

LEAH K. LAKDAWALA

August 2026

Department of Economics
Wake Forest University
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ACADEMIC POSITIONS

Associate Professor, Wake Forest University, Department of Economics, July 2024-present
Clark Family Faculty Fellow, Wake Forest University, July 2023-July 2026
Assistant Professor, Wake Forest University, Department of Economics, July 2020-June 2024
Visiting Scholar, University of California, Davis, Agricultural and Resource Economics, June 2021-May 2022
Visiting Scholar, University of California, Berkeley, Agricultural and Resource Economics, September 2021-May 2022
Assistant Professor, Michigan State University, Department of Economics, August 2012-July 2020
FMLA Leave: 2017, 2020

Research Fields: Development Economics, Labor Economics, Health Economics

NON-ACADEMIC POSITIONS

2008 – 2010 Consultant, World Bank – Development Research Group

EDITORIAL POSITIONS

2025 – present Associate Editor, Economics of Education Review

EDUCATION

Ph.D. Economics, University of California, San Diego, 2012
M.Sc. Economics with Distinction, University College London, 2006
B.Sc. with Honors in International Economics, Georgetown University, Walsh School of Foreign Service, 2005
Magna cum laude, Honors Certificate in International Business Diplomacy

PUBLISHED & ACCEPTED PAPERS

“[Frosty Climate, Icy Relationships: Frosts and Intimate Partner Violence in Rural Peru](#)” (with Katie Bollman, Eduardo Nakasone, and Judhajit Chakraborty). 2026. *Journal of Development Economics* 180: 103710.

“[The Effects of Expanding Worker Rights to Children](#).” (with Diana Martinez and Diego Vera-Cossio). 2025. *Journal of Development Economics* 172: 103389.

“[The Dynamic Impact of Internet Access on Student Learning](#).” 2023. (with Kevin Kho and Eduardo Nakasone). *AEJ: Economic Policy* 15(4): 222-254.

“[Effects of Parental Disability on Children’s Schooling: The Surprising Role of Parental Education](#).” 2023. (with Katie Bollman) *AEA Papers and Proceedings* 113: 477-81.

“[The Relationship Between Parental Disability and Child Outcomes: Evidence from Veteran Families](#).” (with Prashant Bharadwaj). 2022. *PLOS ONE* 17(11).

“[Perverse Consequences of Well-Intentioned Regulation: Evidence from India’s Child Labor Ban](#).” 2020. (with Prashant Bharadwaj and Nicolas Li) April 2018. *Journal of the European Economic Association* 18(3): 1158-1195.

Lakdawala, Leah K. and David Simon. 2017. “[The Intergenerational Consequences of Tobacco Policy: A Review of Policy’s Influence on Maternal Smoking and Child Health](#).” *Southern Economic Journal* 84(1): 229-74.

Bharadwaj, Prashant and Leah K. Lakdawala. 2013. “[Discrimination Begins in the Womb: Evidence of Sex-Selective Prenatal Investments](#).” *Journal of Human Resources* 48(1): 71-113.

WORKING PAPERS AND WORKS IN PROGRESS

“[When the Temperature Drops, Perceptions Worsen: Effects of Extreme Cold on Perceptions of Government and Civic Participation in the Peruvian Highlands](#)” (with Eduardo Nakasone and Judhajit Chakraborty). October 2024.

Abstract: We examine how extreme weather affects individuals' perceptions of government and political institutions in Peru. We match granular data on cold weather shocks to individuals using variation in interview date and location and find that extreme cold worsens perceptions of democracy. Further, extreme cold reduces civic engagement in formal democratic institutions (participation in national elections) but increases participation in local neighborhood associations. We provide evidence that these effects work through several mechanisms: economic losses, increased incidence

of illness, and higher crimes. Finally, we find that greater coverage of government-provided goods and services can attenuate the adverse effects of extreme cold.

“Trade Liberalization and Human Capital Formation: Child Learning and Child Labor in Peru.” (with Ryan Abman, Clark Lundberg, and Eduardo Nakasone)

Abstract: Trade liberalization can promote long-run growth, but adjustment costs fall unevenly and may affect children's human capital with lasting consequences. We examine how Peru's dramatic unilateral liberalization efforts affected human capital, exploiting local labor market exposure to import tariff cuts and combining household surveys with administrative records on test scores and enrollment. We document a stark trade-off between the quantity of schooling and the quality of learning. Greater exposure to import competition increased public primary school enrollment and attendance, yet learning outcomes deteriorated: exposed districts experienced a decline in average math scores. We trace these divergent outcomes to countervailing income and substitution effects. While the decline in returns to low-skill labor increased the relative value of schooling, negative shocks to household income forced children to combine education with employment. Finally, we document a substitution from private to public schooling driven by income constraints, which mechanically raised average private school scores via compositional changes. Our results highlight that trade reforms can expand school access while simultaneously eroding learning quality, a cost standard enrollment metrics fail to capture.

