



ECONEdNEWS

Fall 2025

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT ...

Promoting Diversity with Role Models and Encouragement Intervention

Danila Serra,
Texas A&M University

Within the economics major, we face two pressing and related challenges: first, how to attract a more diverse set of students to the field; and second, how to support those students, particularly women and students from underrepresented minority (URM) backgrounds once they find themselves in classrooms where they are a small minority. A number of recent efforts to address both challenges have generated mixed results. These include informational interventions about earnings potential, job opportunities, and the diversity of researchers and topics in the field. Others have examined curricular changes in introductory courses or encouraging emails to women who perform well in principles classes, again with mixed findings. A review of recent interventions

is provided by Avilova and Goldin (2024).

One promising intervention comes from a study that Catherine Porter and I conducted at a small private university to test whether exposure to relatable female role models could increase women's interest in economics (Porter and Serra 2020). Two successful and charismatic female alumni, selected with help from female students, visited randomly assigned sections of Principles of Economics and gave 15-minute talks about their experiences studying economics and building their careers. Although the presentations made no mention of gender or underrepresentation, the impact was substantial. Treated women (but not men) were significantly more likely to continue in economics coursework and to declare the major. These effects

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NOTE FROM THE CHAIR

Tisha L. N. Emerson,
East Carolina University

Greetings! On behalf of the American Economic Association's Committee on Economic Education (AEA-CEE), I'm pleased to share the fall 2025 issue of *EconEdNews* with you. *EconEdNews* is our biannual newsletter highlighting resources for economic educators, all in support of our mission "to improve the quality of economics education at all levels."

Each year, the AEA-CEE organizes sessions at the Allied Social Science Associations (ASSA) Annual Meeting. For the 2026 meeting, we've organized seven economic education-focused sessions, including a hands-on AI workshop. Plans are also under way for the 2026 Conference on Teaching and Research in Economic Education (CTREE), which will be held May 27–29 in Las Vegas. The CTREE 2026 submission portal is open September 1–December 1, 2025. Mark your calendars, and plan to join us in 2026 for both the ASSA Annual Meeting and CTREE. You can learn more about these and other AEA-CEE activities on our [website](#).

Do You Have a Feature or Story Idea for EconEdNews?

Submit content ideas to the newsletter coordinator, **Emily Marshall**, at marshall@denison.edu. Topics may include an overview of a particular area of economic education research; resources on diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging; or other special features.



Photo: AEA Archive

Danila Serra, Texas A&M University, presented research on the importance of student intervention and encouragement as part of the ASSA 2025 session "Bridging the Gap: Increasing Representation of Women in the Economics Profession, from Students to Faculty."

translated into a nearly 90 percent increase in the likelihood of majoring in economics, with no loss in academic performance, suggesting that the intervention reached women with strong potential who had not considered economics as a viable path.

Replications at large public universities confirm the effectiveness of exposure to role models. Patnaik et al. (2023) replicated the intervention at a flagship public university, varying the gender of the role models. They found that gender-matching matters: Women respond only to female alumni, and men to male alumni. Karszen, Gitter, and Groves (2025) conducted a similar study at a nonflagship public university with 30 percent URM students, inviting primarily African American female alumni to participate. Role model exposure again improved persistence in economics, with the effects being strongest among URM students, suggesting that racial identity may have been more salient than gender identity in this setting.

While role model interventions can help open the door to economics, many students struggle with a lack of support once in the major. There is evidence that women and URM students often report lower levels of belonging, self-efficacy, and growth mindset (Bayer et al. 2020). Research shows that targeted interventions aimed at improving students' sense of belonging and growth mindsets can have long-term benefits for academic performance and emotional well-being (e.g., Walton and Cohen 2011; Yeager et al. 2019). In economics,

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a recent study by Carrell and Kurlaender (2023) shows that supportive and personalized emails from professors increase students' academic success, but these messages require significant faculty time.

