Pioneer academics

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Pioneer Research Institute Evaluation Form

Scholar Information

Scholar's Full Name:	Li, Youyuan (Bruce)
Scholar's Research Concentration:	International Economics
Title of Scholar's Research Paper:	Estimating the Impact of the Marshall Plan on Post-War European Economic Recovery

Grading and Academic Oversight Section

Grade conferred by professor: A+

**Full grading rubric approved by Pioneer Academics and Oberlin College*

The Pioneer Research Institute's college accreditation and academic oversight are conducted collaboratively with Oberlin College:

Listing on Common Application:	"Summer Program, Credit Awarded Directly by Oberlin College"
Course Title on Coalition Application:	"099" "Pioneer Research Course"
College Course ID on UC Application:	"INST 099" "Pioneer Research Course"

Comprehensive Evaluation Section

Evaluator Name & Full Title:	Bill Lincoln, Associate Professor
College/University & Department:	Claremont McKenna College, Robert Day School of Economics and Finance
Full Educational Background of Evaluator:	S.B., University of Chicago M.A., Ph.D., University of Michigan

Please briefly explain the nature and requirements of the research paper and your interaction with the scholar:

Scholars were expected to write a research paper on a topic of their choosing that constituted a substantial, original contribution to our knowledge of international economics. This could be empirical, theoretical, or qualitative in nature and needed to be at least 20 pages in length. Along the way, during our group meetings towards the beginning of the program the scholars were asked to submit a series of problem sets designed to help them with the research phase of the program. These were quantitative in nature and allowed me to see how well the student would do in a traditional economics course. In the latter part of the program students were tasked with several assignments related to their research project, at least one before each of the individual meetings. This included a proposal, a bibliography, an outline, a first draft, a peer manuscript review, a consultation with the Pioneer Writing Center, a second draft, and a final manuscript.

My interaction with the scholar consisted of five group meetings with five other scholars for an hour and half that involved a lecture, five individual meetings for an hour, and a group session in which the scholars all presented their research. These presentations were held a week before submitting their manuscripts at the end of the term.

Please rate the scholar in the following areas:

	Excellent	Good	Average	Below Average	Poor
Ability to form original ideas and concepts	X				
Ability to communicate thoughts in an effective and articulate manner	X				
Ability to synthesize and organize information from disparate sources	X				
Level of scholar's curiosity, aptitude, and industriousness	X				

Based on the scholar's performance throughout Pioneer, how would you rate this scholar's potential for undergraduate-level academic work at a top college/university, relative to other undergraduate students whose academic work you have mentored?

One of the best I have encountered, top 5% X	Excellent, top 10%
Very Good, top 25%	Good, top 50%
Below Average	

Describe some of the scholar's strengths:

Bruce's paper examines how much the Marshall Plan contributed to Europe's economic recovery after World War II. It uses historical data to compare the economic performance of countries that received substantial Marshall Plan aid with countries that received little or no aid. The results indicate that countries receiving more aid experienced larger absolute increases in income per person during the postwar recovery. However, the evidence is weaker when the analysis asks whether recipient countries grew faster in percentage terms relative to where they started. A number of additional tests generally support this distinction between larger absolute gains and faster proportional growth. The paper therefore concludes that Marshall Plan aid was associated with stronger absolute economic recovery, while leaving more uncertainty about whether it caused recipient countries to grow faster than other countries in proportional terms.
Bruce was one of the strongest scholars in this cohort and earned an A+ for the program. He is very bright, hardworking, humble, and a genuinely nice person. What impressed me most academically was that he picked a very ambitious question, learned a lot on his own, and then did the technical work carefully. The paper is well organized and does a good job of connecting the historical debate to a clearly defined empirical question. More broadly, Bruce was extremely conscientious throughout the program, receiving full credit on every assignment leading up to the final manuscript. The statistical analysis and the care he put into the paper would have stood out even among strong college students. My interactions with him in the individual sessions were also very impressive.

Describe some areas in which the scholar can improve:

It took me a little while to think of something useful to put here because Bruce did such a good job in the program. The main thing I would emphasize is making sure the different elements of the manuscript line up with ach other carefully. If he continues with research, I would also make the strongest identification strategy the starting specification rather than leaving some important choices to the robustness section. These are pretty minor comments in the context of an excellent paper, however.

While the second half of the research work was one-to-one with the professor, the first half involved a small research cohort of 3-6 scholars. Describe the contribution that the scholar made to the research group discussion and learning:

Bruce was one of the most active contributors to our group sessions. My post-session notes show large substantive contributions from Bruce during the group meetings, which made him one of the most active students in the cohort. They were not comments made just to get participation credit, however; he was clearly following the material closely and genuinely wanted to understand better and to deepen the discussion. Bruce was willing to engage with technical ideas, ask useful questions, and contribute to the back-and-forth that made the sessions more valuable for the other scholars. I think he would do very well in a seminar-style college class.

Would you recommend this scholar to a college admissions officer at a top college or university? Why or why not?

Yes. I would absolutely recommend Bruce to a top college or university. He did extremely well on the regular coursework and then produced a very ambitious research paper, earning an A+ overall and full credit on every assignment leading up to the final manuscript. The research showed an ability to learn and apply econometric methods independently, work carefully with historical data, distinguish between different economic interpretations of estimates, and recognize the limitations of a causal design. Bruce was also one of the more active members of the research cohort and contributed constructively to the group sessions. For me, the combination of the paper, his steady work throughout the term, and the way he participated in the group sessions is clear evidence that he is ready for demanding college work. On a personal level, he is also very reasonable and enjoyable with whom to discuss. I in particular would be very happy to have Bruce in one of my own college classes. I think that any college or university worldwide would be lucky to have him as a student.

Evaluator's Signature:	
Evaluator's Printed Name:	Bill Lincoln
Date of Evaluation:	August 12, 2026
Evaluator's Email:	wflincoln@gmail.com

Pioneer Academics affirms that the scholar whose research paper is attached has followed Pioneer Academics' protocols for developing original research and that their paper has met Pioneer Academics' standards for authenticity. The grading and evaluation have met the standards collaboratively defined by Pioneer Academics and Oberlin College & Conservatory. If there are any questions regarding the work's academic integrity, please contact us at academic.integrity@pioneeracademics.com or by calling (855) 572-8863. We will conduct an immediate review and respond to your questions promptly.