

Alea Wilbur-Mujtaba

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EDUCATION

Doctor of Philosophy in Public Administration

August 2026

University of Illinois Chicago — Chicago, IL

Dissertation: *Risk Perception and Real Estate Values in Cook County, Illinois*

Committee: David Merriman (Chair and Advisor), Deborah Carroll, Kate Albrecht, Daniel McMillen, Nicole Jardine

Master of Public Administration

May 2019

University of Illinois Chicago — Chicago, IL

Concentrations in Public Management & Financial Management

Certificate in Emergency Management and Continuity Planning

Certificate in Geospatial Analysis and Visualization

Master's Capstone: *Congestion on the Chicago River: An Analysis of Trends and Preferences*

Bachelor of Science in Economics with Mathematical Emphasis

May 2016

University of Wisconsin–Madison — Madison, WI

Certificate in Environmental Studies

SCHOLARSHIP AND RESEARCH

SUBMITTED MANUSCRIPTS

Drucker, J., Weber, R., Van Hulle, M., & Wilbur-Mujtaba, A. (2026). The Push-and-Pull of Property Tax Relief: Who Pays for Exemptions and Incentives? *Urban Affairs Review*. Revised & Resubmitted.

POLICY REPORTS AND RESEARCH PAPERS

Merriman, D., Wilbur-Mujtaba, A., & Lee, J. (2026). Illinois' State Expenditures: Current Condition and Future Concerns. *Institute of Government and Public Affairs*. <https://doi.org/10.25417/uic.32035311>.

Wilbur-Mujtaba, A., Merriman, D., Hu, X., Lee, J., & Worthington, P. (2025). Current Condition and Future Concerns for Growth in Illinois' State Revenue. *Institute of Government and Public Affairs*. <https://doi.org/10.25417/uic.32248659>.

Drucker, J., Edwards, A., Ginsberg, E., Merriman, D., Van Hulle, M., Weber, R., & Wilbur-Mujtaba, A. (2025). The Current and Future Use of Incentives in Cook County. [Report Link](#).

Merriman, D., Funderburg, R., Hu, X., Lee, J., Wilbur-Mujtaba, A., & Worthington, P. (2025). The State of Illinois' FY 2024 Fiscal Situation: A Solid Performance but Threats Remain. *Institute of Government and Public Affairs*. <https://doi.org/10.25417/uic.29873588>.

- Wilbur-Mujtaba, A., Choi, F., Funderburg, R., Hu, X., Worthington, P. R., Wu, Y., Xie, C., & Merriman, D. (2024).** Finding the Balance: State Fiscal Sustainability and Local Government Challenges. *Institute of Government and Public Affairs Research Paper*. <https://doi.org/10.25417/uic.26195198>.
- Drucker, J., Merriman, D., Van Hulle, M., Weber, R., & **Wilbur-Mujtaba, A. (2024).** Extended Analysis of Selected Benefits and Costs. *Government Finance Research Center*. [Report Link](#).
- Wilbur-Mujtaba, A., Choi, F., Hu, X., & Merriman, D. (2024).** Working from Home in Illinois: Who Can and Does? *Institute of Government and Public Affairs Research Paper, Policy Spotlight*. <https://doi.org/10.25417/uic.26018719>.
- Drucker, J., Merriman, D., Van Hulle, M., Weber, R., & **Wilbur-Mujtaba, A. (2023).** Current and Future Use of Homestead Exemptions. *Government Finance Research Center*. [Link](#).
- Choi, F., & **Wilbur-Mujtaba, A. (2023).** "What Happened to Illinois' Open Data Movement." *Institute of Government and Public Affairs Research Paper*. <https://doi.org/10.25417/uic.24093753>.
- Wilbur-Mujtaba, A., Choi, F., & Merriman, D. (2023).** Recovering from COVID (Spending) Fever. *Institute of Government and Public Affairs Research Paper*. <https://doi.org/10.25417/uic.22296901>.
- Choi, F., & **Wilbur-Mujtaba, A. (2023).** Fiscal Futures 2021: Maintaining Fiscal Sustainability After an Influx of Federal Funds. <https://doi.org/10.25417/uic.22296895>.
- Merriman, D., Hu, X., & **Wilbur-Mujtaba, A. (2022).** Why does Illinois' Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund have a large deficit? *Institute of Government and Public Affairs Research Paper*. <https://doi.org/10.25417/uic.20559039>.

