

Taking Urban Economics to the Streets Through Faculty-Led Field Trips

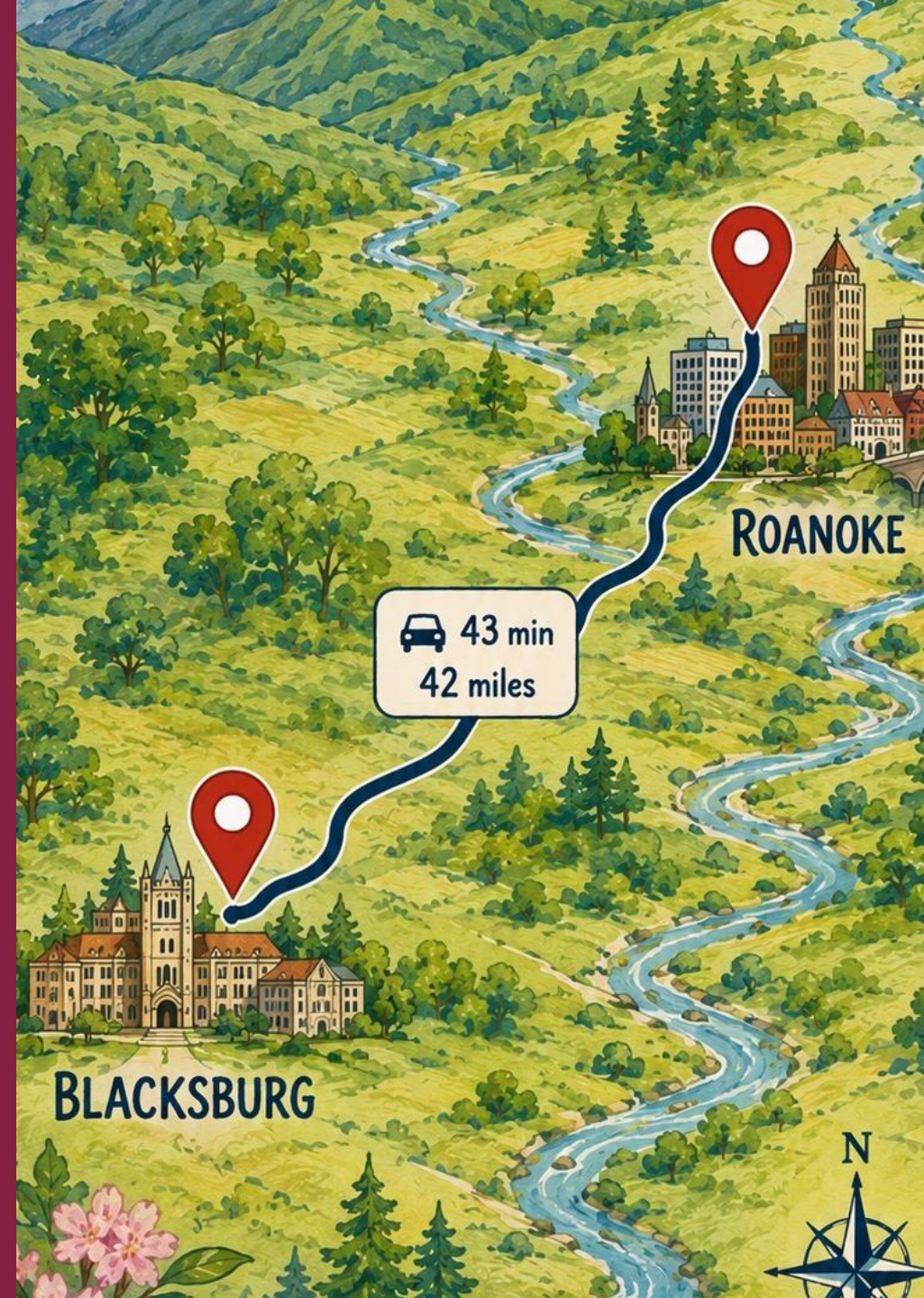
Jadrian Wooten (Virginia Tech)





