

Ben ZOU

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EMPLOYMENT

2022 - present Daniels School of Business, Purdue University
2024 - present, Associate Professor of Economics
2022 - 2024, Assistant Professor of Economics
2015 - 2022 Assistant Professor of Economics, Michigan State University

AFFILIATIONS

2025 - present Research fellow, ROCKWOOL Foundation Berlin (RFBerlin)
2022 - present Faculty affiliate, Purdue University Research Center in Economics (PURCE)
2018 - 2022 Affiliated faculty, Asian Studies Center, Michigan State University

EDITORIAL POSITIONS

2025 - present Coeditor, *Journal of Human Resources*
2025 - present Associate Editor, *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*
2026 Guest Editor, *China Economic Review* Special Issue
- Globalization, Technological Change and Economic Transformation

EDUCATION

2015 Ph.D. Economics, University of Maryland, College Park
2009 M.A. Economics, Peking University
2006 B.S. Mechanical Engineering, B.A. Economics, Peking University

FIELDS OF INTEREST

Labor Economics, Urban Economics, Economic Development

PUBLICATIONS

1. "China's Commuting-based Metropolitan Areas," with Ting Chen and Yizhen Gu. *Journal of Urban Economics*. Vol. 144, Nov 2024.
2. "Home Location Choices and the Gender Commute Gap," with Yizhen Gu, Naijia Guo, and Jing Wu. *Journal of Human Resources*. 59(2): 545-575, Mar 2024.
3. "The Motherhood Penalty in China: Magnitudes, Trends, and the Role of Grandparenting" with Lingsheng Meng and Yunbin Zhang. *Journal of Comparative Economics*. Volume 51, Issue 1, September 2023, Pages 105-132.
4. "A Marriage-Market Perspective on Risk-Taking and Career Choices: Theory and Evidence," with Hanzhe Zhang. *European Economic Review*, Volume 152, February 2023, 104379.
5. "Industrializing from Scratch: the 'Construction of Third Front' and Local Economic Development in China's Hinterland," with Jingting Fan, *Journal of Development Economics*. vol. 152, Sep 2021.
6. "Subways and Road Congestion," with Yizhen Gu, Chang Jiang, and Junfu Zhang, *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*. 13(2):83-115, Apr 2021.

7. “The Alibaba Effect: Spatial Consumption Inequality and the Welfare Gains from e-Commerce,” with Jingting Fan, Lixin Tang, and Weiming Zhu, *Journal of International Economics*. 114: 203-220. Sep 2018.
8. “The Local Economic Impacts of Military Personnel Contractions,” *Journal of Labor Economics*. 36(3): 589-621. Jul 2018.
9. “Incomplete Disclosure: Evidence of Signaling and Countersignaling,” with Ben Bederson, Ginger Zhe Jin, Phillip Leslie, and Alex Quinn, *American Economic Journal: Microeconomics*, 10(1): 41-66, Feb 2018.
10. “The Effect of Aid on Growth: Evidence from a Quasi-Experiment,” with Sebastian Galiani, Stephen Knack and L. Colin Xu, *Journal of Economic Growth*. 22 (1): 1-33, Mar 2017.
11. “Business Cycles and Divorce: Evidence from Microdata,” with Judith K. Hellerstein and Melinda Sandler Morrill, *Economics Letters*, 188: pp. 68-70. 2013.

WORKING PAPERS

1. “Crowding,” with Yizhen Gu, Qu Tang, and Kai Wu. Dec 2025.
2. “Promoting Healthy Diets at a Large Restaurant Chain,” with Weijia Dai and Ginger Jin. Jun 2025. R&R at the *Journal of Marketing Research*.
3. “Migration Restrictions and the Migrant-Native Wage Gap: The Role of Wage Setting and Sorting,” with Naijia Guo, Li Zhang, and Rongjie Zhang. Jan 2025. R&R at the *American Economic Review*.
4. “Fare Structure and Demand for Public Transit,” with Yizhen Gu, Qu Tang, and Yacan Wang. Mar 2026. Conditionally accepted at the *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*.
5. “The Dual Local Markets: Family, Jobs, and the Spatial Distribution of Skills,” with Jingting Fan. Nov 2021.
6. “Interactions among Donors’ Aid Allocations, Evidence from an Exogenous World Bank Income Threshold,” with Stephen Knack and L. Colin Xu. Jun 2014.

