. Watkins. This book is an excellent source of "do's" and "don'ts" for those taking on a new executive position. I particularly liked the book's advice regarding the importance of investing time in learning the culture of the organization early on. As department chair, understanding the culture of students, faculty and the upper administration, and how these groups relate to each other is extremely important in designing a strategy to effectively manage the department. As associate dean, delving into the underpinnings among department chairs and directors is especially useful. As dean having a keen insight of the college environment and how the environment is perceived by the upper administration is critical for effective decision making.

The next step is to give special attention to team building. This hiring/selection process must be well tied to the mission and the culture of the unit you lead. For example, as department chair and associate dean, I provided oversight of a college with a Ph.D. program and, consequently, my hiring and choice of faculty and other personnel was very much influenced by the research productivity of my "team". As dean of a college with a master's program in a learner-centered institution, my choices for chairs and other hires is informed by research productivity but more by the institutional knowledge of department-chair candidates and the service and teaching potential of hires. While this point might appear obvious, it is not uncommon to find situations where this idea has been ignored. Finally, I would emphasize the importance of being respectful to staff and all other constituents. Invariably, you will find yourself in "testy" situations that can be made better with diplomacy (i.e., not being "bossy"), and having an even keel.

Let me also say in closing that, in my experience, the best academic administrators have some of the following traits. First, they follow shared governance principles but are not shy to make tough decisions if need be. Second, they are "present" (they are at events, they rarely miss

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meetings and are basically “around”, making you feel guilty every time you choose to skip an optional gathering!) and good ambassadors for the unit they lead. Third, they make themselves accessible (you can be present and not accessible) and easy to communicate with—one provost, for example, answered every e-mail I sent him, even in the wee hours of the morning! I must admit that while I have strived to have these qualities as an academic administrator, I have been only partly successful as the level of energy and patience required to exercise these is quite high!

I hope you find these tips useful as you consider pursuing a position in academic administration. Given my set of personality traits and skill set, I would have navigated my administrative issues with more ease by following these basic tips from the beginning—all the best!

Using Twitter to Make Your Professional Life Better, Not Worse

Sarah Jacobson¹

If you haven't used Twitter, you might be forgiven for thinking the worst about it. I hope this article will convince you that Twitter can be useful for professional development and can help you feel affirmed and enmeshed in a network of scholars. Through Twitter, I have gotten media exposure, made connections with amazing people, disseminated my work, found papers of interest to me and my students, received and given advice about professional topics, found job opportunities for students, and publicized or learned about conferences or speaking engagements. The connectivity that Twitter enables can be particularly useful for scholars who have identities under-represented in their home units or their fields of study (Montgomery, 2018). In this article, I share ground-up Twitter basics and advice on how to keep your Twitter experience positive.

Twitter is a broadcast medium for short communiques (tweets) with or without images or videos. Users create profiles and can follow others' accounts to create a timeline of tweets. Unless a Twitter user takes (fairly unusual) steps, anyone can see her tweets and any Twitter user can follow her. The platform also has private messaging.

These features make Twitter potentially quite useful to academics. First, the broadcast nature, along with the potential for users to amplify each other's tweets, let you access a wide audience. Second, brevity reduces the cost of engagement; relatedly, the timeline structure lets users dip in and out at their choosing. Third, since you choose whom to follow, you curate your Twitter experience to achieve your own goals.

Before you start using Twitter, decide what kind of Twitter identity suits you. Figure 1 shows my Twitter profile. Each Twitter account is associated with a unique email address, but you can manage multiple accounts; I manage my department's Twitter as well as my own. Each account has a username up to 15 characters long with an @ (e.g., @SarahJacobsonEc). This must be unique. You can change your username, but it is best not to; other people refer to you by this handle so it could create confusion. Each account also has a display name (e.g., "Sarah Jacobson") that can be up to 50 characters. The display name need not be unique; it can be changed at will and people often do so whimsically.

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Figure 1: Twitter Profile

I chose for my Twitter profile to clearly identify me and my professional affiliation. I tweet both professional and non-professional items. Some people use a Twitter account only for professional communication; others create separate accounts for professional and non-professional items. Some people make a Twitter account that hides their identity: no picture, no website link, and a username and display name that don't identify them.

If you want to control who can interact with you on Twitter, you can make your account's tweets "protected," which makes it so anyone who wants to follow you must get your permission and no one who does not follow you can see your tweets. This is relatively rare.

Twitter is about tweeting: sharing short posts. See Figure 2 for a tweet. Each tweet is limited to 280 characters, including spaces, and can include hyperlinks and images. Abbreviations and emojis are common, even in professional tweets. GIFs (video snippets that express some idea or emotion) are extremely popular. Tweets can be retweeted by the original tweeter or others; a retweet can consist of just the original tweet or can accompany that tweet with a comment. Tweets cannot be edited once they have been posted. They can be deleted; however, other people can capture your tweet before you delete it, and if someone retweets a deleted tweet, people who see the retweet see that the original tweet was deleted. Deleting tweets is rare and considered poor form.



Figure 2: A Tweet

Your tweets show up in the timelines of users who follow you and in your profile (where anyone can see it). Twitter users (including the original tweeter) can react to a tweet in several ways. They can reply, in which case a thread is created; other users will only see the reply if they follow both the original tweeter and the replier or if they click on the tweet to open the thread. They can retweet it, as noted, so their followers will see the retweet. They can like it, in which case it will show up in their profile under “Likes.” Some users see the likes of people they follow in their timeline; this is because Twitter promotes tweets they think people want to see. This feature can be disabled in account settings under Content (disable “Show the best tweets first”).

