U-M’s OTPR Wows Conference with Outstanding Attendance

Once again, the Office of Tax Policy Research was very well represented at the November 2013 National Tax Association Annual Meeting in Tampa, Florida. Our OTPR Annual Dinner attendance was 55, including current students, alumni, and guests!

Of the 338 people attending the conference, it is safe to say that everyone there knew Michigan was in the house. Twenty-six OTPR-affiliated students had roles as presenters or co-authors, discussants, and session chairs and eight of those were current students!

At the dinner, Mary Ceccanese gave a “short” presentation including statistics regarding our 48 alumni. Thirty-five are in academia including 24 in the United States, 2 in Canada, 2 in Chile, 1 in Colombia, 1 in the Czech Republic, 2 in Japan, 1 in Korea, 1 in Russia, and 1 in Taiwan – we have a dynamic global reach spanning 4 continents. Eleven alumni work in the government: 1 in international, 9 in U.S. federal, and 1 in U.S. state. Lastly, we have 2 in the private sector. We are truly fulfilling our mission of impacting the academic, business, and policymaking areas of the world – part of our mission that was defined over 26 years ago!

Upcoming Events

2014 will be one of our most exciting years for conferences. On April 25-26 in Knoxville, Tennessee, we are co-sponsoring a conference with the University of Tennessee and the University of Georgia titled “Competition and Subnational Governments.” The famed Michigan Tax Invitational (M-TAXI) will be held in Ann Arbor on June 6-7. And, finally, collaborating with Michael Devereux at Oxford, we will be co-sponsoring a conference on “Tax Systems” in Oxford on October 9 – 10.

As we have mentioned before, we are always open to hearing about any collaboration ideas you may have regarding projects and/or conferences. Rumor has it that if you go through Mary, she has the inside scoop!!!
Sara expounds on retirement account balances to an engrossed group!

Shanthi, Adam, Molly, and Yulia

Michigan presenters draw a large audience at NTA!

Traviss, Morris, and Enda network with Alex from Oklahoma -- Mary approves!

Wojtek chatting with NTJ Editor George Zodrow and Tim Goodspeed
Shanthi, Adam, Molly, and Yulia

Claudio, Enda, and Ben anxiously get in the lunch line.

Caroline, Andrew, Nate, Wojtek, Estelle, Adam, Naomi, and Dan -- current and former students networking!

Adam Cole using his Eagle Scout training to serve at our table!

Caroline, Andrew, Nate, Wojtek, Estelle, Adam, Naomi, and Dan -- current and former students networking!
Quotes from Students

As in the past, students have shared their NTA experience but this year we have included two sets of comments. The first group is from students pursuing their research and the second group is from students who are currently on the job market.

PURSUING THEIR RESEARCH

“I would say to those considering attending that it is a wonderful opportunity to meet and engage with other tax economists, but also nice in that it brings you into contact with substantial numbers of tax lawyers. Seeing both sides can be very helpful for anyone interested in proposing policy changes.”

“Attending NTA was particularly helpful this year (my third) because I saw many different data sets (US and international) being used for current research. It’s also nice to speak with people who have access to administrative data (for example, the UM alumni at Treasury) to learn about its features and availability.”

“NTA is valuable for students at all points in their studies. For second years, it offers a great perspective into the variety of tax research currently being done.”

“Why I would encourage a second-year student to attend:

(1) It’s important to learn how to do a conference. Make sure you attend most of the sessions...Pay attention; take notes when something interests you; ask questions; talk to the presenters afterwards. Take advantage of the socializing opportunities. It’s easier the second (or third or fourth) time around, so I recommend going to conferences earlier on in the program just to learn how to do it right. (2) The NTA isn’t just full of economists; many people there come from other disciplines...The NTA is an excellent opportunity to “practice” interacting with non-economists and to learn about tax from a non-economics perspective.”

“I realized that basically everyone goes to NTAs to be surrounded by people who love to talk about research and are willing to discuss it with just about anyone. This realization made networking a lot easier. I saw my first really prominent citation, which is tremendous motivation to keep doing interesting work.”