EARLIER RESEARCH EXPERIENCES

Consultant, World Bank, Summer 2011, 2012; Winter 2012

Survey team leader, China Health and Retirement Longitudinal Survey (CHARLS), Peking University, 2008-2009

TEACHING

Purdue University

- 2026– Research Sprint (Ph.D.)
- 2026– EconScholars Reading Group (undergraduate)
- 2026– Urban Economics (Ph.D.)
- 2025 Topics in Labor and Urban Economics (Ph.D.)
- 2024–2025 Development Economics (undergraduate)
- 2022– Urban Economics (undergraduate)

Michigan State University

- 2016-2022 Labor Economics I (Ph.D.)
- 2017-2022 Urban Economics (undergraduate)
- 2016-2018 Analysis of Labor Markets (undergraduate)

University of Maryland, College Park
2011 Methods and Tools of Economic Analysis (undergraduate)

FUNDING AND AWARDS

- 2025 Department Distinguished Teaching Award, Spring 2025 (Development Economics)
2024 Department Distinguished Teaching Award.
for two courses in Spring 2024 (Development Economics, Urban Economics).
2019 Dr. Delia Koo Endowment Awards, Asian Studies Center,
Michigan State University
2017-2018 Dr. Gwen Andrew Faculty Initiatives Fund, College of Social Sciences,
Michigan State University
2017 Special Foreign Travel Fund, Michigan State University
2014 Western Economic Association International Graduate Student Workshop
2014 The Ann G. Wylie Dissertation Fellowship, University of Maryland
2014 University of Maryland 2014 Invention of the Year Finalist
"A National Database of Food Safety Inspections for Retail Establishments,"
with Benjamin Bederson, Alexander Quinn, Ginger Jin, and Phillip Leslie.
The business established based on this database was acquired in 2023.
2013 U.S. Department of Labor ETA Research Papers Program
2010-2014 Graduate Assistantship, University of Maryland
2009-2010 Graduate Fellowship, University of Maryland

CONFERENCE AND SEMINAR PRESENTATIONS

(including scheduled)

- 2026: AEA-ASSA; Stanford University; Rocky Mountain Urban and Real Estate Conferences (RMURE);
2025: AEA-ASSA; Sixth World Labor Conference hosted by Society of Labor Economists (SOLE); Brookings Annual Municipal Finance Conference; UEA; University of Chicago-Northwestern China Workshop; University of Illinois Chicago; Northeastern University.
2024: AEA-ASSA (poster); AREUEA-ASSA; Peking University HSBC Business School; University of Hong Kong; Jinan University; Econometric Society North America Summer Meeting; UEA; Conference on Urban and Regional Economics (CURE); SMU-Jinan Conference on Urban Economics.
2023: Mid-Midwest Applied Microeconomics Workshop; Northeast Workshop on Energy Policy and Environmental Economics at Cornell; Conference on Infrastructure and Urban Development in the Developing World at U Tokyo; UIUC; UEA.
2022: SOLE; University of Maryland; Online Spatial & Urban Seminars.
2021: MWIEDC@NWU; Peking University; Purdue University; UEA.
2020: Chinese Economist Society North America Meeting; UEA; Summer Virtual Conference on Urban Economics; Jinan University.
2019: Lehigh University; PacDev@USC; MWIEDC@Wisconsin; UEA; University of Oklahoma; University of Michigan; University of Calgary; Purdue University.
2018: AREUEA-ASSA; University of Queensland; University of New South Wales; Victoria University of Wellington; University of Melbourne; Development Day Conference at University of Chicago.
2017: Econometric Society Asian Meeting; Fudan University; Development Day Conference at Northwestern University.
2016: AEA Annual Meeting; Econometric Society Winter Meeting; UM/MSU/UWO Labo(u)r Day; NBER Chinese Economy Meeting; Econometric Society North America Summer Meeting; NBER Summer Institute (PRIT group); NEUDC@MIT.
2015: University of Chicago Harris School; Cornerstone; Michigan State University; NEUDC@Brown University; UEA; NARSC.
2014 & earlier: U.S. Department of Labor (DoL); SOLE; WEAI Graduate Student Workshop;

UEA; the Chinese Economist Society (CES) North America Conference; Southern Economic Association (SEA) Annual Meetings; ISNIE@Stanford.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Professional Awards:

2024 Excellence in Reviewing Award, *Journal of Human Resources*.

Professional Associations:

2019-2020 Board of Directors, The Chinese Economist Society

Conference Organizer and Program Committee Member:

