

Dear Doctoral Applicant,

Thank you for your email and interest in working with me and my research team. I am delighted to learn about your interest in the **Ph.D. program in Economics at The State University of New York (at Binghamton)** and specifically in your interest in joining my research lab. My research lab researches in development economics, labor economics, behavioral economics, and public economics, with particular emphasis on issues in low- and middle-income countries. You can find more information about my research team at:

- <https://users.nber.org/~nikolovp/research.html>

If you would like to join my research lab or work under my guidance, you need to apply directly to the Economics Ph.D. at Binghamton University (<https://gograd.binghamton.edu/apply/>). The Economics Department receives up to 300 applications each year. Given the competitive nature of admission to the doctoral program, its entering class is approximately ten students.

Please be advised that **I am unable to provide preliminary evaluation** for your chances for admission to our Ph.D. program based on any materials you share via email. These decisions are determined only by the Admission Committee for the Doctoral Program at the Economics Department at Binghamton. There is no one aspect of your application that either guarantees or denies admission. The ultimate objective of the Binghamton Economics Ph.D. program is to produce successful economic researchers, so demonstrating the ability to do research is an important criterion. Additionally, and only for my research team, I am especially interested in applicants with strong mathematical preparation, evidence of prior or future commitment to conducting research in development economics, and exceptional writing skills. Therefore, if you are interested in joining my team or working with colleagues at Binghamton's Ph.D. program in Economics, **I'd encourage you to apply via the online application portal as soon as possible** at:

- <https://gograd.binghamton.edu/apply/>
- Although the formal application deadline is February 1, department fellowships are extremely competitive, and therefore, I'd urge you to submit a complete application **as early as December**.
- If you are specifically interested in joining my research team, I encourage you to submit (or highlight) in your online portal application packet the following items:
 - In your online application form, be sure to list my name and your research interests both in the application form and in your personal statement.
 - A writing sample, preferably from an economics research paper.
 - Recommendation letters from economists. Specifically, economists who are respected in the profession for research as opposed to employers in non-research jobs. I am particularly interested in reading recommendation letters from scholars who understand the research environment at a top Ph.D. program, that is, scholars whom themselves are actively engaged in research and publication and those who have Ph.D.s from research-oriented institutions. We look for letters that make it clear the applicant knows what doing a Ph.D. is like and describes how the applicant has been exposed to the research process.
 - On your graduate school application, it is crucial to write an essay highlighting what kinds of areas of economics you're interested in, what questions you think are interesting to explore in your future research. Be as specific as possible. It may be helpful to discuss your thesis or research assistant work.

Once you submit your complete application, the Admissions Committee will very carefully review the entire application (recommendations, essay, grades, test scores, previous experience, etc.) in making its decisions. The Department looks for academic and research potential, focusing primarily on coursework, grades, and letters of recommendation. With that said, the committee evaluates the entire academic record. After you are admitted to the program, there will be plenty of opportunities to meet with other faculty members or me. I wish you good luck, and I look forward to you joining our doctoral program in the near future!

Sincerely,
Plamen Nikolov