Starting Point: Teaching and Learning Economics

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Starting Point: Teaching and Learning Economics

How did Starting Point get Started?

- Origins in earlier work by Simkins/Maier focused on adapting pedagogic innovations across disciplines

- Need for comprehensive, readily accessible, easy-to-use set of pedagogical resources for classroom teaching
What is Starting Point?

An economic pedagogic portal that seeks to:

- **Introduce economists** to innovative teaching strategies – within and beyond the disciplines
- **Provide tools** to integrate and assess research-based teaching strategies in classroom settings
- **Promote sharing** of teaching innovations and examples implementing these innovations
What is Starting Point?

Pedagogic Modules under development (16):

- Context-Rich Problems
- Just-in-Time Teaching
- Quantitative Writing
- Teaching with Cases
- Cooperative Learning
- Classroom Experiments
- Teaching with Computer Simulations
- Effective use of Personal Response Systems
- Interactive Demonstrations
- Undergraduate Research
- Interdisciplinary Approaches to Teaching
- Service Learning
- Spreadsheets Across the Curriculum
- Documented Problem Solving
- Using Media to Enhance Teaching and Learning
- Interactive Lectures

Why use Starting Point?

- Central location for comprehensive set of pedagogical resources
- Promoting the concept of a “teaching commons”
How can Instructors use Starting Point?

- Learning about specific **pedagogic techniques** and their use in **economics courses**
- Browsing the **teaching examples** library
What’s Different about Starting Point?

- Central location for pedagogical resources
- Extensive pedagogic topic coverage
- Grounded in the learning sciences
- Intentionally adapting innovations across disciplines
- Developed in interdisciplinary teams
- Dynamic, growing library of examples
- Content management system framework (modular and shareable)

When we Build it, will (you) they Come?

- Web-survey (Paul Grimes, November 2009)
- Results
  - Distribution of reported “teaching styles” - leaning toward lecture
  - 20% “not satisfied” with current approach to teaching
  - 46% experimented “extensively” with teaching practices in last five years
  - Varying degrees of familiarity with Starting Point pedagogies
  - Disciplinary colleagues and workshops reported as best sources of pedagogical knowledge

Summary: Significant potential for increasing pedagogical innovation through comprehensive web-based portal
Starting Point – An Example

Cooperative Learning

What is Cooperative Learning?
Cooperative learning can be contrasted with rote, in which cooperation among students is not required or even discouraged. In cooperative learning, students work as part of a team to solve a problem or complete an activity. Each student contributes to the group's success, and the group's success depends on the contributions of all members. This approach emphasizes teamwork, communication, and mutual support, which are important skills in the workplace and in life.

Why Use Cooperative Learning?
Extensive research has compared cooperative learning with traditional classroom instruction using the same or similar curricula and outcomes. On average:
- Students who engage in cooperative learning develop greater understanding, remember material longer, and develop better critical thinking skills than their counterparts in traditional lecture classes.
- Students in cooperative learning have higher traditional lecture classes, as they are more likely to attend classes and take exams.
- Students in cooperative learning develop the skills necessary to work on projects that are difficult and complex, as they are more likely to attend classes and take exams.
- Cooperative learning improves student attitudes and overall learning outcomes.

more information on cooperative learning