“COVID Mortality and Voting Behavior: Evidence from Presidential Elections in Peru.” (with Eduardo Nakasone and Judhajit Chakraborty)

Abstract: Using within-district variation in COVID-19 deaths and data from presidential elections in Peru, we find that -- conditional on district- and election-year fixed effects -- districts that suffered more deaths due to COVID-19 in the months before the elections shifted their votes towards left-leaning parties in the 2021 presidential election. Falsification exercises do not indicate that this relationship is due to underlying differential pre-existing trends in voting across districts. The effects of COVID-19 mortality on voting outcomes does not appear to be driven by direct or indirect effects of deaths on voter turnout or other measures of voter participation. We investigate household income as one mediating factor through which the pandemic influenced voting behavior.

“The Political Returns to Regulation: Evidence from Peru's University Licensing Reform.” (with Fabiola Alba-Vivar, Gustavo Acosta, and Diego Mestanza)

Abstract: Do citizens reward governments for enforcing quality standards, even when enforcement imposes costs? We study Peru's university licensing reform, in which a newly created regulator evaluated every university between 2016 and 2021 and forced the closure of roughly one third. Exploiting variation in the timing and intensity of closures across provinces, we find that greater exposure shifts electoral support toward left-leaning, pro-regulation, and pro-education-reform parties. Individual-level survey data show that these shifts are

accompanied by more favorable evaluations of executive government performance, but not by changes in democratic values. These results suggest that visible regulatory enforcement can signal effective governance without necessarily changing citizens' broader views of democracy. Exposure to university approvals --- affirmations of institutional quality --- produces no measurable political effects.

“The Effect of School-based Internet Access on Educational Attainment and Labor Market Outcomes.” (with Eduardo Nakasone)

Abstract: We show that access to internet at secondary schools increases the probability that young adults attend university in Peru. We exploit variation in school-based internet connectivity induced by the rollout of a national program that connected many public schools to the internet starting in 2004. Using data from annual cross-sectional household surveys, we find that cohorts that attended secondary schools with internet access are 2.4 percentage points (nearly 10%) more likely to attend university than cohorts who attended the same schools before they gained internet access. We also find that young adults are less likely to be working only and more likely to be exclusively attending school. In addition, we 1) see whether internet access affects the quality of universities attended; 2) investigate whether improvements in digital skills are a likely mechanism; 3) explore the effects on labor market outcomes for older samples, including effects on occupational choice and wages.

“[From Loans to Labor: Microcredit, Entrepreneurship and Child Labor.](#)” July 2018.

AFFILIATIONS

Core Faculty Member, Center for Advanced Study of International Development (CASID), Michigan State University (2012-2020)

Core Faculty Member, Center for Gender in a Global Context (GenGen), Michigan State University (2012-2020)

Affiliated Faculty Member, Asian Studies Center, Michigan State University (2012-2020)

CONFERENCE AND WORKSHOP PRESENTATIONS

2026 Liberal Arts Colleges Public/Labor (LAC-PaL) Conference, Wesleyan University (scheduled)
 Liberal Arts Colleges Public/Labor Seminar
 Southeastern Micro Labor Workshop, University of Tennessee Knoxville
 Midwest International Economic Development Conference (MWIEDC), University of Wisconsin-Madison
 Liberal Arts Colleges Public/Labor (LAC-PaL) Conference, Oberlin College
 Triangle Economics of Education Workshop, Duke University

