



TRECC

TEACHING RESOURCES FOR ECONOMICS
AT COMMUNITY COLLEGES

What is TRECC?

TRECC is an economics newsletter focused on teaching economics at the community college level. We seek to provide resources that will help instructors provide a dynamic and meaningful experience for their students. We also seek to unite instructors from across the country and open up lines of communication between us all.

TRECC goes to a list of over 1500 community college instructors. Help us reach everyone by adding others in your economics department. Send email addresses to: mmaier@glendale.edu

Helpful Resources

Click below to access each resource.

[Resources for Economics Educators--American Economic Association website](#)

[Starting Point--Teaching and Learning Economics](#)

[Economics at Community Colleges](#)

[Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta--Classroom Tools](#)

[Econ Ed at the St. Louis Fed](#)

[Economics Media Library](#)

Upcoming Conferences

Click below to access information on each conference.

[EconED 2019](#)

October 18-19, 2019 New Orleans, LA

[15th Annual Economics Teaching Conference \(NETA\)](#)

October 24-25, 2019 Kansas City, MO

[17th Annual St. Louis FED Professors Conference--The Art and Science of Teaching Economics](#)

November 14-15, 2019 St. Louis, MO

[2019 SEA \(Southern Economic Association\)](#)

November 23-25, 2019 Ft. Lauderdale, FL

[The 10th Annual AEA Conference On Teaching and Research in Economic Education \(CTREE\)](#)

May 27-29, 2020 Chicago, IL

IN THIS ISSUE...



AND THE SURVEY
SAYS...



MORE ON
INCLUSIVENESS



WANT TO GET
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TRECC?



INNOVATION IN
THE CLASSROOM

A Survey of Economics Education in the US Community College Sector

Written By Mark Maier (mmaier@glendale.edu) and Tim Thornton (Tim.Thornton@tufts.edu)

In preparation for a special issue of the [International Journal of Pluralism in Economic Education](#) we conducted an online survey of community college economics instructors. Here is a summary of what we found. Details will be published in the journal's special issue and are available from us at the email addresses above.

The survey over-sampled full-time instructors, 82%, but was representative of what we know about community college economists: 54% male; 68% Caucasian; 26% with a PhD in economics; 44% with a Master's degree.

One surprising result was the number using the Openstax textbook, 22%, followed by traditional texts, Mankiw, Schiller and McConnell. Only 30% found their textbook "well suited for student needs." Specific recommendations to add to the economics curriculum included: economic history, environmental economics, behavioral economics, investigation of racism, income distribution, history of economic thought, in-class experiments, and more interaction with data.

Respondents were critical of online learning with 52% believing it had reduced student learning considerably or a little. Similarly, 56% thought that increased use of part-time instructors had reduced student learning considerably or a little.

We also asked about interaction with the profession. Even in this likely selected group, only 40% were American Economic Association (AEA) members and only 18% had read materials from the [AEA's Committee on Equity, Diversity and Professional Conduct](#).

Respondents had many suggestions for how they could be better supported in their work including financing to attend conferences and workshops, more welcoming at AEA annual meeting, networking with colleagues, and a committee within AEA for community college instructors. At their college, respondents wanted more control over textbook choice and curriculum and the ability to offer courses beyond Micro and Macro.



We Need You to Keep TRECC Alive!

We are currently searching for new editors for TRECC. Do you enjoy TRECC and want to see it continue? Or maybe you have a different vision for what this magazine could be? Please contact Mark Maier at mmaier@glendale.edu if you are interested in contributing. A small remuneration will likely accompany this position.

Brian and I will be happy to assist any interested parties in the transition process--including training on formatting and distribution. If you have questions on how much time is involved, please contact me at klotz@lakelandcollege.edu. If new editors are not found this will likely be the last issue of TRECC.

A survey of TRECC's readership demonstrated it's utility to instructors. 60 % of respondents feel that TRECC is very useful, 36 % feel that TRECC is somewhat useful and 4 % of respondents feel that TRECC is not useful.

ADAM RUINS EVERYTHING

Recommended Reading

If you are looking for new ways to incorporate media into your classroom, make sure you check out the paper, "Adam Ruins Everything, Except Economics" by Jadrian Wooten and James Tierney. In the paper, the authors outline the various ways that the show "Adam Ruins Everything" can be applied to your classes. If you haven't seen the show, we highly recommend it!