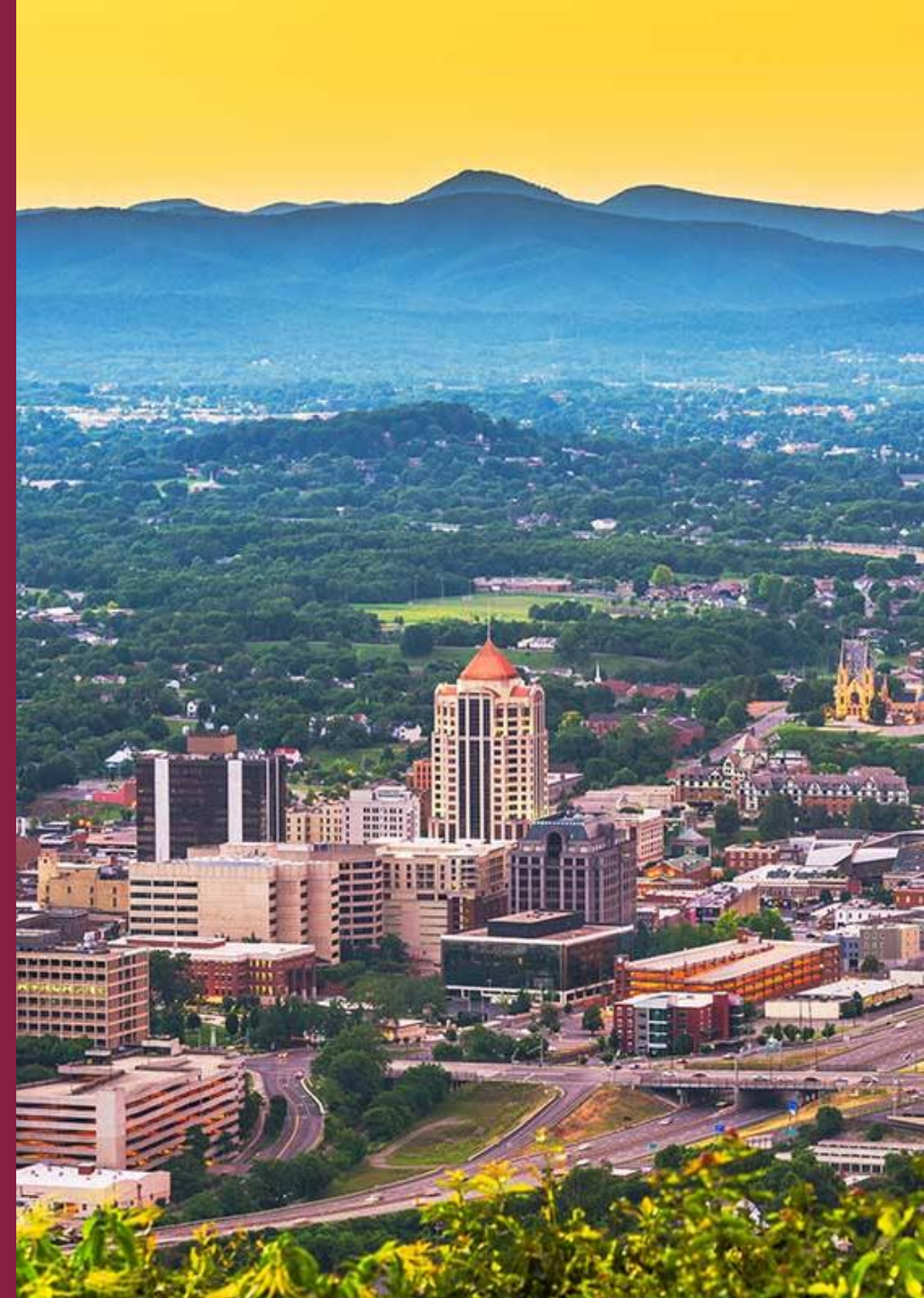
Let me rewind...

- ❖ I wanted to do something different that felt “real” for the students
- ❖ My students are mostly from affluent metro areas but attend campus in a rural college town
- ❖ Hard to see a lot of the urban economics policies in a largely rural community



Why Roanoke?

- ❖ "Economics is everywhere," but sometimes you have to go looking for it.
- ❖ Roanoke fit: one-industry city, built by the railroad . At its peak, the rail yard facilities employed over 8,000 workers
- ❖ Didn't pivot to "eds and meds" like most post-industrial cities



Getting there...

