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Dr. H. Youn Kim

THE FRUIT OF DR. H. YOUNG KIM'S 20 YEARS OF RESEARCH IN THE FIELD OF ECONOMICS SITS IN STACKS OF PAPERS ON HIS DESK AND IN THE VOLUME OF BOOKS ON HIS SHELVES. IN A FIELD WHERE THE RESEARCH IS DEMANDING AND THE PROBLEMS ADDRESSED ARE OFTEN COMPLEX, PUBLICATIONS LED TO NEW IDEAS AND DIALOGUE. KIM'S BYLINES IN JOURNALS AND TEXTBOOKS TESTIFY THAT OVER THE LAST 20 YEARS HE HAS BEEN A HEAVY RESEARCHER.

To a novice his work looks like it is written in a foreign language — and in a way it is. Kim uses mathematics in his research. However, for him the subject always deals with social issues or problems. “Taxes, inflation, unemployment, budget deficits, social welfare — all of these things can be put into perspective by economics,” Kim explains. “I wanted to study in an area that affects people, and that was why economics was so attractive to me,” Kim said. His research involves why people spend and save money, and economic production. “The main type of research I undertake deals with consumption and produc-

“There are many motives for saving, but one of the important reasons people save is because they don’t know what is going to happen in the future,” Kim said. “You may lose your job in the future and so you save. We call it precautionary saving.”

In addition to research on consumption and saving, Kim looks at the firm’s production behavior and cost structure.

“Critical issues concern studying whether firms experience economies of large-scale production and determining the degree of joint production.”

While Kim’s research has taken him across the Atlantic, it is his role as an educator that propels his work forward. He sees teaching as the better half of his work since he came to Western in 1983. “Research is complimentary to teaching, and they should go hand in hand with each other,” Kim said. Like many others, Dr. Kim believes that teachers should always be learning to keep up with current events and research. He said exploring new ideas and giving practical experience with material are two of the

Economics and Social Issues

BY JENNIFER L. DAWES

tion theory,” Kim said. He has presented his papers and research findings from Atlanta to Paris, and his name has appeared as a researcher, author and reviewer for doctorate level textbooks and many economic journals around the world.

Dr. Kim is reserved when talking about his accomplishments and quickly changes the subject back to his current research. “At the center of each new theory and research paper is always a question,” Kim says. Many times the questions are what influences people to consume and to save.

Those same questions often fuel discussion in his classes. One of the first considerations people have when making a purchasing decision is the cost of a given item. His students learn that the price of an item is intertwined with varying incomes which determines how people make their decisions about their consumption.



PHOTO BY LADONNA HARMON

best advantages he can give his students. He frequently supplements the information in the textbooks with his own findings drawn from research.

Kim has been teaching an array of different economics courses including macroeconomics, microeconomics, public economics and environmental economics at the undergraduate and graduate levels. It was not a future he saw for himself when he decided to major in economics at Sogang University, South Korea, in the late 1960s. Many international students seek Kim's advice when they have similar problems. He said it is difficult to succeed in a college level course being taught in a language with which you are not completely comfortable. Perhaps that is from where his fervor for mathematics comes. Kim believes mathematics is a universal language and it can transcend that roadblock.

Kim came from South Korea to the United States in 1975 after receiving his undergraduate degree at Sogang

'I don't know exactly how my research will affect the real world... But I definitely hope that it will help people better understand many issues facing them.'



PHOTO BY LADONNA HARMON

University. Studying in the United States was always one of his goals. He learned to speak English while attending the college run by American priests. However, it was his three years of mandatory military service working alongside American soldiers that taught him the vernacular.

Kim was accepted at the University of Cincinnati where he earned his master's and his doctorate in economics.

Dr. Kim taught classes while working on his doctorate. During those years he also worked for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency studying the cost of water supply. His main focus was determining the degree of economies of scale and an optimal pricing for water use. Unlike results of other studies, he found that a typical water utility does not necessarily experience economies of scale. This implies that an efficient number of water utilities in a given area may need more than one firm and that current water pricing practices may not be optimal.

This work has been an integral part of his research, and it has slowly evolved over time into his interest in consumption and production theory. Recently, Kim has been researching global finance markets, and to what degree they are integrated or how much they affect each other.

"I came up with a new model of world financial integration and was able to test it," Kim said. "I think I came out with very good results." His model is based on firms' profit-maximizing behavior in contrast to traditional models based on consumers' utility-maximizing behavior. He said his model is able to account for some puzzles in earlier studies.

"Publication is the goal for most researchers," Kim remarked. Economic journals and presentation of papers at professional meetings are the main media for researchers in Kim's field to exchange ideas and through their work, to affect issues like taxes, inflation and social welfare.

Kim's work is published consistently in many prominent journals such as the *Review of Economics and Statistics*, *Economica*, *Journal of Money, Credit, and Banking*, *Journal of Human Resources*, *Journal of Development Economics*, *Journal of Regional Science*, and *Journal of Applied Econometrics*. He also has several working papers currently under review for publication.

Dr. Kim doesn't have any illusions about his work. When a student asks to see a sample of his research, Kim displays a patient smile as the student tries to unravel the secret meaning of the numbers, Greek letters, and multiple variables that affect real problems and possible solutions. Kim is constantly working on research ideas to solve complex economic issues from a different perspective. "I don't know exactly how my research will affect the real world," Kim said. "But I definitely hope that it will help people better understand many issues facing them."