In a recent study with Daniel Gomez-Vasquez (Gomez-Vasquez and Serra 2025), I test a scalable alternative: encouragement emails sent weekly by the economics department. The emails emphasized belonging, encouraged students to keep pushing and seek help when struggling, featured supportive notes from recent graduates (primarily women and URM students), and included attention-catching dog GIFs. Email engagement was

high: Students opened four emails on average (of six total sent). Importantly, compared to the no email control group, the intervention reduced course failures among women, especially URM women, and improved their emotional well-being and growth mindset.

Together, these interventions suggest that changing the trajectory of URM students in economics does not always require large-scale reforms. Exposure to relatable role models can inspire women and URM students to see economics as a viable path, and creating supportive environments once they are in the major can help them persist when they feel discouraged.

SPECIAL FEATURE

Boosting Student Engagement through Service Learning

Julia Paxton,
Ohio University

Many economics instructors face the challenge of fully engaging students and helping them envision the real-world relevance of economics, particularly in classes with heavy theoretical content. Service learning is a pedagogical tool that can bridge the gap between theory and practical applications. According to



Photo: Ohio University

Ohio University's Economics of Altruism class, along with Jim and Robin Burrow, presenting a grant to Integrated Services for Behavioral Health. Their donation will help ISBH provide a comprehensive array of behavioral health services in southeastern and central Ohio. Fellow grantees in 2025 were the Trimble Tomcat Bridgebuilders and Southeast Ohio Youth Mentoring.

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Jacoby (2015), to follow best practices, service learning courses should

- ▶ collaborate with a community partner
- ▶ work on a mutually beneficial project
- ▶ tie the service learning project to the curriculum
- ▶ require critical reflection activities

An early advocate for service learning in economics, McGoldrick (1998) argued for more experiential learning and reflection within economics education as it helps students better understand abstraction and application. The Economics of Altruism course at Ohio University is an introductory economics class that draws juniors and seniors from various majors. Each semester, the class makes real grants totaling \$30,000 to local nonprofit organizations, with funding evenly provided by Ohio University and the [Joe Burrow Foundation](#) (Paxton 2021). In class, students learn about the theoretical foundations of consumer behavior, behavioral

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economic explanations of altruistic behavior, and nonprofit analysis.

Leaders from the Joe Burrow Foundation and community experts come to class to help students understand a specific predetermined local issue, such as food insecurity or youth mental health. The class then writes a mission statement and sends out a Request for Proposals to local nonprofits working in the identified area. Students review the grant proposals, interview the nonprofit leadership, and analyze their financial statements. Students narrow the set of applications and vote on how the funds are divided among three finalists. The Joe Burrow Foundation

follows the recommendations of the class, saving it valuable staff time and providing it with a deeper analysis than usual.

Critical reflection helps students apply the theoretical underpinnings of the course to their experience. In their reflection journals, students in the Economics of Altruism course consider the role of information, cognitive biases, and opportunity cost in decision-making. Research shows that students master the information better, are more engaged, demonstrate a higher level of critical thinking, and enjoy the course more when service learning is used (Henderson 2018; Salam et al. 2019).

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND BELONGING

Active Learning Pedagogy for DEIB

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Active learning has been shown to improve student learning, academic performance, and critical-thinking skill development (e.g., Freeman et al. 2014). In Avery et al. (2024), we find that implementing active learning in recitation sections of large introductory economics courses also reduces the gender gap in performance.

These benefits came from a gender-neutral intention: pedagogical changes in recitations designed to improve learning outcomes in Introductory Microeconomics



and Macroeconomics. Prior to the changes, teaching assistants (TAs) primarily spent recitations reviewing previously completed homework involving brief and abstract problems. Interviews with students revealed that this structure left them feeling passive and uninspired. Motivated by evidence from STEM pedagogy research (Hmelo-Silver 2004), the new recitations instead involved students applying economics concepts to interesting-to-them real-world topics (e.g., concession prices at NFL stadiums in relation to demand

elasticity). Students worked on activities in small groups, as collaboration has been found to improve conceptual understanding (Chi and Wylie 2014) and mastery of complex skills (Kirschner, Paas, and Kirschner 2009) while also simplifying TAs' facilitation of the recitations.