- Economics Seminar, Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research (IGIDR), Mumbai
- 2025 College of William and Mary, Department of Economics Seminar
Liberal Arts Colleges Public/Labor Seminar
Pacific Conference for Development Economics (Pac-Dev), University of Southern California
Economics Seminar, San Diego State University
Midwest International Economic Development Conference (MWIEDC), University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
Annual Conference of the Society for Economic Measurement (SEM), Athens University, Athens, Greece
Research Seminar, Centre for Advanced Financial Research and Learning (CAFRAL)
- 2024 ASSA / AEA Annual Meeting
Seminario Microeconomía Aplicada en Perú (Seminario MAP)
Liberal Arts Colleges Public/Labor Seminar
Society of Labor Economics Annual Conference
DevSouth Conference, University of Tennessee Knoxville
UNC Greensboro Economics Seminar
Southern Economic Association Annual Conference
Carolina Regional Empirical Economics Day, UNC Charlotte
Liberal Arts College Development Conference (LACDEV), Williams College
- 2023 ASSA / AEA Annual Meeting
Economics Department Seminar, University of South Carolina
Southeastern International/Development Economics Workshop, Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta
Society of Labor Economics Annual Conference, University of Pennsylvania
Triangle Economics of Education Workshop, Duke University (discussant)
Southern Economic Association Annual Conference
Triangle Economists in Applied Micro Workshop
Deconomics Workshop, Wake Forest University
Junior Research Workshop, Wake Forest University
- 2022 Sustainability and Development Conference, University of Michigan
Development Economics Seminar, UC Merced
Development Economics Seminar, UC Davis
ARE Department Seminar, UC Berkeley
Midwest International Economic Development Conference (MWIEDC), University of Minnesota, Minneapolis
100 Years of Economic Development Conference, Cornell University

- Economics Seminar, Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta
Impact Evaluation Conference for KDI School's 25th Anniversary, KDI School of Public Policy and Management, Seoul
Liberal Arts College Labor/Public Conference
LACEA/RIDGE Labor Workshop
Triangle Economists in Applied Micro Workshop (Spring 2022 and Fall 2022)
Economics Seminar, CalState Chico
Southern Economic Association Annual Conference
Northeastern Universities Development Consortium (NEUDC) Conference, Yale University
Liberal Arts College Development Conference (LACDEV), Wellesley College
Deaconomics Workshop, Wake Forest University
Junior Workshop, Department of Economics, Wake Forest University
- 2021 The Frontiers in Development Policy Conference, KDI School of Public Policy and Management
Portland State University (Seminar)
Triangle Economics of Education Workshop, Duke University
Development Tea, UC Davis (Internal Seminar)
Applied Research in Labor Economics and Human Capital, MGIMO University
Bolivian Conference on Development Economics, Bolivia
Triangle Area Economics Applied Micro Seminar
Econometric Society Delhi Winter School, Delhi School of Economics and Center for Development Economics
Conference on Economic Growth and Development Economics, Indian Statistical Institute
Sustainability and Development Conference, University of Michigan
- 2020 Federal Trade Commission (Seminar)
Food and Drug Administration (Seminar)
Wake Forest University, Department of Economics (Seminar)
San Diego State University, Center for Health Economics and Policy Studies (Seminar)
Northeastern Universities Development Consortium (NEUDC) Conference, Dartmouth
- 2019 Sustainability and Development Conference, University of Michigan
- 2018 University of Hawaii, Manoa, Department of Economics (Seminar)
Sustainability and Development Conference, University of Michigan
Inter-American Development Bank Research Department, Washington DC (Seminar)
Development Economics Conference, UC San Diego

- Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada, Department of Economics (Seminar)
Summer Meetings of the Econometric Society, University of California, Davis
University of Madison, Wisconsin, Department of Agricultural and Applied
Economics (Seminar)
MSU Empirical Microeconomics Lunch Workshop
- 2017 Development Day Conference, Northwestern University
 MSU Development Lunch Workshop
- 2016 Summer Meetings of the Econometric Society, Philadelphia
- 2015 Labor Day Conference, University of Michigan
- 2014 Development Day Conference, Notre Dame University
 Western Michigan University, Department of Economics (Seminar)
 BREAD-CEPR-PODER Conference on Development, London School of
 Economics, London
- 2013 Dartmouth College, Department of Economics (Seminar)
 Annual Conference on Economic Growth and Development (ACEGD), Indian
 Statistical Institute (Delhi)
 Northeastern Universities Development Consortium (NEUDC) Conference,
 Harvard
 Michigan State University, Department of Economics (Applied Seminar)
- 2012 University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, Department of Public Policy (Seminar)
 George Washington University, Department of Economics (Seminar)
 Federal Housing Finance Agency (Seminar)
 U.S. Treasury, Micro Group (Seminar)
 Department of Justice (Seminar)
 University of Colorado Boulder, Department of Economics (Seminar)
 Michigan State University, Department of Economics (Seminar)
 Claremont McKenna College, Department of Economics (Seminar)
 Simon Fraser University, Department of Economics (Seminar)
 Royal Holloway University, London, Department of Economics (Seminar)
 Consumer Finance and Protection Bureau (Seminar)
 Barnard College, Department of Economics (Seminar)
 Midwest International Economic Development Conference (MWIEDC), University
 of Minnesota, Minneapolis
- 2011 Northeastern Universities Development Consortium (NEUDC) Conference, MIT
 All-California Labor Economics Conference, RAND Santa Monica
 NBER Entrepreneurship Research Boot Camp, NBER

