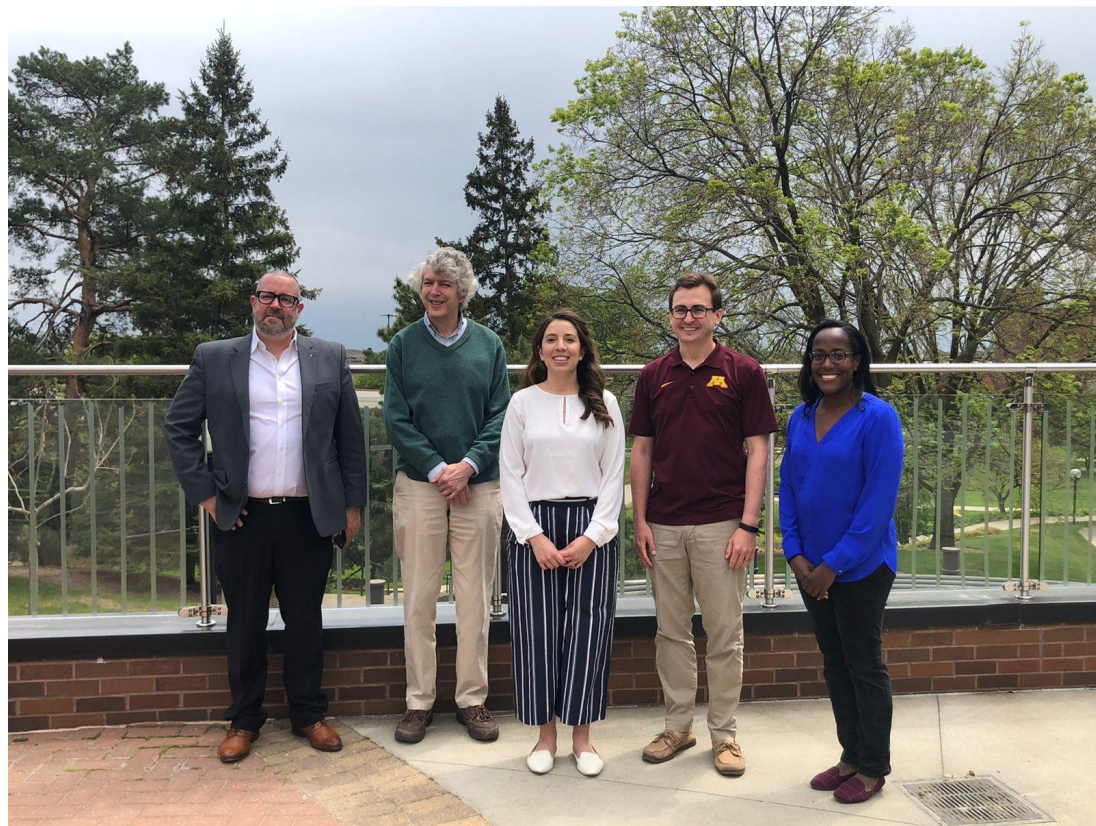


# My Experience as an Economist in Tech

ApEc Student Seminar

- Mexico City
  - Economics at ITAM
- Applied Econ at UMN
  - 2021 Market
- Postdoc in Bocconi's gender lab
- Visiting Researcher at Meta
  - 2021-2023
- Economist at Google
  - 2024- present
  
- How did I end up in tech?  
It's complicated!



# What do economists in tech do?

- Three broad categories of economist job types
  - Amazon and a small number of other companies have explicit **economist** roles
  - **Data Scientists** (eg Google)
  - Some companies (eg Meta) have **Research Scientists**, **Applied Scientist** (eg Uber) or **ML engineer** (eg Instacart) roles for economists,

All of these job titles can apply to non-economists as well, so look for context

- Specific topics can range from more business question heavy to more causal inference heavy, across fields.
- Some teams are consulting teams, others are embedded in product, others are more research- oriented.
- There are other smaller groups of jobs, such as policy roles.

