



# 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](mailto:mmailer@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](#)

## Upcoming Conferences

Click below to access information on each conference.

[30th Annual Robert Morris Teaching Economics Conference](#)

February 21-23, 2019 Coraopolis, PA

[2nd Annual Women in Economics Symposium](#)

February 28, 2019 Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, MO

[2019 MEA \(Midwest Economics Association\)](#)

March 15-17, 2019 St. Louis, MO

[FRED at the St. Louis Fed](#)

May 28, 2019 Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, MO

[2019 Annual AEA Conference on Teaching and Research in Economic Education \(CTREE\)](#)

May 29-31, 2019 St. Louis, MO

[Federal Reserve Institute at University of San Diego](#)

June 24-28, 2019 University of San Diego, CA

[2019 AAEA \(Agriculture & Applied Economics Association\)](#)

July 21-23, 2019 Atlanta, GA

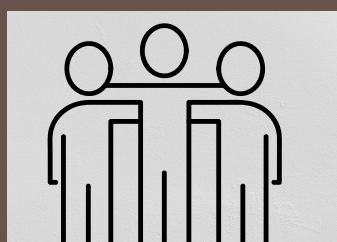
## Calling all Innovative Educators!

We would like to feature teaching ideas from our readership in each issue. Please consider sharing what you're doing in the classroom! Please send all ideas to Katie Lotz at [klotz@lakelandcollege.edu](mailto:klotz@lakelandcollege.edu)

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# Team-Based Learning: Getting it Right

Written By Amber Casolari (Riverside City College)

[Team-based Learning \(TBL\)](#) is an evidence-based collaborative learning teaching strategy designed around units of instruction, known as “modules,” that are taught in a three-step cycle: out of class preparation, in-class readiness assurance testing, and application-focused exercise.

There are some important elements to “getting TBL right.” The first, is that the teams must be appropriately formed and fixed for the length of the entire course. Students must also be accountable for their pre-learning and for working in teams. In other words, there must be some nominal grade assigned to this work. In-class team assignments must promote both learning and team development. Students must receive frequent and immediate feedback. (For additional information about TBL and to view the library of Application Exercises visit the [SERC TBL site](#).)

## *My Classroom Experience*

Once you learn about TBL, you will find that this strategy requires a restructuring of your curriculum as well as your preparation and classroom time as the professor. TBL is not a strategy that you simply implement on a whim. Therefore, at this point you might ask yourself, why would I do this? The answer is simple. It revolutionizes student learning! It empowers students to learn and create learning and gives them the freedom to do so because they are in control of their learning.

When I mentor colleagues on TBL in their classrooms, of the four elements above, the one that faculty struggle with the most is team formation. Since this sets the tone for the entire term, it is crucial to do this well from the beginning. I have a strategy that has worked well for me over the years. It entails placing students in like-minded teams based upon personality. On the first day of class, I hand out index cards and ask students to provide me with their name, nickname, pronoun and other contact information. I also ask students two questions about how they feel about working in teams.

From their answers, I sort students into teams based upon how they answered the questions. Teams are generally comprised of five students. Doing so tends to spread out academic ability as well as all other demographic characteristics.

TBL has been a successful strategy for me in the California Community College. I have used TBL in my courses for over twelve years at RCC and I have found significant increases in success and retention for all students. Recently, however, I have found that in my 8-week hybrid (blended) courses, TBL has led to increases in retention for women and students of underrepresented populations. These populations of students also experienced improved success rates over the general population of economics students. As the economics discipline struggles with the inclusion of women and minority populations, TBL might be an important strategy to consider.

## Team-Based Learning Opportunity at CTREE

If you have experience or interest in team-based learning (TBL) pedagogy in college economics classes, you are invited to apply to participate in the upcoming workshop on developing content for team-based learning classes in college economics. The workshop will take place during the afternoon of May 31 and the morning of June 1, immediately following this year's [Conference on Teaching and Research in Economic Education \(CTREE\)](#) in St. Louis, Missouri.

At the workshop you will join a National Science Foundation (NSF) project to engage economists in TBL pedagogy. An [extensive website](#) introduces economists to TBL and now includes an extensive library of more than 100 application exercises (AEs).

Before the workshop, participants will be expected to complete short readings on TBL and writing effective AEs. In the workshop, we will briefly review TBL basics, discuss best practices for developing AEs, and then spend most of the workshop developing AEs. By participating you agree to complete five AEs during summer 2019 to be included in the library. (cont. on page 3)

Participants in the May 31 - June 1 TBL workshop will receive a \$700 stipend, in addition to funding for the extra night's lodging, Friday dinner, and Saturday breakfast.

[Click here to access the online application.](#) Please submit your application by midnight on Friday, February 15, 2019.

