

UWaterloo Economics PHD Program: Student Point of View – Andres Arcila-Vasquez

1. Why did you choose to pursue graduate studies at the University of Waterloo?
 - a. *One of the main reasons was the quality of the faculty members, they are worldwide renowned, not only in Economics but probably in every academic field. Moreover, the diversity of the student body generates positive externalities that enrich the learning process.*

2. Why did you want to do your PhD in Economics?
 - a. *I wanted to continue my understanding of the economics problem by doing research. I was continuously asking myself questions about the behaviour of the economic agents, especially how people responded to government interventions and how firms compete in non-competitive markets. I understood that the best way to understand this was doing a PhD in Economics.*

3. Why/how does the Economics PhD program offer a unique learning perspective for graduate students?
 - a. *The excellent student-faculty ratio of the department generates the perfect environment for an exceptional learning experience. As a student, you create tight bonds with your professors that enrich your understanding.*

4. What was your favourite part of the Economics PhD experience?
 - a. *I always enjoyed sitting in the seminars we have. We would have experts from other universities presenting their latest work. Learning about what other people were doing was always one of my favorites. On top of that, we also had students and internal seminars where we would discuss and enrich our own work. I loved being questioned about what I was doing.*

5. What was your favourite course and why?
 - a. *My favourite course was the grad level Numerical Methods for Economics. It is a course where you work on your computing programming skills and this has been extremely useful across every topic where I have to do applied work.*

6. Was there a professor that inspired you within the Department of Economics? If so, then who? What made them inspiring?
 - a. *I had a lot of close contact with the professors in the department and I learned a lot and I was inspired by all of them, but I would say that Dr. Ana Ferrer, my supervisor, was the person who inspired me the most. She always pushed me to continue with my ideas, was extremely supportive, but at the same time critical of my work. We would always have very constructive discussions to interpret the results coming from my thesis. I owe her a lot.*

7. What did you take away from this PhD program?

- a. Critical thinking. Having constant discussion about economic issues with my professors and classmates shaped the way I think. I always wonder “why” every time someone makes an economic statement, and it pushes me to research and learn more when I don’t really understand a topic.*

8. What kind of research did you work on in this program that was especially compelling?
 - a. My PhD thesis was on applied microeconomics, where I focused on the effect of policy interventions in labor outcomes. Learning about the causal effect of government policies is important to efficiently assign resources and continue programs that are successful or to discontinue and enhance those that seem to not be working.*

9. What are your plans for the future?
 - a. I started working in the financial sector doing statistical analysis for risk management. All the abilities that I obtained during my PhD seem to be very valuable in this sector. I moved after a year to work as a Senior Research Data scientist for a company in the beer industry, where I work closely with people of different academic backgrounds. I have enjoyed this job a lot and I think I want to pursue a career in data science. The abilities that Economists have are useful in this sector because we can combine business/economic intuition with hard statistical methods. I also enjoy my part time job teaching Economics at UWaterloo and this is something that I will continue doing in the future.*