[Adam Ruins Everything, Except Economics](#)

The Role of Community Colleges in Creating Greater Diversity in Economics

Written By Mark Maier (Glendale Community College) and James Peyton (Highline Community College)

Failure of the economics profession to promote diversity among economics majors and in teaching faculty is well documented. Of particular note is a shortfall relative to nearly all other disciplines including math and the physical sciences. The reasons for such differences between disciplines need careful research attention.

We have been asked to investigate one aspect of diversity in a profession: the role of community colleges as a route to more diversity among students and also as a conduit to diversity in faculty. Community colleges enroll the majority of all Latinx, Native American and Black undergraduates and enroll a disproportionately high number of women students.

Many academic disciplines have a deliberate, institutionalized attempt to support community college students and faculty. These vary considerably from independent organizations such as math at www.amatyc.org, to the groups within professional associations that most disciplines have (history, psychology, physics, sociology, chemistry, biology, geoscience, English, MLA).

In our study we summarize efforts by other disciplines to engage community college students and faculty and describe how these efforts might be implemented in the economics academic community. In particular we note projects that aim to increase diversity. Notable is an NSF supported program in geoscience called [Supporting and Advancing Geoscience Education at 2-Year Colleges](#).

Most promising for adaptation in economics are the following projects (see full document available from James or Mark for details and examples in other disciplines).

1. Initiate and promote research on community college economics instruction.
2. AEA website to support community college instruction with material for students and for faculty. Includes recruitment of community college faculty to join AEA and use AEA materials.
3. AEA task force with community college representation to make recommendations to increase diversity of students enrolling, succeeding and majoring in economics.
4. AEA Task force to make recommendations to improve quality of community college economics instruction through new faculty development programs.

Innovation in the Classroom

Innovation is defined as the introduction of something new. The following examples give us new ways of presenting some very old economic ideas.

Using Music in the Classroom--J. Brian O'Roark, Robert Morris University

Helping students to see that economics really is part of their lives takes a little bit of work. Perhaps the best opportunity to illustrate this is in music. Music has been a classroom staple for many of us teaching economics. So many songs contain economic content that it is hard not to find some concept nearly leaping out of the radio (or the phone) at you. While finding the songs may not be difficult, getting students to see the connection may move them out of their comfort zone. Still, music can be a low cost, fun way to have students apply what they have learned. In my introductory classes I ask students, alone or in small groups, to choose, interpret and package a song. This involves a little bit of imagination, and some technical skill (primarily Power Point, but any movie making software can work), yet interpreting songs is a project that gets students thinking about how economics isn't just a foreign concept in a textbook.

Song interpretations focus on the main economic content of the lyrics. Obviously, not every line in a song will have a direct economic explanation, as some of what is being said is historic, political, or personal. Students have freedom to explain the lyrics in any way they like, but where there is economic material, they need to target it.

After a little tweaking, the best presentations as voted on by the class, are loaded onto [Critical Commons](#) where an entire library of "Music for Econ" songs are available. From the Beatles to 21-Pilots, covering genres from Broadway to country to hip-hop, songs interpreted by economic teachers and students make up the catalog. I usually play these songs as students are coming into class to extend the class time by a few minutes, prepare students for the day's topic, and to ensure that we start on time. When the music stops, the class begins.

Edited by Katie Lotz (klotz@lakelandcollege.edu) and Brian Lynch (blynch@lakelandcollege.edu)



Using Powtoon in the Classroom--Sylvia Cavalcant, Mesa Community College

On the first day of class, I ask my students the same set of questions, "What are your hobbies? What are your forms of relaxation?" I frequently get responses such as, "We love to play video games, we enjoy developing videos," and the list goes on and on.

Since learning economics can be dry, I often try to incorporate new educational tools to engage the students. For example, I have successfully used online simulations, games, e-portfolios, website building tools and much more. Last year, I tested Powtoon, an animated video software.

I started using Powtoon and posting the videos on Canvas (our learning management system) to summarize the chapters, break down complex econ concepts, provide examples and even create informal assessments.

I have asked students to create Powtoon videos in small groups (the free version works just fine for beginners). They have started developing chapter's summary videos, concept explanation videos, and summaries of a research project and much more.

By the end of the year, I realized that the students that used Powtoon, who are not econ majors, were able to express their message more efficiently than the students that did not.

Powtoon is a great tool to improve not only knowledge retention, but also improve engagement, and encourage collaboration and individual learning. [Click here to view an example of a video created with Powtoon.](#)