

Department of Economics
2025-2026
Seminar Series



Monday, November 24, 2025
12:30 PM - 1:50 PM
SBS, Room N603

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Professor
TSE

Discretionary Hiring and Inequality: Evidence from School Principals

Abstract: We exploit rich administrative data on the centralized teacher recruitment drive in Peru to quantify how school principals' hiring decisions shape the distribution of student achievement. Discretionary hiring selects slightly higher value-added teachers than test-based hiring, on average, but remains largely misaligned with the objective of maximizing student achievement. We find that these aggregate patterns hide substantial heterogeneity that we quantify using a flexible model of principals' ranking behavior. Heterogeneity in hiring practices generates a standard deviation of 0.16σ in the value-added of selected teachers, indicating that discretionary hiring largely contributes to inequality in student achievement.

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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