CONFERENCE PAPERS

- Wilbur-Mujtaba, A. (2026, November). *Risk Perception and Real Estate Values in Cook County, Illinois* Paper presented at the National Tax Association Conference in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
- Merriman, D., & Wilbur-Mujtaba, A. (2026, November). *Measuring Local Government Levies' Responsiveness to the Property Tax Base* at the National Tax Association in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
- Merriman, D., & Wilbur-Mujtaba, A. (2026, September). *Measuring Local Government Levies' Responsiveness to the Property Tax Base* at the Association for Budgeting & Financial Management (ABFM) in Washington DC. September 25, 2026
- Merriman, D., Wilbur-Mujtaba, A., & Van Hulle, M. (2026, June). *Measuring Local Government Levies' Responsiveness to the Property Tax Base* at Mid-Continent Regional Science Association (MCRSA) in Chicago, Illinois. June 10-12, 2026
- Drucker, J., Weber, R., Van Hulle, M., & Wilbur-Mujtaba, A. (2025, November). *The Push-and-Pull of Property Tax Relief: Who Pays for Exemptions and Incentives?* Paper presented at the North American Regional Science Council (NARSC) in Denver, CO.
- Van Hulle, M. P., Wilbur-Mujtaba, A., & Merriman, D. (2024, November). *Measuring local government levies' responsiveness to the property tax base*. Paper presented at the National Tax Association Annual Conference in Detroit, MI.
- Van Hulle, M. P., Wilbur-Mujtaba, A., & Merriman, D. (2024, October). *The distributional politics of fragmented incentives: When economic development turns fiscal*. Paper presented at the Association for Budgeting and Financial Management Annual Conference, Cleveland, OH.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Research Assistant for David Merriman

Government Finance Research Center – UIC

Jan. 2023 – Dec. 2025

- Conducted applied research for the Cook County President's Property Tax Reform Group on residential property-tax exemptions and commercial and industrial incentive classifications.
- Estimated effects on property tax bases, tax bills, and the distribution of property-tax burdens.
- Produced statistical analyses, maps, figures, tables, and policy-facing research products for county officials, researchers, and other stakeholders.

Institute of Government & Public Affairs – University of Illinois System

Jan. 2022 – June 2026

- Coauthored annual *Fiscal Futures* research examining Illinois state revenues, expenditures, and long-term fiscal conditions.
- Analyzed and harmonized Illinois Comptroller data across fiscal years and developed methods for tracking changes in agencies, funds, revenue sources, and fiscal classifications over time.
- Built and maintained reproducible R workflows supporting recurring annual analysis, data validation, visualization, and publication.

Research Assistant for Professor Federica Fusi

Department of Public Administration – UIC

Aug. 2020 – Aug. 2021

- Contributed to a mixed-methods research project examining the decisions, actions, and outputs of researchers and data-repository teams engaged in COVID-19 research.
- Cleaned and managed sample frame data in R and Excel
- Assisted with survey creation

Research Assistant for Professor James Thompson

Department of Public Administration – UIC

Aug. 2019 – Dec. 2019

- Analyzed data from the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS)
- Visualized statistical differences in perceptions of work environment within and between agencies
- Researched legislature that led to the current status of federal data collection (GPRA, FITARA, PMIAA, DATA)

OTHER WORK EXPERIENCE

Office of Emergency Management & Communications Intern

City of Chicago – Chicago, IL

May 2020 – August 2020

- Analyzed data for daily situation reports, progress summaries, and resource requests
- Created infographics and visualized data to show project progress
- Improved data management by manipulating data sources to allow for comparison over time
- Assisted Logistics and Planning teams with testing sites, public safety plans, and changing daily needs

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Intern

Village of Skokie – Skokie, IL

June 2019 – Aug. 2019

- Designed surveys using Qualtrics and collected community input from organizations and community members for the Community Development Block Grant 5-Year Consolidated Plan for the Village of Skokie
- Organized focus groups on housing affordability, economic development, and increasing the quality of life for senior citizens and persons with disabilities

- Participated in Village meetings regarding site plan approval, zoning changes, proposed developments, etc.

RESEARCH TRANSPARENCY AND DATA REPOSITORIES

Fiscal Future Reports Methodology, Documentation, and Replication Materials | *Repository Creator & Lead Developer*

Institute of Government and Public Affairs, University of Illinois System | [Website](#) | [GitHub](#) | DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.18927706

- Created and maintained the public data, code, and methodology infrastructure supporting the annual *Fiscal Futures* research on Illinois state finances.
- Developed longitudinal revenue and expenditure datasets from annual Illinois Comptroller records and reproducible R workflows to identify and reconcile changes in agencies, funds, revenue sources, and classification systems across fiscal years.
- Rebuilt inherited research workflows in R and developed a public Quarto/GitHub site providing downloadable datasets, analytical code, documentation, and methodological guidance for future annual updates and independent research.
- Reworked and consolidated inherited data-processing code, reviewed historical coding decisions and annual files, corrected identified inconsistencies, and developed procedures for tracking agencies, funds, revenue sources, and reused fund numbers across fiscal years.

Illinois State Budget Expenditure and Revenue Datasets, Fiscal Years 1998-2026 | *Creator & Lead Data Developer*

Independent Research Data Project | [GitHub](#) | DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.22804579

- Created a researcher-oriented longitudinal dataset from previously obtained Illinois Comptroller revenue and expenditure files, retaining observations that are excluded from Fiscal Futures report calculations and adding consistent labels, classifications, and analytical variables.
- Added and documented variables not consistently available in the original files, including classifications needed to identify and analyze transfers, debt, refunds, and other fiscal activities, with the goal of producing a more complete dataset for independent Illinois budget research.
- Developed reproducible cleaning, recoding, quality-control, and annual-update workflows so the dataset can be maintained as new fiscal-year data become available.

