Yuchen Zhu

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Placement Director: Ignacia Mercadal, imercadal@ufl.edu

Education

Ph.D. in Economics, University of Florida — 2022 – 2027 (expected)
M.A. in Economics, University of Florida — 2024
M.S. in Applied Economics, Johns Hopkins University — 2019
B.A. in Economics, minor in Statistics, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign — 2017

Fields

Research: Labor Economics, Econometrics, Applied Microeconomics

Teaching: Econometrics, Principles and Intermediate Microeconomics, Labor Economics, Economics of Education, Public Economics

Job Market Paper

Predicting College Major Switching with Machine Learning

Major switching can benefit students, but it is costly when it happens late. Advising offices therefore want to know in advance who is likely to switch, so they can help students stay in their major or find a better fit. Using administrative data from the University of Florida, I build a machine learning model that gives each student an approximately unbiased and easily interpretable switching probability. Information available before college predicts switching only weakly, so advising offices cannot reliably identify likely switchers when students first arrive. Prediction improves as students' records accumulate. Performance in a major's core courses is key: it predicts even switches that occur several terms later. At the same advising capacity in each term, the model identifies 18 percent more switchers than the university's current advising system.

Working Papers

Migration Responses to Targeted K–12 Funding: Evidence from California's Local Control Funding Formula [Draft]

The Academic Effects of Performance Requirements for Staying in College Majors
(with Robert Ainsworth, Thomas Knight, and Macy McClaren)

Work in Progress

Mass Layoffs and Fertility: Evidence from WARN-Based Shocks (with Qilin Zhang)

Quantifying Quality Growth in China: 1988–2009 (with Qilin Zhang)

Effect of Retirement Delay on Labor Market Supply (with Qilin Zhang and Qiushi Hua)

Presentations

Southern Economic Association (SEA) Annual Meeting — 2025
Workshop in Applied and Theoretical Economics (WATE), University of Florida — 2025
University of Florida Public Economics Group — 2025

Teaching Experience

Instructor of Record, University of Florida

ECO 4421 Econometrics (Undergraduate) — Spring 2026, Fall 2026

Spring 2026 evaluations (1–5 scale): overall course rating 4.47 (dept. mean 4.30); improved critical thinking 4.58 (dept. mean 4.32)

Teaching Assistant, University of Florida

ECO 4422 Econometrics 2 (Undergraduate)	Fall 2025
ECO 5426 Econometric Analysis 1 (Graduate)	Fall 2025
ECO 4104 Economics of Competitive Strategy (Undergraduate)	Spring 2025
ECO 5427 Econometric Analysis 2 (Graduate)	Spring 2025
ECP 6035 Cost-Benefit Analysis (Master's)	Spring 2024
ECO 3101 Intermediate Microeconomics (Undergraduate)	Fall 2023
ECO 4504 Public Economics (Undergraduate)	Fall 2022

Teaching Assistant, Johns Hopkins University

Real Estate Entrepreneurship (Master's)	2018 – 2019

Research Experience

Research Assistant to Robert Ainsworth, University of Florida	Spring 2024 – Fall 2024
Research Assistant to David Sappington, University of Florida	Spring 2023 – Summer 2024
Research Assistant to Javier Donna, University of Florida	Spring 2023

Other Experience

Student Affairs Officer, Zhejiang University, China 2020 – 2022

Managed international student services, the campus career service center, and the campus mental health center; Director of the International Student Council and the Residential College Student Committee (2021 – 2022)

Skills

Software: Python, Stata, R, SQL, MATLAB, SPSS, LaTeX **Certification:** CFA Level I

Languages: English (fluent), Mandarin Chinese (native)

References

Robert Ainsworth (Chair)
Department of Economics
University of Florida
robert.ainsworth@ufl.edu

David Sappington
Department of Economics
University of Florida
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Cecilia Peluffo
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