Four economics majors were awarded the 2017 Tobin Scholar Prize for their outstanding performance in economic core theory courses. The recipients are Jason Gaitonde, Morse College; Justin Katz, Ezra Stiles College; Joyce Koltisko, Berkeley College; and Yicong Shen, Grace Hopper College.

The seniors were treated to lunch at Mory’s Club on October 25, accompanied by Economics Professor Tony Smith, Professor Emeritus Bill Brainard, and Department Chair, Dirk Bergemann. The prizes were awarded to each student by the prize co-founders Chief Investment Officer David Swensen (Ph.D. ‘80) and alumnus Steve Freidheim (B.A. ‘85), both of whom studied under the prize’s namesake James Tobin.

Recipient Joyce Koltisko said, “I was shocked and honored to have received the Tobin Scholar Award! I was also touched to learn more about the award’s origins, and to hear from David Swensen and Stephen Freidheim about how influential of a mentor Professor James Tobin was to them.”

Throughout her time at Yale, Koltisko has found her Economics professors very supportive. “I felt encouraged to just learn as much as possible and to do my best.” As for the Tobin Scholars Prize, she said it served as a reminder of how fortunate she is to have had her own mentors at Yale through the Economics Department, including Professor David Swensen, Professor Dean Takahashi, and Professor Eduardo Faingold.

Koltisko says she enjoys the flexibility of the Economics major, and the diverse offering of electives has allowed her to explore both economic theory and its applications. “I love that economics cuts across all industries and has relevance in every aspect of daily life,” she said. After graduation, Koltisko plans to work in equity research.

The annual prize was established in 2012 and is awarded up to four senior majors in Economics or Economics and Mathematics who have excelled in core theory courses in economics courses. The award’s namesake, James Tobin, was a prominent member of the Department of Economics at Yale from 1950 to 2002, and the recipient of the Nobel Prize in Economics in 1981. “There is a renewed buzz on campus about the great man behind the prestigious prize, which has been so enjoyable for me to witness and in which to take part,” said prize co-founder Freidheim.

For more additional information and history about the prize, see “Alumni Behind the Tobin Scholar Award,” a Q&A with Steven Freidheim and David Swensen.
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