Cook County Property Tax Reform: Data, Replication and Updated Analysis | *Lead Data & Reproducibility Developer*

Government Finance Research Center, University of Illinois Chicago | [Website](#) | [GitHub](#) | DOI:10.5281/zenodo.17634402

- Developed the analytical data pipeline supporting research for the Cook County President's Property Tax Reform Group by identifying relevant PTAXSIM tables and Cook County administrative datasets for property-level analysis.
- Designed reproducible R workflows to clean, join, reshape, aggregate, and summarize source data and automated construction of variables used in analyses of residential exemptions, commercial and industrial incentive property classes, tax bases, tax bills, and distributional effects.
- Created the public replication website and codebase reproducing analyses, tables, figures, and results from the published Property Tax Reform Group reports.
- Built parameterized reporting workflows to update key results by geography and fiscal year as new administrative data became available after publication; continue to serve as the sole technical maintainer for data updates, corrections, documentation, and site revisions.

Measuring Local Government Levies' Responsiveness to the Property Tax Base | *Data Developer & Replication-Site Developer*

Research with David Merriman | [Website](#) | [GitHub](#)

- Constructed a longitudinal panel of Cook County municipalities, school districts, townships, and other taxing agencies linking annual property-tax bases and levies from 2008–2023.
- Developed identifiers and reconciliation procedures to account for changes in taxing agencies and associated funds over time and preserve consistent units for longitudinal analysis.
- Built reproducible R workflows and a public replication site supporting conference-paper analyses, including fixed-effects, asymmetric, lagged, and instrumental-variables specifications, descriptive analyses, robustness checks, and supporting tables and figures.

Dissertation Replication and Supplemental Research Materials | *Creator & Principal Researcher*

University of Illinois Chicago | [Website](#) | [GitHub](#)

- Developed a public replication and supplemental-research site for *Risk Perception and Real Estate Values in Cook County, Illinois*, documenting the data construction, analysis, and methodological decisions underlying the dissertation.
- Built reproducible spatial-data workflows integrating property sales, parcel and building geometries, multiple vintages of FEMA flood data, FIRM panel information, and First Street Foundation Flood Factor data using R, {sf}, {targets}, Quarto, and ArcGIS Pro.
- Published supporting tables, figures, robustness and assumption tests, code notes, methodological documentation, exploratory analyses, and additional material that supplemented the dissertation but could not be included in the final document.

Commercial & Industrial Development Projects in Cook County, Illinois | *Creator & Lead Developer*

Independent Research Data Project | [Website](#) | [GitHub](#) | DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.21324424

- Created a project-level research database after identifying limitations in treating individual Property Index Numbers (PINs) as independent commercial and industrial developments.
- Extracted historical commercial and industrial PINs from PTAXSIM and linked related parcels into development projects using ownership, parcel proximity, buyer and seller names, sale document numbers, appeal records, valuation worksheets, transaction records, and manual review of ambiguous cases.
- Developed reproducible R/Quarto workflows and parameterized report templates that generate detailed project documentation by township and municipality.
- Built and maintain a public research website allowing users to browse projects geographically, search individual PINs and projects, and review documentation explaining how parcel-level records were converted into project-level research data.

TEACHING

University of Illinois Chicago

- Instructor & Course Creator – Public Policy 105: Programming and Data Analysis for Public Policy Fall 2021
- Teaching Assistant – PA 434: Data Analytics Spring 2021
- Teaching Assistant – PA 402: Principles of Data Analysis Fall 2021
- Course Builder - PPOL 230: Nonprofit Organizations in US Society Summer 2020
- Teaching Assistant - Public Policy 307: Policy Analysis Spring 2020
- Teaching Assistant – PA 401: Foundations of Public Service Fall 2019
- Graduate Assistant / Teaching Assistant - CMPA Program AY '18-'19

AWARDS, FELLOWSHIPS AND HONORS

Climate Tax Fellowship - National Tax Association (NTA) 2026 Fall Conference

Ciccarone Public Finance Scholarship, 2022-2023, UIC

2022 ICPSR Summer Program Scholarship, Summer 2022

Department of Public Administration Scholar Award, tuition and stipend, 2019-2023, UIC

Certificate of Merit – United States Coast Guard, Marine Safety Unit Chicago, May 2019

MEDIA

Radio Interview

Schlenker, Charlie. (2024, February 16). McLean County has high potential for work-from-home permanence. [Radio broadcast]. WGLT NPR. https://www.wgl.t.org/local-news/2024-02-16/mclean-county-has-high-potential-for-work-from-home-permanence#new_tab.

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Data & reproducibility: R/RStudio, tidyverse, sf, targets, Quarto, Git/GitHub, GitHub Pages, data integration, cleaning, validation, documentation, automated reporting, reproducible pipelines

Analysis & methods: fixed effects, difference-in-differences, event studies, instrumental variables, panel data, survey analysis, geospatial analysis, descriptive statistics, data visualization, mixed methods

Additional tools: ArcGIS Pro, SQL, Tableau, Stata, SPSS, Qualtrics, Excel and Microsoft Office