“I found NTA to be so invigorating that I couldn’t wait to return home so that I could jump right back into my work with renewed enthusiasm.”

“I especially thought the poster session during the second day was helpful as it allowed me to see research done by graduate students at the very early stages.”

“I see two main benefits of attending the NTA meeting. First, it is an excellent networking opportunity. There is no other opportunity to have that many tax people from across the country (and world) in one place at one time. Second, it is terrific to be immersed for 3 days in research specifically on tax issues.”

“NTA provides a great opportunity to meet U-M alumni and learn about the different career paths in economics that they have pursued. Lastly, current and former U-M students showed us second-years how to give engaging and fascinating research presentations.”

... the NTA conference is a great opportunity...to see what research is at the frontier...[and]...to see the stars of Public Finance.”

“I found NTA helpful because I was able to see more tax topics than I knew existed, it gave me some new research ideas. I especially enjoyed the NTA next generation to see the newest techniques in PF.”

“It’s such an amazing event that I cannot heap enough praises on it except to say that you should go if you have any interest in learning about the exciting research going on in the frontiers of public finance or for first/second years what PF is about.”
“Public finance, and taxation more specifically, is a unique field in economics because it is so intertwined with policy work. Policy jobs at institutions such as the American Enterprise Institute, Tax Policy Center, Office of Tax Research at The Treasury, the Congressional Budget Office, and the Federal Reserve Board of Governors, yield a larger pool of potential employers for public finance students and as a result (I believe) better job market outcomes than econ PhDs in other sub-specialties...public finance students ...that are lucky enough to attend the NTA can get the inside track to a special pool of exciting jobs that apply our specialized knowledge to try to make a positive difference in the world.”

“One direct benefit of attending the NTA has been the ability to improve my job market paper. In addition to the benefits of presenting my own work, the NTA offers the advantage of seeing work being presented across a number of different areas in public economics. I think the word “tax” doesn’t do justice to the various gamuts of economics that get covered in the conference. There are several individuals that I have met at last year’s NTA that I also met with this year and now I think we have a connection that I can build on. All in all, if a student works in any area of public economics, s/he will not have a better forum to be at than the NTA.”

“Participating in the NTA meetings has given me a more complete appreciation of the career path for a public finance academic or policymaker. One of my dissertation chapters began as a result of discussions inspired by a paper presented at the Rhode Island NTA meeting in 2012. The keynote speakers at each of the conferences I’ve attended have been inspiring: Peter Diamond, Larry Summers, and Raj Chetty. I have no doubt I’ll only be able to fully appreciate the benefits from engaging in the public finance community through the NTA meetings in years to come.”

“My first experience attending NTAs was enjoyable, but also stressful. You are expected to walk up to people you don’t know, and talk about research that is still in its earliest stages. What I didn’t realize at the time was how much those little interactions would matter in terms of making future years feel easier. With OTPR’s support, we are able to have practice years to learn how to deal with these, potentially awkward, interactions, and that means that we have the opportunity to be more prepared and confident when we do actually get to the point of being on the job market. My job-market year has been first time that I felt comfortable enough with my research to actually feel at ease during these interactions. If you’re more reserved, it’s okay to have a different experience at NTAs than someone who is naturally outgoing or extremely confident. The goal at NTAs is not to talk to as many established names as you possibly can, it’s to push yourself to get as much as you can out of the experience. The conference is a great opportunity to see where research in your area is going and to develop relationships with the people who are likely to be your future colleagues.”

“There are many research opportunities available to tax economists. Grad students are aware of a lot of these jobs, but there are others under the radar. At the NTA conference I made a point of finding people who worked at some of these places in order to find out more about the work they do and, sometimes, to inquire about job opportunities or the hiring process. These conversations were informative and uplifting, as there are bright, ambitious researchers in various jobs I previously did not even know existed. I also found unexpected networking opportunities arose during the course of conversation. In one case the person I talked to is the person in charge of the research group, and in charge of hiring. Given the fact that these organizations are not often targeted by people from places like Michigan, they seemed quite happy to talk about job opportunities and their hiring process.”