Notable Economics Alumni

The Department of Economics is proud to have many distinguished alumni among its thousands of graduates. Collectively, our alumni have had a profound impact in the public and private sectors of the state, the nation, and the world. Indeed, the following list includes leaders from all walks of life representing the breadth and depth of a liberal arts education in training future trailblazers.

Bridge, Jonathan, BA ’70

Jonathan is Co-CEO and corporate counsel for Ben Bridge Jeweler, a local family business dating to 1912. The company has more than 80 stores stretching from California to Minnesota. Both Jonathan and his wife, the Hon. Bobbe Bridge, retired Washington State Supreme Court justice, have received the UW School of Law Distinguished Alumni Award; Jonathan has also received the UW Law Service Award. A community leader, he chairs the Alliance for Education and is vice chair of Evergreen Children’s Association day care programs. He is also on the Board of the Association for Washington Businesses & Center for Career Alternatives. Jonathan and Bobbe co-founded the Center for Children and Youth Justice in 2006. Jonathan is third generation Navy, a Captain with nine years active duty and 22 in the Reserves. He was a Navy JAG and has taught military law to ROTC midshipmen.

Brimmer, Andrew, BA ’50, MA ’51 (deceased)

As the first African American on Federal Reserve Board of Governors, Dr. Brimmer served the “Fed” from 1966 to 1974. He told President Gerald Ford to consider a 10 percent personal income tax rebate in 1974 – and the President and Congress took his advice, resulting in an $8.1 billion tax break. Dr. Brimmer established an endowed professorship in the department in his estate plans with a $250,000 charitable trust.

Carlson, George, BA ’64

After completing his PhD in economics at the University of Illinois in 1971, Dr. Carlson spent 14 years at the Department of Treasury as the top civil servant leading the group that works on tax reform policy issues. He left Treasury to work for Arthur Andersen and specialized in international tax law. In 2002, he went to Deloitte and Touche where he stayed until 2008 when he retired. He enjoyed his UW experience and fondly remembers the positive influence Professor Henry Buechel had on him.

Courtion, Collette, BA ’94

Colette began her beauty career when she created Calidora, a chain of high-end, anti-aging skin clinics in 2005. With more than 250,000 treatments performed at Calidora, she’s built a trusted, multi-unit retail beauty brand in the greater Seattle area. This experience opened the door to JeNu in 2011, where she continues to innovate by merging her anti-aging treatment knowledge with cutting-edge skincare science. Prior to JeNu and Calidora, Colette was a marketing executive for Starbucks, responsible for creating the Duetto Card (Business Week, Best Product of the Year 2003) and managing the Starbucks Card, the most successful retail value card and loyalty program in the US. Colette has been named by the Puget Sound Business Journal as one of the Top 15 Women of Influence in Seattle (2009) and Top 40 Under-40 leaders in Seattle (2006).

Cox, Charles, BA ’67

After completing his PhD in economics at the University of Chicago, served as commissioner (from 1983 to 1989) and acting chairman (in 1987) of the Securities and Exchange Commission. He is currently Senior Vice President at CompassLexecon, an economic consulting firm based in Chicago, where his areas of expertise include securities and financial markets, industrial organization, and money and banking. He has consulted and directed studies on a variety of industries, including securities, banking, media, communications, insurance, and investment.

Cressey, Bryan, BA ’72
Bryan began his career with First Chicago Equity Group and was one of the founders of the firm that became Golder, Thoma, Cressey, Rauner. He co-founded TCB in 1998. His industry consolidation leadership has been recognized by Fortune and Time magazines, and his particular expertise in the healthcare services field has become widely acknowledged. A member of the Chicago Area Entrepreneurship Hall of Fame, Bryan received his BS in Economics at the University of Washington and earned MBA from Harvard Business School and JD from Harvard Law School.

Fisher, Walter, PhD ’90 (deceased)

Dr. Fisher was head of the Department of Economics and Finance at the prestigious Institute for Advanced Studies (IAS) in Vienna, Austria, a position he held since 2005. From 1995 – 2005 he was an Economist and faculty member at IAS. He was widely published in his research fields of macroeconomics and international finance, including publications with and about the work of his dissertation committee chair, Professor Stephen Turnovsky. Dr. Fisher’s dissertation was entitled “The Effect of Policy Disturbances on the Term Structure of Interest Rates in Closed and Open Economies: An Intertemporal Optimizing Analysis.”