- Western Economic Association International Annual Conference,
San Diego
Conference on the Long Run Impacts of Early Life Events,
University of Michigan
Pacific Conference for Development Economics (Pac-Dev),
UC Berkeley
- 2010 Northeastern Universities Development Consortium (NEUDC) Conference, MIT
- 2009 Western Economic Association International Annual Conference,
Vancouver
Pacific Conference for Development Economics (Pac-Dev),
San Francisco State University

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES AND SERVICE

- Member: American Economic Association, Econometric Society, Society of Labor Economics, International Development Economics Association (IDEA) - Founding Board Member
- Editorial Positions: Associate Editor, Economics of Education Review
- Referee Service: Review of Economic Studies, Quarterly Journal of Economics, Review of Economics and Statistics, American Economic Review: Insights, AEJ: Economic Policy, AEJ: Applied Economics, The Economic Journal, Journal of the European Economic Association, Journal of Development Economics, Journal of Human Resources, Proceedings of the National Academy of Science, Economic Development and Cultural Change, World Bank Economic Review, Economics of Education Review, Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization, World Development, Journal of Health Economics, Journal of Economic Geography, Journal of Population Economics, Demography, Southern Economic Journal, Canadian Journal of Economics, Oxford Bulletin of Economics and Statistics, Feminist Economics, Health Economics, Population Studies, Economic Modelling, Nature Communications, Journal of Human Capital, BMJ Public Health
- Excellence in Refereeing Award, World Bank Economic Review, 2021 and 2022
- Department and University: Wake Forest University:
Curriculum Committee Chair (2025 – present)
- Committees and Roles: College Research Advisory Council (2025 – present)

Research Assistant Coordinator (2026 – present)
Member of Assistant Professor Hiring Committee (2024-25)
Chair of Assistant Professor Hiring Committee (2023-4)
Member of Associate Professor Hiring Committee (2022-23)
Graduate School Liaison (Fall 2023-present)
Creator and Organizer of Junior Writing Group (Spring 2023)
Committee to Evaluate the Chair (2024-25)
B of A Scholarship Committee (2025, 2026)
Exit Exam Assessment Committee (2025 – present)

Michigan State University:

Economics Advisory Committee to Chair (2012-3)
Development Field Exam Committee (2012-3, 2014-5)
Graduate Instruction Committee (2013-4, 2014-5)
Econometrics Field Exam Committee (2012-3, 2014-5)
Master's in Public Policy Advisory and Admissions Committee (2014-5)
Labor Recruiting Committee (2014-5)
Water (Environment/Development) Recruiting Committee (2014-5)
University Jurisdictional Appeal Panel (2016)
Department Computer Committee (2017-9)

Professional Meetings
and Conferences
(Organizer,
Creator, Committees):

Wake Forest University:

Host for the 2027 Liberal Arts College Public and Labor (LAC-PaL) Conference (2026-2027)
Organizing Committee Liberal Arts College Public and Labor (LAC-PaL) Conference (2024 – present)
Organizing Committee Liberal Arts College Public and Labor (LAC-PaL) Seminar Series (2025, 2026)
Selection Committee for the Liberal Arts College Development (LACDEV) Conference (2026)
Selection Committee for the Northeast Universities Development Consortium Conference (NEUDC, 2024)
Organizer/Co-organizer of the Triangle Economists in Applied Micro (TEAM) Seminar (Spring 2023, Fall 2023)
Selection Committee for the Liberal Arts College Public and Labor (LAC-PaL) Conference (Spring 2023, Spring 2025, Spring 2026)

Michigan State University:

Co-organizer of Development Day Conference (2012, 2017)
Co-creator of MSU Development Lunch Workshop (2012-3)
Organizer of MSU Development Lunch Workshop (2013-4)

Creator and Organizer of MSU Assistant Professor Lunch Workshop
(2018-9)