2026 Program & Award Selection Committee, Chinese Economist Society North America Meeting
2026 Program Committee, Chinese Economist Society at ASSA Annual Meeting
2025 Program Committee, China Urban Economics Association Meeting
2025 Program Committee, AREUEA National Conference
2024 Program Committee, China Urban Economics Association Meeting
2023 Program Committee, Chinese Economist Society China Meeting
2021 Reviewer Panel, Midwest International Economic Development Conference
2020 Reviewer Panel, S.C. Lee Best Paper competition, Asian Studies Center, MSU
2020 Reviewer Panel, Midwest International Economic Development Conference
2020 Organizer, Chinese Economist Society North America Meeting.
2019 Reviewer Panel, Midwest International Economic Development Conference
2019 Organizing Committee, Midwest Macro Meeting

Referee for academic journals:

American Economic Journal: Applied Economics, American Economic Journal: Economic Policy, American Economic Journal: Microeconomics, American Economic Review, American Economic Review: Insights, American Journal of Agricultural Economics, Canadian Journal of Economics, China Economic Review, China Quarterly, Economic Development and Cultural Change, Economic Journal, Economics Letters, European Economic Review, IMF Economic Review, Journal of Comparative Economics, Journal of Development Economics, Journal of Economic Geography, Journal of Economic Growth, Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization, Journal of Economics and Management Strategy, Journal of the European Economic Association, Journal of Human Resources, Journal of International Economics, Journal of Labor Economics, Journal of Public Economics, Journal of Policy Analysis and Management, Journal of Urban Economics, Labour Economics, National Tax Journal, Oxford Economic Papers, Regional Science and Urban Economics, Review of Economics and Statistics, Review of Finance, Review of Industrial Organization, Review of International Organizations.

ad hoc reviewer for research grants:

National Science Foundation, Israel Science Foundation.

DOCTORAL STUDENTS

Doctoral Dissertation Committee (first placement) [most recent known affiliation]

* indicates as committee chair

At Purdue University

ongoing Lisa Qilu Pan, Tong Li, Yuri Kim, Zach Knepper, Chengxi Su,
Yucong Li*, Yiming Li*, Yiting Yu, Cecilia Yu-Ting Huang,
Yilin Wang, Xiaoxu Yang.
2026 Junni Pan* (Shanghai University of Finance and Economics)
2025 Yuansen Li (Ag Econ) (Michigan State University, postdoc)
2025 Sisi Zhou (Ernst & Young)

At Michigan State University

- 2024 Raghav Rakesh (Bates White)
- 2023 Kaidi Wu (JP Morgan Chase)
- 2023 Alex Johann (Lewin Group)
- 2022 Nick Brown (Queen's University, postdoc) [Florida State University]
- 2022 Priyankar Datta (Walmart)
- 2021 Narae Park (University of Texas at Austin, postdoc) [Stanford Center at Incheon Global Campus]
- 2020 Akanksha Negi (Monash University)
- 2017 Kyong Hyun Koo (Korea Institute for International Economic Policy.)

DEPARTMENT & UNIVERSITY SERVICES

Purdue University

- 2025 Faculty recruitment committee
- 2024 Purdue University Summer Research Opportunity Program
Shivi Pandey
- 2023– Faculty advisor for PURCE undergraduate research assistants
Yinuo Liu (2025-2026)
Yizhou Fang (2024-2025)
Yunlei Tang (2023-2024)
Danhe Tang (2024)

Michigan State University

- 2016–2022 Mentor for Econ Scholars Program
- 2018–2020 Graduate Admission and Award Committee
- 2016–2019 Advisor for Summer Research Opportunities Program
- 2018 Econometrics Qualifying Exam Committee
- 2016-2017 Organizer of Applied Seminar
- 2016-2017 Department Advisory Committee

INTERVIEWS AND MEDIA COVERAGE

- 2025 [Wall Street Journal](#), [Fox Business](#), [The Bond Buyer](#)
- 2024 [South China Morning Post](#)
- 2023 [The Paper](#) (in Chinese)
- 2020 [VoxChina](#)
- 2019 [Caixin](#) (in Chinese)
- 2018 [AEA Research Highlight](#), [VoxDev](#), [China Urban Traffic Research Report \(2018Q3\)](#)
[Caixin](#) (in Chinese)
- 2016 [VoxEU](#), [IGC Blog](#), [NBER Digest](#), [Chicago Policy Review](#)
- 2015 [Listen Up](#), [Lansing](#)
- 2014 [The Economist](#)

PERSONAL

Married with one son (born in 2020).