On Campus

Joseph Stiglitz Wins the Nobel Prize

Fall 2001

Joseph Stiglitz, a Columbia professor who teaches in the Department of Economics, the School of International and Public Affairs, and the Graduate School of Business, has won the Nobel Prize. He shares the prize with George Akerlof of the University of California, Berkeley, and A. Michael Spence of Stanford.

The three researchers were selected for their “analyses of markets with asymmetric information.” As Stiglitz explained at a press conference at Columbia, “Market economies are characterized by a high degree of imperfections. Older models assumed perfect information, but even small degrees of information imperfections can have large economic consequences. Our models took into account asymmetries of information, which is another way of saying, ‘Some people know more than others.’”

Formerly a chief economist at the World Bank, Stiglitz began his career at Yale, earning tenure at 27. He has been a faculty member at Princeton, Oxford, and Stanford, and is also a member of the National Academy of Science. With substantial foundation support, Stiglitz is founding the Initiative for Policy Dialogue at Columbia’s School of International and Public Affairs. The Initiative aims to provide an alternative to the International Monetary Fund and World Bank for countries in need of sound economic policy advice.

Stiglitz is the University’s third economist in the last six years to receive the honor. The late William S. Vickrey won for economics in 1996, followed in 1998 by Horst Stormer, who received the honor for physics. Vickrey’s colleague Robert Mundell won the prize in economics the following year, and Eric Kandel won it for medicine in 2000.

This year, Stiglitz is one of two Columbians to win the Nobel Prize. Alumnus William S. Knowles ’42GSAS won the award in chemistry for groundbreaking research that led to the development of hundreds of therapeutic drugs, including L-DOPA, used to treat Parkinson’s disease. Knowles shares the prize with Ryoji Noyori and K. Barry

Sharpless.



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