TEACHING

Wake Forest University

ECN209: Applied Econometrics (Undergraduate)

- Fall 2020 (2 sections), Spring 2021, Fall 2022 (2 sections), Spring 2023, Fall 2022 (2 sections), Fall 2023 (2 sections), Spring 2024 (2 sections), Fall 2024 (1 section), Spring 2025 (2 sections), Fall 2026 (2 sections)

ECN335: Economic Analysis of Labor Markets (Undergraduate)

- Spring 2021 (1 section), Spring 2023 (1 section), Fall 2024 (1 section)

Independent Study (Undergraduate)

- Fall 2023 (Advising student research project)

Michigan State University

EC410: Development Economics (Undergraduate)

- Spring 2014

EC413: Economic Analysis of Asia (Undergraduate)

- Fall 2013, Spring 2015, Spring 2016, Fall 2016, Spring 2018, Spring 2019

EC850: Growth, Development, and Human Resources (PhD Development Economics)

- Spring 2013, Spring 2015, Fall 2016, Spring 2018, Spring 2019

PPL802: Quantitative Methods II (Master's Econometrics)

- Spring 2013, Spring 2014, Spring 2015, Spring 2016, Spring 2018, Spring 2019

ADVISING

Wake Forest University

Note: I was on research leave Fall 2021 and Spring 2022

Honors Theses: Becca Spritzer (primary), Elizabeth Crispino (primary), Antonio Roca (primary), Tristan Duthler (primary), Cameron Blair (primary, High Honors), Jasmine Xu (primary, High Honors), Steven Cayea (secondary), Andy Shen (secondary), Emma Douglass (secondary), Juan Londono (primary), Gary Guo (primary)

Research Assistants: Dawn Zhong, Jasmine Xu (2 semesters), Emma Gao, Haosen He, Marina Velasco, Brandon Staats, Cameron Blair, Wyla Solsbery (2 semesters), Juan Londono (2 semesters), Nick Mauro, Diego Mestanza, Dev Parikh, Anushree Khatri

Teaching Assistants: Angela Waszkiewicz (2 semesters), Steven Cayea (4 semesters; awarded the Hammond Leadership & Service Prize for service to the department), Gary Kim (2 semesters), Andrew Vollrath

Major Advising: Fall 2022, Spring 2023, Fall 2024, Spring 2024, Fall 2024, Spring 2025, Fall 2025, Spring 2026

Research Fellowships (Advisor and Recommender): Jasmine Xu (URECA Summer Research Fellowship, Awarded 2024) Gary Guo (URECA Summer Research Fellowship, Awarded 2025)

Mentor: Association for Inclusion and Mentoring in Economics (AMIE) (Mentor 2023-24, 2024-25, 2025-26; Conference Discussant 2023)

Letter Writer (PhD): Subarna Banerjee (Shiv Nadar University), Judhajit Chakraborty (Michigan State University), Kathryn Bollman (Michigan State University)

Michigan State University

PhD: Committee member (Michigan State):
Economics: Asja Asenova, Hui Wang (Econ/AFRE), Muzna Alvi, Hyeongjun Bang, Godwin Debrah (Econ/AFRE), Kevin Kho, Sambojyoti Biswas, Kathryn Bollman
Agricultural, Food, and Resource Economics (AFRE): Ayala Wineman, Aissatou Ouedraogo, Evgeniya Moskaleva, Josephat Koima, Judhajit Chakraborty

Master's: Public Policy (Michigan State): Eyup Civelek, Herve Mukuna, Keran Zhu, Qiang Feng, Weiqin Wu, Xiaodi Zhu, Haining Wang
Agricultural, Food, and Resource Economics (Michigan State): Awa Sanou

Undergraduate: Economics Scholar Advisor (Michigan State): Ruth Awor, Sarah Schuitt, Ruth Archer, Chelsea Wein
Social Science Scholar Advisor (Michigan State): Grace Hough
AEA Scholars Program – Faculty Research Mentor (Michigan State, 2017)

HONORS, SCHOLARSHIPS, AND FELLOWSHIPS

2023 – 2026

Clark Family Faculty Fellowship, Wake Forest University

2010 – 2011	Clive Granger Prize, Department of Economics, UCSD
2008 – 2010	PreDoctoral Fellow, Department of International Relations and Pacific Studies Center on Pacific Economies, UCSD
2008	Summer Graduate Research Fellow, Department of Economics, UCSD
2005	William F. Notz Medal for International Economics, Georgetown University