

PROFESSOR PHILIP OREOPOULOS BIOGRAPHY

Professor Philip Oreopoulos earned his B.A. from the University of Western Ontario in 1995, his Master of Arts from the University of British Columbia in 1996, and his Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley in 2002. The same year, he joined UTM's Department of Economics. He was promoted first to Associate Professor in 2007 and then to Professor in 2012. Since starting his career, he has also held visiting appointments at MIT (2004-05) and at Harvard University (2010-11 as the William Lyon Mackenzie King Visiting Professor of Canadian Studies and Economics). He was a Research Scholar with the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research for more than 10 years as part of their Social Interactions, Identity, and Well-being Group, and became its Co-Director in 2015. He also served as a Special Advisor at the College Board in 2017-18 and a Russel Sage Visiting Scholar in New York in 2018-19.

In terms of current professional service, Professor Oreopoulos serves as Editor for the *Journal of Labor Economics* (the highest ranked journal in the field) and as Associate Editor for the *American Economic Review* (the highest ranked journal in the profession). He is Co-Chair of the Education sector of the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), based in MIT, which aims to reduce poverty through supporting randomized impact evaluations and summarizing research from around the world. Professor Oreopoulos is also an active Faculty Research Associate at the National Bureau of Economic Research (USA) and Research Fellow at IZA (Germany), both are renowned research institutes.

Professor Oreopoulos is consistently ranked among the top 10 Canadian economists and the top 10 economists of his cohort. His research focuses on the field of labour economics, with a special interest on education policy. He approaches this work from three directions: 1) he investigates the importance of different skills in determining long-run social-economic success and how individuals develop these skills over their lifecycle; 2) he applies insights from behavioural economics to education to understand how psychological and sociological forces affect skill development and long-run well-being; and 3) he designs programs to improve skill development and long-term well-being and implements large-scale field experiments to test their efficacy and potential worth in scaling up.

Among his key research findings are the following:

- Benefits of compulsory schooling are very large - 10-15% higher annual earnings per additional year of high school.
- Adolescents drop out of school rather because they ignore or heavily discount future consequences of dropping out than because of an aversion against high school. This implies that students make education attainment decisions that are not always in their best long-run interests
- A 1-year increase in the education of either parent reduces the likelihood that a child repeats a grade by 2-4% in the U.S., thus reducing intergenerational social mobility.
- Workers who graduated from university during recessions suffer from persistently lower earnings for at least a decade, beginning their careers working for lower paying employers and then gradually upgrading their jobs by moving to better firms;
- The non-financial benefits of schooling - e.g. higher work enjoyment, patience, trust, ambition, and risk aversion or also better decisions regarding health, marriage or parenting - are at least as large as the financial benefits of schooling.
- The quality of neighborhoods in which children grow up in has only a small impact in determining their social economic outcomes, but that the quality of the children's family environment does.

- Having an ethnic-sounding name significantly lowers an applicant's chances of receiving a call-back for an interview in Canada.
- Comprehensive student support programs, such as Pathways to Education in Canada - offering coaching, tutoring, social activities, and financial incentives - significantly improve education and labour market outcomes among disadvantaged high school students.

More recently and in line with his work at J-PAL, Professor Oreopoulos uses randomized controlled trials to design and test programs for improving academic achievement and student experiences. Among this line of research, he is working on the following projects:

- The H&R Block FAFSA experiment, in which parents of high school seniors receive assistance completing their child's postsecondary financial aid application.
- The Life After High School experiment, in which low-transition high schools incorporate into their curriculum classes to help every graduating senior student through the entire postsecondary application process
- The Student Achievement Lab, a series of experiments at the University of Toronto to offer coaching, information, encouragement, and advice to first year Economics students to improve their academic achievement and experience.