- ❖ Requirement: no driving. I wanted them to experience being transit-dependent for a day.
- ❖ Fare-free with student ID (that helped), but it's 75 min by bus compared to 45 min by car
- ❖ Lesson from class: opportunity cost really matters for public transit policy





What They Saw: Virginia Museum of Transportation





A Random Walk Down San Fernando Street

Ninos Malek[†] John Estill[†]

[†] San Jose State University



What They Saw: Downtown Roanoke



The Surprise

- ❖ Timeline: arrive downtown ~11am, but the return bus didn't leave until 4pm.
- ❖ Most left early via Uber, rides with friends, but several chose to wait longer
- ❖ That delay was unassigned, but it's what they said was the best part





Pascale Kuo • 1st

Discover Analyst @ The Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond

1yr • 👤



Yesterday, I had the opportunity to go on a field trip to Roanoke, VA as part of my Urban Economics class. It was such a fun experience — you don't always expect to be going on field trips as a junior in college!

It was exciting to see real-world applications of what we've been learning. Roanoke had some vacant spaces, but overall, it was a very walkable city with good design and plenty of sidewalks. There was even a farmers market happening while we were there, and it was great to see so many people out and about enjoying the public spaces.

We took the city bus to get to Roanoke, which tied in perfectly with our discussions about transportation and accessibility. We also ate at a local restaurant downtown and visited the Transportation Museum, where we learned more about the city's transit history.

It was a great experience to step outside the classroom and see urban economics in action.



Corrie Minor • 1st

Virginia Tech Alumni B.A. in Economics

1yr • 🌐



Yesterday I had the pleasure of taking a trip to Roanoke, Virginia, for my Urban Economics class! We took a tour of the Virginia Transportation Museum, as we have learned how the country was able to grow and expand as transportation technology advanced. I also enjoyed getting a chance to walk around downtown Roanoke and learn more about the growing city that it is becoming.

Compared to Blacksburg, Roanoke is a revitalized factory town that is now being used in an advanced modern way. It is a much more walkable city, with a vibrant public transportation system. Given the walkability of this city, public transportation is more likely to be used as it is convenient for the citizens of the city to hop on and ride around town, without having to wait for long times or commute through city traffic themselves. I enjoyed the calming, urban feeling that I got when I walked down the street, as it reminded me a lot of Richmond, Virginia. I was surprised by the diversity in the architecture of the city, it felt like every corner I turned was a new place. I have included some photos from my walk around the city!

Roanoke felt like a small-town city to me, but it is still counting to grow. It gave me the fun, social feeling of being a city, but without being too overwhelming like New York City. Overall, I am grateful to have been able to take the day to learn more about Roanoke, and will definitely have to go back again sometime!



Lukas Brombacher • 1st

M.A. candidate in Economics at Virginia Tech // Vice President, ...

1yr • 🌐



This past weekend I went to downtown Roanoke to experience local public transportation and compare a smaller urban area to the larger ones I've been to in the past.

Something that stood out to me during the trip was despite it being a smaller city, it had a modernized downtown that utilizes brickwork architecture which included many different amenities that are seen in larger urban areas, such as eateries and breweries, and a rich history of the area of Southern Virginia. The city also provides sidewalks for walkability with tree cover as other signs of revitalization.

Along with this, I toured the Virginia Museum of Transportation, learning of the rail hub which Roanoke was in the late 1800s. In addition to this, I learned of the Piedmont Motor Company, the only automobile manufacturer to ever be established in Virginia.

Compared to what I expected, Roanoke provides a smaller but still interesting city experience. I believe that improvements to architecture outside of the main downtown area and improvement of local transit could greatly improve the attraction of the city as well as improve life for residents. I enjoyed exploring a new place, and it was nice to compare the city experiences of my past to it.



Final Grade Determination

Visualization Assignments

<i>Guided Projects (Best 3 of 4)</i>	30%
<i>Independent Project</i>	12%
<i>Final Portfolio</i>	10%

Weekly Assignments

<i>Packback Discussion (Best 12 of 14)</i>	12%
<i>Blue Book Quizzes (Best 10 of 14)</i>	18%

Engagement Assignments

<i>Clicker Polling</i>	10%
<i>Experiential Activities (5 required)</i>	5%
<i>Roanoke Field Trip</i>	3%

Total Graded**100%**



Try This Yourself



Taking Urban Economics to the Streets Through Faculty-Led Field Trips

Jadrian Wooten (Virginia Tech)

