Long Bio

Sudipta Sarangi is a microeconomist who is currently a Professor of Economics at Virginia Tech. He obtained his bachelor's degree in economics from Delhi University and master's from Delhi School of Economics. He then completed his Ph.D. from Virginia Tech in 2000 where he was hired fifteen years later as a professor. Prior to this, he was a Program Director for economics at the National Science Foundation (NSF) and a Distinguished Professor of Business Administration at Louisiana State University. He spent the 2023-34 academic year as a fellow of the French Institutes for Advanced Study and has been a Jury Member of The Infosys Prize in 2024 and 2025. He has served as a consultant to major international organizations including the World Bank and the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO). Currently, he serves on the editorial boards of leading journals such as the Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization, Journal of Public Economic Theory, Oxford Open Economics, and Economic Modelling.

His primary area of research is network theory where his early research on networks focused on how agent heterogeneity influences network formation, recognizing that individuals differ in identity, connection costs, and benefits. This approach yields more realistic and diverse stable network structures than models assuming identical agents. Currently, he is studying two emerging areas in social and economic networks: the implications of uncertainty on behavior in networks, and modelling multilayer networks. He is also one of the organizers of the NSF-sponsored Network Science in Economics Conference series. His research in experimental economics has been driven by theoretical questions and has explored issues like the absent-minded driver paradox, the role of complementarities in contests and how the size of choice sets affects optimal decision-making. More recently, he has been involved in designing light-touch intervention for attracting more female students to   STEM disciplines. His work in development economics has focused on topical themes such as how culture shapes economic behavior and corruption. Some of his research on culture studies agriculture practices and outcomes in antiquity explain contemporary gender inequality. Another strand explores the legacy of rice farming on outcomes like cooperation and performance in standardized tests. His work on corruption can be best seen in his recent edited book titled The Political Economy of Corruption: Emerging Issues. He has given numerous keynote talks, a TED Talk on how human behavior is the same across pandemics, and presented his research at numerous conferences and universities around the world. His research has also been funded by organizations like the NSF, NIH, DARPA and DHS.

He is a accomplished educator who has taught microeconomic theory at all levels across a range of institutions, earning multiple awards for excellence in teaching and mentoring. Over the course of his career, he has supervised more than a dozen Ph.D. students, many of whom now hold academic and industry positions around the world. His commitment to education extends beyond traditional settings, as he has also engaged with high school students and lifelong learners, fostering a broader appreciation for economics across diverse audiences.

He has been the Department Head of Economics at Virginia Tech since joining the institution in 2015. During his tenure, he has successfully doubled both the size of the faculty and undergraduate enrollment in the economics major. Under his leadership, the Department has actively engaged in several interdisciplinary initiatives, including programs in Politics, Philosophy and Economics (PPE), Behavioral Decision Sciences, and Data and Decisions as well as an innovative master's program with several international universities. Notably, the department was also awarded American Economics Association's 2021 Award for Department with Outstanding Achievements in Diversity & Inclusion for the Department's curricular offerings relating to data driven approaches to diversity and inclusion.

He is great believer in extending economic ideas and concepts to broader audiences. He has written column for various local newspapers, online platforms and leading national dailies in India. His book, The Economics of Small Things, showcases his talent for making complex economic ideas accessible and engaging through everyday examples. Overall, his body of work exemplifies a rare blend of interdisciplinary insight and analytical rigor, to answer question about human behavior with clarity and impact.