WHAT is Distinction in Economics?
The Department of Economics has created a new and exciting program: Distinction in Economics. Students are invited to join the program during their junior year. They are offered a unique opportunity to engage in original, high-quality economics research within a supportive and challenging academic environment. The Distinction in Economics course sequence culminates in an economics thesis project. Those who complete the thesis project and maintain a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.4 will earn Distinction in Economics honors. This program is the only honors gateway for students preparing a thesis project in economics.

Distinction students earn six credits toward the economics major by completing two special courses during their senior year. ECN 499.1 (Economics Thesis I) orients students to professional economics research and guides them toward definition of their thesis projects. ECN 499.2 (Economics Thesis II) is a truly student-focused research opportunity. Each thesis writer presents ongoing research, constructively engages the work of other students, and progresses toward completion in close cooperation with a faculty mentor.

WHY graduate with Distinction in Economics?
An undergraduate thesis has long been a signal of academic excellence and achievement in a major field of study. The creation and execution of a project of one’s own design can be the most rewarding experience of an undergraduate career. The project immerses the student in sustained intellectual activity, encourages depth of inquiry, and develops research, writing, and presentation skills. Thesis seminars require close consultation with a faculty member and cooperation with other students earning Distinction in Economics. Through these interactions, a student participates in an intellectual community focused on the creation of economic research.

The thesis project provides excellent preparation for graduate school as well as the job market. The skills learned through the project prepare students for further work in economics, business management, public health, and public administration. The thesis itself becomes a credential that indicates to admissions officers and potential employers the set of skills a student has successfully acquired.

WHO is eligible to participate?
Students are chosen for Distinction in Economics during spring semester of junior year. Students studying abroad during junior year are also considered for the program. Letters of invitation to the program are sent to eligible students in March, prior to registration for fall classes. Invited students may meet with the director before registration to decide if the Distinction in Economics program is right for them.

Students are considered for invitation to the program based on three criteria:
1. A student must have a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.3 by January of the junior year.
2. A student must have declared economics as a major and have at least a 3.0 grade point average within the major.
3. A student must have a record in upper-division coursework that indicates likely success in the program. Regarding the third criterion, students may demonstrate promise through completion of research-preparatory courses, such as ECN 565, Mathematical Economics; ECN 521, Economics Statistics, and ECN 522, Econometric Methods. As an alternative, a student may indicate readiness for independent research through outstanding performance in 400-level field courses, such as Public Economics, Urban Economics, Labor Economics, and International Economics.

HOW is this program related to Renée Crown University Honors Program?
Economics majors seeking to complete a Renée Crown University Honors thesis project do so through the Program of Distinction in Economics. To prepare a thesis project in economics, a student must successfully complete the two-semester sequence of ECN 499.1 and ECN 499.2.

(Please note: To participate in the Program of Distinction in Economics, students need not be enrolled in the Renée Crown Honors Program and are not required to enroll in either the Junior Honors Seminar or Senior Honors Seminar offered by the Renée Crown University Honors Program.)
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WHERE can I find more information?

Program of Economics in Distinction

Interested students should begin their inquiries by discussing the Program of Distinction in Economics with their major advisors. Economics advisors understand the program and can help students decide if this option fits individual academic and career goals. Economics advisors also know the program’s selection criteria and can help students plan a course of study to prepare for thesis research in the senior year. Students with specific questions about the program should contact Professor Mary Lovely, the program director, by e-mail: melovely@maxwell.syr.edu.

The Program Director

The Program of Distinction in Economics is headed by Professor Mary E. Lovely, a member of the Syracuse University faculty since 1989. Lovely, a specialist in international trade theory and policy, is currently engaged in research on trade and the environment and on the attraction of low wages for multinational enterprises. Since her training as a Pew Faculty Fellow at Harvard University, Lovely has been a practitioner of the case method of teaching. She has written or supervised the creation of numerous teaching cases in international affairs, education policy, citizenship, and economic inequality. A Maxwell Professor of Teaching Excellence for 2004-2007, Lovely was recipient of the Economics Undergraduate Teaching Award in 1996 and served as economics undergraduate director from 1997 to 2000. Currently serving as a major advisor, she is delighted to be the first director of the Distinction in Economics program, and looks forward to working with the talented students invited to join it.

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