Gehrt, Kathy, MA ’77, BA ’75 (deceased)

Kathy spent 25 years in the telecom industry in a variety of executive positions with Pacific Northwest Bell and later AT&T. At AT&T, she established the first remote test center in Seattle – a state-of-the-art 24/7 customer service center for testing and managing the repair of data circuits. After being promoted to an executive sales position, Kathy negotiated multimillion dollar contracts with AT&T’s Fortune 500 clients, such as Starbucks, Boeing, Safeco, Costco, and Amazon.com. Twice, Kathy was appointed to AT&T’s Council of Leaders, an honor reserved for the company’s top 1% of executives. In addition to serving on the Economics Visiting Committee from 1998 – 2013, she was the first female chair of the committee from 2004-2006. Kathy was the Economics Distinguished Alumna in 2004.

Hotelling, Harold, BA ’19, MA ’21 (deceased)

Dr. Hotelling was an influential economic theorist who taught mathematical statistics at Stanford, Columbia, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Though his doctorate was in mathematics (Princeton University, 1924), Dr. Hotelling is considered one of the fathers of modern economics. He made pioneering contributions to the theories of demand and utility, welfare economics, and taxation. He taught Milton Friedman while at Columbia and was thesis adviser to Ken Arrow and Seymour Geisser.

Inslee, Jay, BA ’73

Elected Governor of the State of Washington in November 2012 in a close race with another UW Economics alumnus, Attorney General Rob McKenna (BA ’85). Inslee grew up in White Center, a fifth generation Washingtonian. Inslee earned his JD at Willamette University and served in the U.S. House of Representatives from from 1993 – 1995 and 1999 – 2012 as a member of the Democratic party.

Jenkins, Timothy, BA ’86

Tim received his UW Econ BA in 1986, and his MBA in Finance and Marketing from the University of Chicago. Tim is co-founder and was for many years the CEO of Point B, Inc. Point B, established in 1995, is a rapidly growing management consulting and venture capital firm with offices in seven U.S. cities. His earlier careers include Director of IT at Children’s Hospital, and manager for Accenture. Tim is Board Chair for YoungLife’s Western Washington Region, a member of the Board of Trustees at Crista Ministries, and is a longtime volunteer at New Horizons Ministries in Seattle. He is also the co-head football coach for King’s Junior High School in Shoreline. Tim’s stepfather was Professor and Chair of UW’s Department of Engineering.

Johnson, Hon. Charles W., BA ’74

Associate Chief Justice Charles W. Johnson began service on the Washington State Supreme Court in January 1991, and is the longest serving justice on the court. Justice Johnson remains active at Seattle University School of Law, where he is a Distinguished Jurist in Residence. He was an adjunct professor at Seattle University School of Law from 1995-2010, teaching a comprehensive seminar on state constitutional law. He has received national recognition for his contribution to legal education, being awarded the 2012 John J. Mcaulay Legal Educator Award based on his dedication to the principles and ideals of integrity, compassion, courage and professional service. He has served as co-chair of the Washington State Minority and Justice Commission since 1994, and he co-chaired the 2004 Task Force on Civil Equal Justice Funding.

Joss, Robert, BA ’65
Dr. Joss earned his MA and PhD degrees while a Sloan Fellow at Stanford University, then went on to serve as a White House Fellow and Deputy to the Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Economic Policy. After a banking career with Wells Fargo and Australia-based Westpac, Dr. Joss returned to the United States in 1999 to become Philip H. Knight Professor and Dean of the Graduate School of Business at Stanford, where he remained until 2009. He is currently a member of the school’s faculty, as an Emeritus Professor.

McIntire, James, PhD ’93

Jim McIntire was elected as Washington’s 22nd State Treasurer in 2008. Prior to that, Jim served five terms (10 years) in the Washington State House of Representatives, representing the 46th Legislative District in North Seattle. Prior to his election as Treasurer, Jim maintained a private economic consulting practice with a national company and served on the faculty of the UW’s Evans School of Public Affairs for 25 years, where he taught economics and government. Before his election to the State House, he was director of the Fiscal Policy Center at the UW, and was appointed by Governors Lowry and Locke to Chair the Community Economic Revitalization Board, where he served for four years. Jim began his career working for Hubert Humphrey in the U.S. Senate, and worked for several other Congressional Committee Chairs. During the 1980s, he served as a public finance advisor to Governor Gardner. Jim is married and lives in Seattle. He and his wife have five adult children.

