

Department of Economics

Faculty Fun Facts – Did you know?



NAME: DR LYNN GAMBIN

POSITION: ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

EDUCATION: BSC (MEMORIAL), MA (MEMORIAL), PHD (YORK, ENGLAND)

HOMETOWN: DUNVILLE (PLACENTIA), NL, CANADA

Work history: After receiving my doctorate, I held a one-year research post in the Economics Department at the University of Sheffield before moving onto the Institute for Employment Research at the University of Warwick as a Research Fellow initially and then as a Senior Research Fellow. I held that position for 10 years before returning to Memorial University of Newfoundland in August.

Research interests: My research focus is on public policy in the areas of education and training, with a particular interest on vocational education, training and apprenticeships. More generally, my research encompasses labour and health economics. I conducted a variety of studies looking at the intersection of the education and training system with the labour market. These studies have examined the motivation for employers to engage in different forms of training; the costs and benefits of doing so; and the returns to different forms in education and training. My research has also addressed issues relating to identifying and measuring skills mismatches in the labour market.

Teaching: I teach introductory microeconomics and macroeconomics, health economics, and quantitative methods for research as a part of the Masters in Employment Relations program.

Hobbies: DIY, assembling flat-pack furniture (IKEA is my favourite store), going to the gym, watching movies with my children and introducing them to my favourite comedies (as age appropriate!) and 80s films.

Memorable events: I once served as a Specialist Adviser to the House of Commons Education Select Committee in the UK. As part of this committee, I was privileged to observe how parliamentary committees really work and, most interestingly, I got to walk through the secure tunnels and passages (including very narrow staircases) in and around the Palace of Westminster and I got to walk directly under Big Ben, from I gained a whole new perspective on time.

Fun (?) Facts: 1) Whilst a student at Memorial I once had a summer job as a research assistant with the Centre for Nursing Studies and spent most of the summer in Southcott Hall and the Medical School Library. 2) I spent another summer working at a window factory – long shifts, noisy saws, lots of dust, but it paid well! 3) The first time I ever left Canada was the day I moved to York, England to start my PhD. That same day I made my first train journey (from London to York for £60 (I didn't know about discounts for rail fares then!)). It wasn't the original plan but, I ended up living in England for 14 years.

How were you drawn to economics? I hadn't always planned on a career in economics (or even completing my degree in the subject). Initially when starting my BSc, I had intended to major in Chemistry but, after the first semester, I found that I really didn't enjoy the subject. After considering other options, I found myself taking the first two introductory economics courses (for which I had a knack for the subject and loved it. I met with the then Head of the Department Economics (Dr. Eugene Tsoa) and promptly declare my major. Over the rest of my undergraduate studies, I felt like a part of the department.

I was fortunate to work in the Help Centre and as a research assistant for different professors. I continued on and completed my MA at MUN. With encouragement and support from the department, I was awarded the Rothermere Fellowship to undertake my doctorate at any UK university. With a keen interest in health economics, I applied for a place (and was accepted!) at the University of York under the supervision of Dr Andrew Jones.

What was your most interesting research project?

This is a tough question. I can give you my top two: 1) The net costs of training to employers. In this study (and a number of linked ones), I had the opportunity to travel to various towns and cities in England to interview employers across a variety of sectors. Aside from the importance of the research itself, this project exposed me to the country and provided me with hands-on understanding of where data come from and the experiences of real employers and employees.

2) Assessing the types and extent of skills mismatches (shortages and surpluses) in the UK (and another study at the European level). These studies involved work with numerous data sets and experimenting with different definitions, calculations and estimates to best identify occupations that were likely to be areas where skills mismatches might emerge.

In your opinion, what is this the most surprising misconception about economics? That it is all about money. If you aren't familiar with the discipline, it could be easy to think that it is just about money, banking, finance, etc., but once you become more acquainted with Economics, you will find that it is also about how different choices affect society and different groups and this insight is really powerful.

What advice would you give students deciding on a career? Two things: 1) Think about what you want in a career. Are you concerned most about earnings? Prestige? Work-life balance? Doing something you really enjoy? Autonomy? Security? All of the above? 2) Explore! If you're in university (or about to start), don't be afraid to try different subjects – especially if you haven't been exposed to them before. If you're interested in an area, try to meet people working in that field (including your professors and instructors) and find out about their experiences. The labour economist in me also suggests that you examine how the labour market looks and try to ascertain where it is headed. I think it is important to remember too that whatever you do your degree or training in, there are always opportunities to go in a different direction later on to help with career progression or to make a career change.