Northwestern University Professors John Hudson and Joseph Swanson were senior members of the study team for a report commissioned by the Surface Transportation Board to review competition in the railroad industry, and provide an analysis of potential policies that might enhance competition. This report was submitted in November 2008. The report was commissioned as a result of a 2006 study by the Government Accountability Office that raised congressional concerns that freight rates were starting to increase. The report provides an analysis of recent trends in costs, rates and profits. The captivity of shippers is analyzed, as is the levels of price discrimination between commodities. The report pays particular attention to the existence of capacity constraints in recent years, and the financial case for capacity expansion. The report analyzed the effectiveness and desirability of four possible policies to enhance competition: reciprocal switching agreements, requiring the quotation of bottleneck rates, terminal agreements, and trackage rights.
Speaker Bios:

John C. Hudson is Professor and Director of the Program in Geography and Associate Director of the Environmental Sciences Program at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. His bachelor’s degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison was followed by the Masters and PhD degrees from the University of Iowa. He taught at the University of North Dakota from 1966 to 1968, and then taught at the University of Wisconsin before joining the Northwestern University faculty in 1971.


Among his recent books are Making the Corn Belt (Indiana University Press, 1994); Across This Land: A Regional Geography of the United States and Canada (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002); and Chicago: A Geography of the City and Its Region (Center for American Places and University of Chicago Press, 2006). His most recent book is A Love of the Land: Selected Writings of John Fraser Hart (Center for American Places and University of Chicago Press, 2008).

Joseph Swanson

Joseph Swanson is Clinical Professor of Finance at Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management and the majority equity holder of Jos. Swanson & Co. a firm that provides strategic and financial counsel to major North American companies. Swanson was previously Vice President of The Chicago Corporation, a privately-held investment banking firm, and Senior Vice President–Corporate Development at CalFed, Inc.

From 1975 through 1986, Swanson was Professor of Finance at Kellogg, and served as Adjunct Professor of Finance, 1987-2006. Swanson’s teaching at the Kellogg School goes to two elements of investment banking: FINC 938 Due Diligence and FINC 918 Project Finance.

Swanson received a Bachelor of Science degree in economics and history from the University of Wisconsin in 1964 followed by his PhD in economics, also from the University of Wisconsin, in 1968. He has taught economics, finance and statistics at the following institutions: Purdue University (1967-1969), the University of Iowa (1970-1974), and Northwestern University (1975-present).

Swanson's academic research covers a wide number of areas including relative price performance in corporate bond markets, the impact of regulation and mergers on firm cost performance, the measurement of productivity change and productivity differentials in transportation companies, optimal plant location, and statistical techniques for cost analysis and economic forecasting. His current research is in the area of efficient auction market systems design, and is focused on the initial elements of competitive advantage. Swanson spends a fair amount of energy focusing on economic history, with a special interest in globalization rewards, and associated income distributions.

Joseph Swanson is a member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Economic Association, the Economic History Association, the Financial Management Association and the Institute for Operations Research and Management Sciences. He is an elected member of Beta Gamma Sigma, the national business honorary society. Swanson is a founding member of The Society for Financial Econometrics. He serves as a member of the Business Advisory Committee of The Transportation Center at Northwestern University.