Do Financial Crises Cause Legislation?
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For my PURM project this summer, I investigated the question, “Do Financial Crises Cause Legislation?” I worked with Professor Peter Conti-Brown and his co-author Michael Ohlrogge on this task. The overall goal was to build a data tool using Python that produces complete editions of the banking code and identifies differences between the years. The output will eventually be used to make inferences about the relationship between crises and federal statutes.

The project involved both physical and virtual tasks. The data tool required copies dating as far back as 1925 (at the minimum). Over the course of the summer, I reached out to government officials, law librarians, and database managers to locate these old copies of the legal code. The next step was to OCR (optical character recognition) the documents. In other words, the copies needed to be converted to editable text files in order to be parsed by the computer. It was challenging to locate high-quality scans of older editions and learn how to use open-source OCR software. The final part of this project involved building this data tool using Python. My professors outlined a structure for the program and I wrote different functions and scripts to parse the files. At the conclusion of my program, the data tool was almost complete. In the fall, I plan to wrap up this project and add a GUI to make this data tool an accessible academic tool for future researchers.

Another project I worked on involved traveling to the University of Virginia for archival research. I visited the Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library to photograph the Carter Glass Papers. I focused on the Federal Reserve Act and the Banking Act of 1935. These documents will ultimately support my professor’s next book about the history of the Federal Reserve. In the fall, I will catalog these documents in a database for further analysis.

My PURM research experience this summer taught me about Python and the Federal Reserve and gave me two amazing mentors, Dr. Conti-Brown and Dr. Ohlrogge. Dr. Conti-Brown shared invaluable career advice and gave me the confidence to further pursue courses in finance and computer science. I grew both as a student and a person this summer thanks to my mentors’ wonderful book recommendations and life advice, and the intellectual challenge of research.