# What skills do economists in tech need?

- Technical:
  - All: Programming (although difficulty may vary)
  - All: Statistics (and many: Machine Learning, increasingly so)
  - Some: Structural Modelling
- Non-technical
  - “Cross-functional collaboration”
    - It means being able to communicate and work with people in different teams/roles, with diverse backgrounds (ex UX designers, engineers, PMs)
  - “Stakeholder communication and management”
    - It means being able to explain your work to people who will use it to make decisions
- An important skill is to keep learning on the job.
  - For example, you will learn how to write and speak about your work, how to use different technical tools, how to apply new methods

# How is a job in tech different from a job in academia?

- The type of questions you get to answer
  - In most jobs you will need to work on something that is relevant for the business/your org
- The data you get to use and how
  - Tech sounds like data heaven, and it is partially true, but there are constraints
- The cadence of work / project life cycle
  - In most jobs you will have shorter time frames per project.
  - You will need to be more scrappy, hacky, imperfect (this can be hard!) but done and timely
  - You are more likely to work in teams
- Career paths
  - Jobs in tech have ladders with levels. You will need to get promoted each time to increase in level, depending on the team this can be hard and will depend on a variety of factors in and out of your control. Promotions get harder the higher the level
  - In most companies there are different job ladders for People Managers and Individual Contributors. We can go deeper into this if people are interested

# How is a job in tech different from a job in academia?

- **Work-life balance**
  - This can vary a lot, but in general tech jobs pay well and allow you to also have a life outside of work. You can ask about this when you interview for a specific team.
    - *This is not true for all industry jobs, eg consulting and finance*
  - Maternity and paternity leave benefits are good (this is important to me). In general, outside life is valued.
- **Stability / mobility**
  - People working in industry switch jobs a lot more than people in Academia. This can be good, but it is also different.
  - You may have more geographical flexibility, but there are some risks to remote work
- **Other miscellaneous differences**
  - Generally based off of places where there are more jobs (good if eg you have a partner)
  - Perks are fun
  - Depending on your interests, some jobs are pretty cool!
  - You will interact with people from more diverse backgrounds (engineers, computer scientists, statisticians, business people, etc)

# What do I do on my day to day in my current role?

- I have meetings discussing my projects
  - Explaining to stakeholders what I think needs to be done and why
  - Asking question to teams about what data they have to figure out if I can help them with an inference problem
  - Discussing what I have done, what remains to be done, who will do it and when
- I do deep work
  - Coding: data visualization, exploration, statistical analyses
- I spend time writing my results in ways my stakeholders can use
  - Thinking about business context
- I have more meetings...
  - Brainstorming about approaches, discussing data issues, debugging code
- I do some project management

**The share of time you spend on each of these is very role dependent. You should ask about this during interviews**

# Other resources

- Podcasts:
  - [Why Tech Companies Need Economist-Engineers | Vincent Martin from Meta](#)
  - [Scott Cunningham interviews Susan Athey](#)
  - [Scott Cunningham interviews John List](#)
  - [Scott Cunningham interviews Miikka Rokkanen](#)
- Writing:
  - [Why tech companies hire so many economists](#)
  - [Why economists are flocking to Silicon Valley](#)
- You can always reach out to me!

One quick note: Tech jobs don't necessarily hire on the same calendar as the academic job market!



What questions do *you* have?

# Job Market Advice Nobody Asked Me For

- Ask yourself: do I want this job or do I just want to have a job?
  - No wrong answers, but don't sell yourself short!
  - Remember, the market is about finding \*your\* match
- It is OK to prioritize other aspects of your life
  - eg: two-body problems, geographical preferences, work-life balance, specific interests
- Don't rush to conclude, ask questions about the specific team/role/company
  - What share of work is deep work? What share of work is expected to be independently driven? What does success in that role look like?
- Think about your career and not just this specific job
  - Would this role provide a skill you would value in the future? Is there strategic value to this role?
  - If you choose to go to industry, and depending on your preferences, you may be playing a longer game. You do not need to find your forever job, you need a job that provides something useful to you now.
  - Once you are in a specific industry, it is easier to switch \*within\*.
  - Related, build your network!
- If you are not an American Citizen, ask about visa AND green card sponsorships