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## PENNWEST STUDENTS STAND OUT AT FEDERAL RESERVE BANK ECONOMICS CONFERENCE



*April 20, 2026*

Two PennWest University students from the Department of Business, Economics and Communication were selected to present original research at the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland's annual Economic Scholars Program on April 17, continuing a growing record of strong student scholarship.

Chosen from a highly competitive national pool, just 24 presentations were accepted to this year's conference. For the second consecutive year, two of those spots were awarded to PennWest students, reflecting the depth of preparation in the university's [business](#) and [economics](#) programs.

PennWest Edinboro seniors Kara Hooppell and Matthew J. Posego developed their research as standout projects in their Applied Econometrics course before refining them for a national audience under the guidance of Dr. Jingze Jiang. Their work was selected through a rigorous peer-review process conducted by economists from the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland and partner universities.

“I am incredibly proud of Kara and Matt. Their success shows that our students can compete with the best in the country,” said Jiang, professor of economics and quantitative analysis and lead of the Quantitative Business Analysis group. “By turning class projects into professional-grade research, they aren’t just learning economics — they are practicing it at the highest level.”

To date, every student mentored by Jiang has been accepted to present at the conference.

Hooppell, an [accounting](#) major with a minor in supply chain management, explored currency fluctuations in her study, “CPI Surprises and the EUR/USD Exchange Rate.” Analyzing data from 2015 to 2025, she found that while inflation “surprises” have a modest immediate impact, the resulting market volatility tends to persist, providing critical insights for currency traders. Hooppell resides in Union City, Pennsylvania.

Posego, an [integrated business](#) major focusing on event planning and management, examined healthcare economics in his paper, “Hospital Consolidation and Patient Pricing.” Using a difference-in-differences framework, his research suggests that hospital acquisitions may contribute to higher patient costs through increased pricing power. Posego is from Saegertown, Pennsylvania.

The conference also offered professional development opportunities beyond student presentations. Accompanied by Jiang, members of the ECON Connect student club attended to support their peers and engage with Federal Reserve economists. The program included a keynote address by President and CEO Beth M. Hammack, along with career panels and networking sessions connecting students with economists and peers from across the country.



ECON Connect Club group members from left: Dr. Jingze Jiang, advisor; Kara Hooppell; Lillian Trainor, vice president; Gabriella Marston, secretary; Rhonda Gardner, president; J.D. Colie, treasurer; and Matthew J. Posego.