Timelines are like streams; each tweet or retweet appears in the stream when it’s posted. When you open Twitter, you will re-enter your timeline where you last left it or at the current moment, but you can scroll through the timeline or search all tweets. Ads also appear in your timeline. You can pin an important tweet, such as an announcement of a new paper, to the top of your profile.

Mentions and hashtags can be useful. A mention is the use of a username to flag that person’s attention. This is handy to call out a coauthor, congratulate someone on an achievement, or ask them to contribute to a discussion; an example is the mention of @jasonjdelaney in Figure 2. (If someone’s username is not just their name, you might mention their username and also type their name out.) Hashtags (#) are coordination devices; they allow all tweets with the same tag to be found in a search. For example, at the Southern Economic Association 2018 conference, tweets were tagged with #SEA2018; this lets people search on #SEA2018 to see a steady stream of tweets from different people at the conference. (For this reason, hashtags can help other users stumble on your profile.) If you are running an event, choose a hashtag in advance and publicize it to attendees. Once you get comfortable with Twitter, you may want to explore other functionalities, including Moments, Lists, and statistics.

I will now return to how scholars can leverage these features of Twitter. Twitter is great for publicizing your work and yourself. If you want to do this, your Twitter profile should link to your website and vice versa. Whenever you have good news, tweet: your Twitter friends love the opportunity to commend you for a paper or grant you have #submitted (#nogutsnoglory!), publications, media exposure, talks you give, etc.

If you have a new paper, you obviously can't fit the entire paper into a tweet; a link to the paper is a good start, but you can do two other things to give more information. First, you can include a screenshot of the front page with the title and abstract. In this way, you are essentially cheating the 280-character limit by using an image filled with text. I suspect few people read these text images, but the quick reader can breeze by and those who want more depth can read it. What I like better is a thread; Figure 2 is the start of a thread about a new working paper of mine. It's nice for the thread to start with the "tl;dr" (too long; didn't read) summary for people who don't even want to read the thread. Threads can be of whatever length you choose, but, again, many people want quick engagements, so I recommend making it as short as possible. Try to make each tweet self-contained; sentences that spill across tweets are hard to read. Use visuals from your paper or perhaps links to background information; some people also use funny gifs to liven things up. Clearly indicate the start and end of a thread (e.g. putting "1/N" and "N/N" at the end of the first and last tweets). It's best to plan out a thread offline and then use copy and paste to execute it.

You can also get and give advice very effectively on Twitter. You can use #EconTwitter to try to draw eyes, or you can mention users you think might be useful in answering or amplifying. For example, I created a long thread of advice on CV's, including images from my own job market CV. I've also gotten advice on a variety of topics, including professional norms (e.g., cover letter length), data sets, and events and speakers.

Tweeting from conferences and talks is a fun way to provide a public good. From a query I put out on Twitter, I learned there is no consensus on whether it's acceptable to tweet a photo of someone giving a talk; some strongly feel it is and some strongly feel it is not. Therefore, I recommend asking permission from the speaker if your tweet will contain a picture of them.

More generally, think of Twitter as a way of extending and deepening your network. We can feel isolated in our academic lives, and Twitter lets us stay connected to people we know and make new connections. Therefore, think of choosing the people you follow as a way of curating the community you are a part of. This is the key to a positive Twitter experience: follow accounts that provide information you want to see or that make you happy. Don't be stingy in following interesting people and people you want to know more about; but do feel free to not follow anyone whose tweets bother you or are not interesting to you. (People can tell whether you follow them, and may be mildly hurt if they follow you and you don't follow them back, but only mildly.)

The academic Twitter community is not solely a virtual one. Follow people you know, or want to know, in real life; then when you encounter them at conferences or campus visits, make a point of deepening the engagement. People often organize Twitter happy hours at conferences to enable these encounters.

The people who follow me must have found the mix of things I tweet about (my research and teaching, other interesting research I find, pictures from my morning runs, and random thoughts) to be worth mixing into their timeline. I am not an expert in increasing your number of followers; if you want to do this, consult social media strategy guides. However, I have two observations. First, if you want people to follow you, tweet regularly. Second, make your tweets high quality and useful. There's no need to retweet things that everyone else already follows; for example, don't retweet a New York Times article or the top economists on Twitter. By the same token, keep your tweets brief and relatively well-edited; readers are pretty tolerant, but if your tweets are very messy or rambling, some followers might be deterred.

While you can get a lot of good things from Twitter, bad experiences can also happen. Trolls do exist, and they may respond to your tweets in ways that are inappropriate or even disturbing. I've never had any real trolling after a couple of years and thousands of tweets, but women and people of color, and people who tweet about issues with a political angle, are sometimes targeted. If this happens to you, you can report the tweet, mute the user (which makes it so you don't see their tweets), or block the user (which disallows them from following you). You can engage with the troll in a discussion, but that is not always productive.

I will close by emphasizing again that you should curate your experience so that your Twitter feed brings you interesting ideas and perhaps even some joy. Participating in the Twitter world draws people to you who mirror the kinds of things you share. Following accounts selectively can keep negativity out. Sometimes an account that's totally useless but that makes you smile (for example, @dog_rates) can boost your spirits. So join Twitter – I hope I see you there!

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About the Hispanic Economic Outlook Committee of the American Society of Hispanic Economists –

Formed in early 2009, this Committee was designed to monitor and report on a host of Hispanic economic issues. The views expressed in these reports are those of the authors, and do not necessarily represent the views of their respective employers nor of ASHE. All errors in fact or interpretation belong to the authors.

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