Please contact Phil Ruder at [ruder@pacificu.edu](mailto:ruder@pacificu.edu) with any questions about the workshop.

## Professional Development without the Travel

If you are unable to attend one of the economic conferences highlighted in this issue, consider attending one of the many webinars offered through the Council for Economic Education. The webinars cover a variety of subjects on anything from immigration to cryptocurrencies. Best of all, the webinars are available free of charge.

The Council for Economic Education is the leading non-profit organization in the United States focused on personal finance and economic education for students in K-12. Despite this, many of the webinars contain information useful for teaching introductory courses at the college level.

[Click here to view the list of scheduled webinars for 2019.](#)

## The American Economic Association and Teaching

Written By James Peyton (Highline College)

Economics is what got me interested in teaching. And yet, as a faculty member at a community college, it's easy to feel distant from the broader economics discipline and current thinking in economics.



**AMERICAN  
ECONOMIC  
ASSOCIATION**

Membership in the [American Economics Association \(AEA\)](#) is one way to stay connected. The annual dues of \$22-42 are a great deal, especially since that includes online access to 8 AEA journals, including the Journal of Economic Perspectives, that make it easy to bring current research back to our classes. The dues get you both current and past access.

The Fall 2018 issue of the [Journal of Economics Perspectives](#) was a great example. There were articles on climate change, last year's U.S. tax cut, and on unconventional monetary policy in different countries. All of those topics are in the news, but getting the economist perspective is value added for me – and for the way that I teach about them.

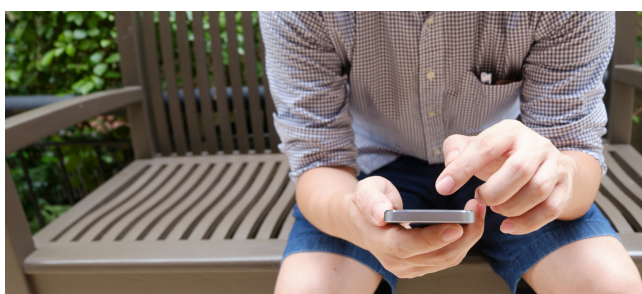
Membership in the AEA also gets you reduced registration fees for the AEA/ASSA meeting in January and at the AEA's Conference on Teaching and Research in Economic Education (CTREE) in May each year. Both of those conferences have great sessions on teaching economics. There is also the EconSpark discussion board that is open to members to discuss current issues for economics and economists.

There's another reason to become an AEA member. The AEA is the professional association of over 20,000 academic and business economists. A lot of economics teaching happens at community colleges. What we do, and how we do it forms students' ideas of what economics is. And those students are potential future economists. Membership raises the profile of community colleges and gives us the opportunity to push for programs and resources that will help all of us stay more connected to economics and our economics colleagues – and do a better job for our students.

*James is also a community college representative to the American Economic Association Committee on Economic Education. If you have ideas of ways that the AEA could serve community colleges better, he'd welcome them.*  
[jpeyton@highline.edu](mailto:jpeyton@highline.edu)

# 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 FLIPGRID in Your Online Classroom--Angela Thurman, Tarrant County College](#)

What if there was an easy and free way to increase student/instructor interaction in online courses? There is! Let me introduce you to FLIPGRID. FLIPGRID is a free video tool that can easily be embedded into your course or you can use a hyperlink that allows students to log in using their campus email and create a short video on any theme you choose. These videos are excellent as introductory videos or if you would like a "live" presentation or answer to a question. Students can view each others videos and comment, if you allow that option. I find that students are so used to posting on Instagram and Snapchat that using FLIPGRID is a super easy and natural way for them to introduce their personalities into online courses.

[Aggregate Supply and Demand Selfies: Active Learning with Photo Submission--Dr. Tammy Batson, Northern Illinois University](#)

It is often hard to interact with students these days. They are often more into their phones than the lecture. To combat this problem, I created a group learning activity that helps highlight economic concepts while creating lasting memories for the students.

My technique for this lesson plan has emerged from two different techniques I have used in recent years. One is selfie attendance for tracking student participation and the other is a pool noodle group activity which allows for diagram shifting with large scale graphs. Students are given several events which they must model with aggregate supply and demand. After the students are sure they answered the question correctly, they model the results using the blackboard or floor and shift with the noodles. Once the diagram is complete, they take a selfie including all their group members. I usually have them hold up their fingers to indicate the question number. At the end, each group uploads their results.

The best thing about this program is grading, which is very simple. The results are photos which you can show to explain the correct answers to the class, create a slideshow for the final day of class, or show your department on how you are engaging with your students. The last advantage is that my students are making college memories they can keep. Overall both techniques work well to create lasting impressions of economics.

For me, these photos help create bonds that help me remember the students throughout the years to come. This activity works great on small and large classes--I have done this with up to 200 students as they work in groups of 3-5.