

Meet the IGIER Scholars

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You earned your undergraduate degree from the University of Torino and your PhD in economics from UCLA. Among the scholars you met during your undergraduate and graduate studies, who are the ones who have made the most profound impact on the way you think as an economist, and why?

Mario Monti, who taught me to go beyond strictly normative prescriptions in economic policy, and to ask how public policy is shaped by governments' incentives and constraints. Axel Leijonhufvud, who taught me to pay attention to substantive ideas over mathematical formalism and intellectual fashions. Ed Leamer, who taught me how to draw inferences from non-experimental data.

You have been a faculty member in the Departments of Economics of Stanford University and UCLA before returning to Italy. To what extent has that experience shaped your career and research agenda? What are the best things you remember about working in the United States?

The time spent in the US had an immense influence on my professional life. The best part of that experience was the open and intense intellectual environment. Clarity of thinking and originality were the only things that mattered in the workplace, irrespective of your age and professional rank.

You have received many honors and awards that recognize your leadership in the field of political economy. You have been recently awarded one of the prestigious Advanced Grants from the European Research Council (ERC). Bravo! Can you briefly tell

us what are the exciting questions you aim to address in this five-year research project?

The main focus of the grant is to study how the functioning of public institutions is shaped by the values and beliefs that prevail in society, and how this influences economic performance.

Suppose one of the many talented undergraduate Bocconi students stops by your office and asks for advice to enter academia in economics. What advice would you give to him or her?

Do it only if this is truly your passion.

In the past 15-20 years Bocconi University has developed into a research-oriented, international institution. There are many bright Italian and non-Italian scholars working abroad. What would be the attractive features of working at Bocconi for any of them?

Bocconi is one of the few leading international universities entirely focused on the economic and social sciences. This, together with the flexibility that comes from being a private institution, gives us unusual degrees of freedom in the pursuit of a variety of scientific approaches. A second special feature of Bocconi is the talent of its students, who come to our university because of the quality of the faculty, its links with the best institutions throughout the world, and its overall efficiency.

Imagine yourself travelling back in time and being offered the possibility of being Julius Caesar, Leonardo da Vinci, or Pelè. Which one would you pick and why?

Julius Caesar, who enlarged the borders of what was at the time the modern and civilized world.

What is the thing you never did and you would love to do in the future? Sailing around the world with a "veliero"? Singing "Celeste Aida" in the role of Radames at La Scala? Playing one match at San Siro in the role that Pato has with the Milan team against Inter...? Anything else?

This is an easy one, "il veliero"!

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