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Professor and Chair of Economics at Tulane University and past SEA President James Alm, right, presents the award to SHU Professor Jennifer Trudeau.

The Southern Economic Association (SEA) recently recognized [Jennifer Trudeau](#), assistant professor of [business economics](#) at Sacred Heart University's Jack Welch College of Business, as the first runner-up for the renowned Georgescu-Roegen prize.

Trudeau was honored at a presentation Nov. 20, during SEA's annual conference in Washington, D.C. The conference featured notable guest lecturer Andrei Shleifer of Harvard University and SEA lecturer Israel M. Kirzner of New York University.

The SEA annually awards the Georgescu-Roegen prize to the best academic article published in the *Southern Economic Journal*. Trudeau received the 2016 runner-up prize for her article, "The Role of New Media on Teen Sexual Behaviors and Fertility Outcomes—The Case of *16 and Pregnant*." (SEJ, Volume 82, Number 3, January 2016).

"I've always focused on looking at different factors affecting maternal and infant health in the past," Trudeau said. "This concept was initially a part of my doctoral research; it began in 2011 as a research proposal in a health economics course at the University of New Hampshire and was expanded upon for my dissertation between 2012 and 2013, with final revisions in 2014."

Trudeau's study isolated the informational effect of MTV's reality show, *16 and Pregnant*, which follows several teenaged girls through their pregnancies each season. She did so by employing a quasi-difference-in-difference framework considering three differential effects by age, sex education and viewership. She used data on teen sexual behaviors, contraceptive use and fertility outcomes from the National Survey of Family Growth, and fertility outcomes from restricted-use vital statistics.

Based upon her research, Trudeau concluded that young teens—the target demographic of *16 and Pregnant*—showed a decrease in sexual activity and an increase in contraceptive use, relative to older teens who served as the control group. Additionally, she found that reductions in births to 15- and 16-year-olds is more common in states without formal sex education requirements, suggesting the show helped increase sexual knowledge in these states.

These findings are reinforced with results incorporating unique, private Nielson viewership data showing that reduced birth rates occurred for this younger group only, and in areas of high-show viewership. By identifying measurable effects on potential teen mothers, Trudeau demonstrated that *16 and Pregnant* shows teens that early pregnancy is a reality to avoid, rather than envy.

Trudeau's research also set precedent for analyzing the impact of informational campaigns on human behavior.

"Receiving this recognition was a wonderful experience," Trudeau said. "Being in a room full of peer economists and having them speak about my work was very exciting. It has reaffirmed to me that no question is too small to research. And it has definitely motivated me to continue pursuing research like this in the future."