OLIVIA FRANCES EDWARDS

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EDUCATION

Texas A&M University *Expected 2026*
5th Year PhD Student in Economics
Research Interests: Industrial Organization, Applied Microeconomics

Millsaps College *2017-2021*
BS in Economics, Minor in Mathematics & Data Analytics
Phi Beta Kappa

PUBLICATIONS

Lattice Configurations Determining Few Distances *2020*
Integers Volume 20 (with Balaji et al)
We begin by revisiting a paper of Erdos and Fishburn, which posed the following question: given $k \in N$, what is the maximum number of points in a plane that determine at most k distinct distances, and can such optimal configurations be classified? We rigorously verify claims made in remarks in that paper, including the fact that the vertices of a regular polygon, with or without an additional point at the center, cannot form an optimal configuration for any $k \geq 7$. Further, we investigate configurations in both triangular and rectangular lattices studied by Erdos and Fishburn. We collect a large amount of data related to these and other configurations, some of which correct errors in the original paper, and we use that data and additional analysis to provide explanations and make conjectures.

Sets in R^d Determining K Taxicab Distances *2019*
Involve Volume 13, No. 2 (with Balaji et al)
We address an analog of a problem introduced by Erdos and Fishburn, itself an inverse formulation of the famous Erdos distance problem, in which the usual Euclidean distance is replaced with the metric induced by the ℓ^1-norm, commonly referred to as the taxicab metric. Specifically, we investigate the following question: given $d, k \in N$, what is the maximum size of a subset of R^d that determines at most k distinct taxicab distances, and can all such optimal arrangements be classified? We completely resolve the question in dimension $d = 2$, as well as the $k = 1$ case in dimension $d = 3$, and we also provide a full resolution in the general case under an additional hypothesis.

WORKING PAPERS

The Cost of Accountability: School Closures, Competition, and Student Welfare *2025*
I ask whether accountability-driven closures in New Orleans improve displaced students' achievement and welfare, and whether any system-wide gains justify their disruption. In a staggered event study, I find a persistent 0.13 SD drop for displaced students and only short-lived value-added changes in neighboring schools. A structural discrete-choice model of OneApp rankings shows families overwhelmingly choose by proximity and are blocked from better schools by capacity limits. Counterfactuals reveal that closing under-utilized rather than low-performing schools can minimize welfare losses. These findings argue for closure policies that explicitly account for family preferences and real-world constraints.

The Economics of Encouragement: Can A Simple Email Shape Major Choice? *2025*
Revise and Resubmit (with Jonathan Meer)
We examine the impact of encouragement emails sent to high-performing students in a principles

of microeconomics course at a large state university, aimed at motivating them to take additional economics courses and consider an economics major or minor. Using a regression discontinuity design, we find some evidence of an increase in the likelihood of enrolling in intermediate microeconomics, especially for first-generation college students and underrepresented minorities, but limited effects on major switching or declaring an economics minor. Our findings suggest sustained interventions may be necessary to produce lasting effects.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

ECON 285: First-Year Experience *Fall 2023*
Instructor at Texas A&M

ECON 202: Principles of Microeconomics *Spring 2022 - present*
Teaching Assistant for Dr. Jonathan Meer at Texas A&M

ECON 328: Economics of Education *Spring 2022, Fall 2023*
Teaching Assistant for Dr. Jonathan Meer at Texas A&M

OTHER EXPERIENCE

Associate Intern *Summer 2025*
Analysis Group; Dallas, TX

Research Assistant
Dr. Jonathan Meer, Texas A&M *Summer 2022, 2023*
Dr. Steve Puller, Texas A&M *Fall 2021*
Dr. Blakely Fender, Millsaps College *2019 - 2021*
Dr. Alex Rice, Millsaps College (Dept. of Mathematics) *2019 - 2020*

Congressional Intern *Summer 2020*
House of Representatives; Washington D.C.

CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS

2025: American Education Finance and Policy Conference
2024: ASSA Annual Meeting, Urban Economics Association Summer Workshop
2023: ASSA Annual Meeting, Southern Economic Association Meeting
2020: Academy of Business Research, Tri-Beta Symposium

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Economic Graduate Student Association Social Chair *2023 - 2024*
1st-Year Ph.D. Student Mentor, Texas A&M *2022 - 2024*
Referee: Journal of Human Capital *2024*

AWARDS AND HONORS

Lechner Liberal Arts Scholarship, Texas A&M *2021-present*
Most Outstanding Else Business School Graduate, Millsaps College *2021*
Pi Mu Epsilon, Millsaps College *2020*
Omicron Delta Kappa, Millsaps College *2020*
Omicron Delta Epsilon, Millsaps College *2019*

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Jonathan Meer (Co-Chair)   Texas A&M Department of Economics
                                       jmeer@tamu.edu
Steve Puller (Co-Chair)   Texas A&M Department of Economics
                                       spuller@tamu.edu
Fernando Luco (Member)   Texas A&M Department of Economics
                                       fluco@tamu.edu

Security Clearances: Special Sworn Status (current), Public Trust (previous)
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