

**Department of Economics
2025-2026
Seminar Series**



Monday, December 01, 2025
12:30 PM - 1:50 PM
SBS, Room N603

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***Why Don't Struggling Students Do Their Homework?
Disentangling Motivation and Study Productivity as
Drivers of Human Capital Formation***

Abstract: Using field-experimental data (study-time tracking and randomized incentives), we identify a structural model of learning. Student effort is influenced by external costs/benefits and unobserved heterogeneity: motivation (willingness to study) and productivity (conversion rate of time into skill). We estimate academic labor-supply elasticities and skill technology. Productivity and motivation are uncorrelated. Low productivity, not low motivation, is the stronger predictor of academic struggles. School quality augments productivity and accelerates skill production. We find that dynamic skill complementarities arise mainly from children's aging and from a feedback loop between investment activity and productivity, rather than from carrying forward past skill stocks.

All in-person seminars will be held in the Social and Behavioral Sciences Building, Room N603. For additional information, contact the seminar organizers: Profs. Jonathan Becker and Lorenz Ekerdt. Visit our webpage for additional information: stonybrook.edu/economics.

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