Using institutional data of 8,727 students over nine semesters, we observe that these changes greatly reduce underperformance (relative to incoming performance and

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performance in other courses) of women in Introductory Microeconomics and eliminate it in Introductory Macroeconomics. While not the initial goal, these improvements in women's relative performance are particularly important in the face of underrepresentation of women in economics, with only one-third of bachelor's degrees in economics being earned by women (Siegfried 2024).

Why might these gender-neutral pedagogical changes have improved women's relative performance? The STEM pedagogy literature shows that active learning, particularly with a focus on real-world applications, increases the retention of women in male-dominated STEM disciplines (e.g., Lewis 2011; Rodriguez, Potvin, and Kramer 2016). Furthermore, the interactive, small-group element may have allowed students to build connections with their peers, which may be particularly important to women (Werner et al. 2005).

Faculty interested in modifying lectures or recitations to improve engagement, inclusivity, and support for women's success can easily modify existing lesson plans to incorporate this approach. Here, we describe our process for course revision, following the tenets of backward design (e.g., Wiggins and McTighe 2005):

- ▶ For each lesson, clearly define the learning objectives and select activities that support these goals. Consider how to ensure participation and scaffold student success. Written work that is handed in, either individually or as a group, encourages participation, even if only graded for completion.
- ▶ Activities should apply economics to novel situations that are relevant to the students and require analysis that utilizes higher-level thinking.

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It could include using mathematical economic models for problem-solving, applying these models to real-world economic situations, analyzing economic data, or practicing the application of economic concepts. Some examples include analyzing current events found in newspaper articles and videos, analyzing real economic data, participating in economic simulations and experiments, discussing readings, and analyzing case studies.

- ▶ For recitations taught by TAs, a well-written, detailed recitation plan should be provided, along with training on small-group facilitation. The plan should include clear and specific learning objectives for the class as well as a detailed guide

for leading the class; preparation before the recitation; an outline with guidelines for time to be spent on each task; and notes about possible pitfalls. Follow up with TAs after the recitations to identify any challenges they experienced.

While Avery et al. (2024) focus on gender equity, we find some evidence that racial minorities may also be differentially aided by these pedagogical changes. Miller-Cotto and Schunn (2022) find further evidence that underrepresented minorities perform better in Introductory Microeconomics with the updated recitations, helping to close performance gaps.

Example lesson plans are available at <https://www.malloryavery.com/lesson-plans>.

ACTIVE LEARNING PEDAGOGIES

Closing Math Gaps in Introductory Economics

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The George Washington University

Timothy Fenton,
The George Washington University

One primary challenge facing Principles of Economics ("Principles") students is the need to

master basic mathematics, a critical predictor of success in economics (Allgood, Walstad, and Siegfried 2015). This obstacle to success in Principles was intensified by SAT/ACT test-optional admissions policies (Fennell and Foster 2025; Kwak 2021) and learning losses associated with COVID-19 lockdowns (Flaherty

2024). At the George Washington University (GWU), high DFW (grades of D, F, or withdrawal) rates of more than 10 percent in Principles have been flagged as contributing to retention issues at the institution.

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The first step to address GWU's DFW rates was to identify students in need of math remediation. While research (Ballard and Johnson 2004; Mallik and Shankar 2016) shows that indicators such as SAT and ACT math scores are good predictors of student success in economics, a proctored math placement exam testing skills specifically needed for economics and disallowing calculator use is a better predictor (Fennell, College, and Foster 2019; Fennell and Foster 2021). One such placement test is the Math for Economics Skills Assessment (MESA) (Orlov et al. 2021).