McKenna, Robert, BA ’85

While an undergraduate at UW, McKenna was ASUW (student body) president. After graduation, he completed his JD at the University of Chicago, where he was on the law review. McKenna practiced law at Perkins Coie for several years before election as a councilman in King County, Washington. In 2004 McKenna ran for, and won, the seat as Attorney General for Washington state, a position he held from January 2005 – January 2013.

Mundell, Robert, MA ’54

Robert Mundell is Professor of Economics at Columbia University, Professor-at-Large at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and laureate of the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences (1999) for “for his analysis of monetary and fiscal policy under different exchange rate regimes and his analysis of optimum currency areas.”

Niimi, Haruyuki, BA ’59 (deceased)

Born in Japan in 1936, Mr. Niimi first joined Shell Sekiyu K.K. in 1960 and successively rose in position within the company, becoming Chairman and President of Showa Shell Sekiyu K.K. in 1998. Niimi served as one of UW’s Senior Presidential Advisors to Mark Emmert from 2005 – 2011, and also served as Senior Executive Director of the Gakushuin School Corporation, a Japanese school that instructs students from kindergarten age through graduate studies and is the traditional school of choice for members of Japan’s royal family.

Nordstrom, Bruce, BA ’55


North, Douglass C., Professor Emeritus

Nobel Laureate Douglass North joined the faculty in 1952 as an assistant professor, and was Professor of Economics from 1960 – 1983. He was awarded the Nobel prize with co-recipient Robert W. Fogel in 1993 for “for having renewed research in economic history by applying economic theory and quantitative methods in order to explain economic and institutional change.”ncer T. Olin Professor in Arts & Sciences,

Richards, Brent, BA ’12

2012 Pac-12 Men’s Soccer Scholar-Athlete of the Year, First-Team Academic All-American, and Portland Timbers forward.

Runstad, Jon, BA ’65

Jon Runstad is Co-Founder, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Wright Runstad & Company, a major Seattle real estate development firm. Jon Runstad co-founded Wright Runstad & Company in 1972. Currently, he is responsible for the direction and general management of the company and is actively involved in major aspects of each project in development and major management issues for existing properties.
Schlickeisen, Rodger, BA ’63

Retired President of Defenders of Wildlife, an environmental advocacy group, and former member of the US Senate Budget Committee.

Sommers, Helen, BA ’69, MA ’70

Helen Sommers grew up in Woodbury Heights, New Jersey, in the ’30s. When she graduated from high school, she went to work as a clerk at Mobil Oil, who gave her an opportunity for a position in Caracas, Venezuela in 1954. While there, Helen decided to take college correspondence courses and enrolled in a program at the University of Washington. She had never traveled to the northwest until 1965, when she came up for summer school at UW. She moved to Seattle in ’68 and went on to earn her B.A. and Masters in Economics. She was very active in Seattle’s League of Women Voters and became the second president of the fledgling National Organization of Women. Through those efforts and the support of other feminists, Helen ran for and won a seat to the state House of Representatives (D-36th District) in 1972. She went on to serve in the House for 36 years; 18 successful elections.

Stigler, George, BA ’31 (deceased)

A Seattle native, Stigler completed his PhD in economics at the University of Chicago and went on to win the Nobel Prize in Economics (1982) for “for his seminal studies of industrial structures, functioning of markets and causes and effects of public regulation.” Stigler was close friends with noted economist Milton Friedman, with whom he led the Chicago School of Economics for many years.

Sutch, Richard, BA ’63

Dr. Sutch is Distinguished Professor of Economics at the University of California at Riverside and Director of the Center for Social and Economic Policy. Dr. Sutch is an economic historian whose analytical work on US slavery and emancipation has earned him acclaim and awards. While at undergraduate at UW, Dr. Sutch studied with Nobel laureate Doug North, and went on to earn his doctorate at MIT with dissertation chair Franco Modigliani. He was awarded both the Ford faculty research fellowship and the Guggenheim fellowship early in his career.

Wilson, Lorin, BA ’40 (deceased)

Partner-in-charge at Deloitte and one of Time Magazine’s 100 Newsmakers of Tomorrow in 1950.

You might also be interested in the Department’s Distinguished Alumni Award. Know of someone who should be on this list? Email the Outreach Coordinator.

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