

James J. Heckman was born in Chicago in 1944 and educated at Colorado College (B.A., Math, 1965) and Princeton University (Ph.D., Economics, 1971). He is the Henry Schultz Distinguished Service Professor of Economics at the university of Chicago, Director of the Center for Social Program Evaluation at the Harris School of Public Policy at the University of Chicago, and a Senior Research Fellow at the American Bar Foundation. Dr. Heckman has received numerous awards for his work, including the John Bates Clark Award of the American Economic Association in 1983, the 2000 Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences, the 2005 Jacob Mincer Award for Lifetime Achievement in Labor Economics, the 2005 Aigner award from the Journal of Econometrics. His recent research deals with such issues as evaluation of social programs, econometric models of discrete choice and longitudinal data, the economics of the labor market, alternative models of the distribution of income, public economics, regulation and policy reform of income inequality, the economics of the life cycle of skill formation, hedonic models and pricing of heterogeneous goods and characteristics, and heterogeneity in general equilibrium models.

Dr. Heckman's work has been devoted to the development of a scientific basis for economic policy evaluation. In the course of this work he has made contributions to economic theory and to econometrics, with special emphasis on models of individuals (or disaggregated groups, such as organizations or firms) and to the problems, and possibilities created by heterogeneity, diversity and unobserved counterfactual states. His work uses data on individuals and firms to test economic theory and it uses economic theory to solve problems in microdata analysis. He has developed the economics and econometrics of lifecycle dynamic models to study unemployment, wage growth and skill formation over the lifecycle. He has developed new methods for analyzing microeconomic data on firms and families. His methods for correcting for biased samples and for constructing policy counterfactuals are widely used. They use economic theory to guide the construction of counterfactual states. He has applied these tools to analyze the impact of civil rights and social action on the economic status of African Americans, to analyze the role of regulation in affecting productivity and employment in many countries around the world, to analyze the determinants and consequences of labor incomes and income inequality, the consequences of tax policy and to develop methods for analyzing the pricing of labor services and the determinants of lifecycle skills.

# KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

## UNIVERSITY DISTINGUISHED LECTURE



**James J. Heckman, Ph.D.**

*“Skills, Schools and Synapses”*

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION  
COLLEGE OF HUMAN ECOLOGY  
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS  
INSTITUTE FOR ACADEMIC ALLIANCES  
UNIVERSITY DISTINGUISHED LECTURES COMMITTEE

## ABSTRACT

Modern economies require skilled labor. The U.S. economy is not producing sufficient numbers of skilled workers, thereby creating inequality and reducing economic productivity. This lecture draws on economics, psychology and neuroscience to analyze this problem. The sources of human skill, their multiplicity, the role of families and schools in producing skills and the implications of recent findings for social policy are discussed.

*To view materials associated with this lecture please visit  
[www.humec.ksu.edu](http://www.humec.ksu.edu)*

# UNIVERSITY DISTINGUISHED LECTURE

K-State Student Union  
Forum Hall

Friday, November 3, 2006  
1:30 p.m.

## Welcome

Virginia Moxley, Interim Dean  
College of Human Ecology

## Introductions

Lloyd B. Thomas, Head  
Department of Economics

## “Skills, Schools and Synapses”

Dr. James J. Heckman

## Questions and Answers

## Concluding Remarks

Virginia Moxley

*Please join us for a reception immediately following the lecture.*