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See where economics can really take you.



James Murray

Company & Current Role: Managing Director, BDO Center of Healthcare Excellence and Innovation, BDO

School: University of Nebraska

Year: 1992

Major: Economics

Why did you major in economics?

I had absolutely no idea what I wanted to do after college. Law, medicine, engineering, everything under the sun was on the table but at my core I knew that I loved problem solving. I loved finding an answer. I switched my major from Electrical Engineering to Economics at the start of my sophomore year and immediately loved it. I loved the math, I loved the data, but I also loved the stories that went with the problems. At the core Economics will teach you critical thinking and problem solving.

Favorite econ class or topic? Why?

My very first class, Principles of Macroeconomics taught by Dr. William Walstad. I would eventually learn what an honor it was to have such a leading mind in the field teaching sophomores, but in that class he opened the students eyes to the complexity of the field and how economics touches almost all other disciplines. I left that class wanting to learn more.

Biggest econ myth you've heard—and why was it wrong?

The biggest myth is that economics is the study of money. It is really the study of how people make decisions. It is about choices and tradeoffs and it extends far beyond money. Time, labor, energy, and so many more aspects are all part of the equation. The behavior is just as important as the math.

Any fun, unexpected, or relatable story from studying econ?

One of the most relatable moments from studying economics I got my first job offer while I was still completing my degree and it had nothing to do with Econ degree. Studying Econ means looking at data. Back in 1992, we weren't carrying laptops around, but we had access to computers in the labs around campus. While using those computers I became fascinated in how computer technology could be applied to many businesses. I looked for a way to apply problem solving with technology to different areas. I was able to get an internship at a Boston area hospital in the IT department. That turned into a full-time job after graduation and that led to a Masters degree in Healthcare Informatics and a 30+ year career in Healthcare Technology.

What advice would you give your first-year self?

Stay curious. Your first year will give you the foundation to build your degree. Make it a solid foundation and then use those skills to find economics in everything else. Take classes outside of economics and economics will meet you in all sorts of spaces.

Did you almost major in anything else? If so, what and why?

History. I loved the story telling and the digging into the details. UNL has some amazing History professors, and they brought it all to life.

Scan here to find out more about economics.