

# Projects that worked/haven't worked in economics

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### What has worked

1. NSF currently supports "Economics at Community Colleges," [/econ/2yc/index.html](#) , a project to explore ways to engage two year instructors in ongoing discourse about teaching and learning economics. It is part of another NSF project, "Starting Point: Teaching and Learning Economics" [/econ/index.html](#) , a portal for sixteen pedagogical approaches. (Both are housed at SERC).

The one activity that has most successfully engaged community college instructors is a webinar series in which a nationally-known expert discusses a current issue in economics such as antitrust law, the financial crisis or health care. See [/econ/2yc/index.html](#) We call the series, "Cutting Edge," borrowing the name from geoscience education [/NAGTWorkshops/index.html](#), The webinars, one-half hour of presentation and one-half hour of open phone line discussion, investigate how new theories and evidence affect instruction in the introductory course. Registration for each webinar has been 40 – 50 participants, thus reaching more two year instructors (and at lower cost) than other approaches we tried including regional workshops and meetings at national conferences. Our goal is further engagement after the webinars in local study groups at which faculty will develop new teaching materials based recordings of the webinar presentation.

2. The American Economic Association has increased its support for teaching and learning activities with additional sessions at the national meetings and a separate conference on economic education <http://www.aeaweb.org/committees/AEACEE/Conference/2012/index.php>

One activity at the national meeting that has increased involvement by community college instructors is a poster session on teaching. Because the poster session has a much higher acceptance rate than regular sessions, more faculty are able to present at the meetings and therefore obtain funding to attend. Also, the poster session has created a social setting in which faculty talk about teaching and learning, not a common occurrence at the national meetings.

### What I'd like to see

For five years, NSF supported the Teaching Innovations Program <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/AEA/AEACEE/TIP/TIP.htm> in which economics faculty met face-to-face in workshops to explore innovative teaching techniques and then worked online with mentors to develop specific applications in their courses. Unfortunately, only 4 percent of the more than 300 participants were from community colleges even though two-year faculty teach an estimated 40 percent of introductory economics students. It would be wonderful to re-create this

program specifically for community college instructors. The combination of face-to-face interaction followed by web-based activity was successful here and in other disciplines. The key would be to find ways to recruit community college faculty to the initial workshops (other disciplines have done so successfully) and then keep them engaged afterward. And, then, of course we would need NSF funding; it was not awarded to sustain the original project.