The second step was to select a form of remediation. Students are often directed to math tutoring. While this may improve math scores, it may not improve economics exam scores at all (Lagerlöf and Seltzer 2009) or only partially (Pozo and Stull 2006). Mazzeo (2008) notes that students tend to be better able to apply their math knowledge/skills to a target subject, such as economics, if the math is taught in the context of that subject. Economics departments can provide “math-for-econ” training in several ways:

- ▶ An asynchronous online summer course/boot camp
- ▶ A synchronous in-person or online summer course/boot camp
- ▶ Embedding remediation in the Principles course along with core content
- ▶ A corequisite math class to be taken alongside Principles
- ▶ A one-semester prerequisite course prior to Principles

At GWU, we have found that students take remediation more seriously and learn more if it counts either as credit toward graduation or as part of their grade in Principles. Institutional constraints vary, and which option best suits a particular institution will depend on the number of students needing remediation, available resources, and the cost versus benefit of each approach at the institution.

For example, while an asynchronous online class may be more affordable and offer flexibility, an in-person synchronous class may be more engaging. Embedding

remediation in Principles may result in less time for Principles topics and frustrates both stronger and weaker students. Although the co- and prerequisite Principles class options are very effective in helping students (Kashyap and Mathew 2017), there may be administrative barriers to adoption due to the cost of developing and staffing the courses. Another drawback of the prerequisite option is that it delays students' progress to graduation by one semester. However, one could argue that many would be a semester behind anyway if they

fail Principles—and scarred in the process.

After experimenting with these approaches, the economics department at GWU decided to offer an in-person three-credit-hour prerequisite course for students needing remediation as determined by a proctored placement test. The class counts toward general education credits, fulfilling a math requirement. Helping students identify and close math gaps enables them to go into Principles with confidence, measurably improving their performance in the class (Foster et al. 2023).

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AEA Distinguished Economic Education Award

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

Nomination Deadline: October 1

www.aeaweb.org/go/aeacee-award



SPECIAL FEATURE

Literacy-Targeted Principles: An Inviting First Course

Phil Ruder,
Pacific University

The Literacy-Targeted Economic Principles (“LT”) course introduces students to a relatively small number of key concepts, aiming to develop their ability to apply these concepts to decisions throughout their personal, professional, and civic lives (Hansen, Salemi, and Siegfried 2002). The LT course has the twofold goal of (i) better serving the majority of the students who currently take the introductory course(s) but won’t continue in the discipline (Stock 2024) and (ii) attracting a larger and more diverse group of students to study economics. Benjamin, Cohen, and Hamilton (2020) describe the LT course as “Pareto-improving” because it serves “one-and-done” students better while preparing continuing students equally well for the intermediate courses.

Teaching fewer concepts in the LT course enables instructors to meet the challenge of teaching students to transfer the economic ideas under study to new situations. Goffe and Wolla (2024) draw on the cognitive science literature to demonstrate how the repeated and diverse application of just a few models can develop in students a deep understanding and long-term retention of economic concepts. Hoover and Washington (2024) note that the LT course can incorporate applications on topics such as gender, race, and climate change, which are often excluded from traditional introductory courses. Adding highly relevant issues to the LT course promises to attract more women and people of color to economics.

To achieve the goals of the LT course, Mark Maier and I recommend (in Maier and Ruder 2024) that instructors (i) pose real-world conceptual challenges in their assessments, (ii) incorporate frequent formative exercises, and (iii) adopt teaching approaches that emphasize learning through interaction with others in order to maximize student practice and provide immediate feedback on student efforts. For example, instructors could add low-stakes peer instruction (PI) exercises to lecture classes (Mazur 1997).



Peer Instruction classes give every student regular opportunities to apply the concepts under study and to receive immediate feedback on their efforts from both peers and the instructor.

Each segment of a PI class consists of seven elements:

- ▶ A short lecture
- ▶ A multiple-choice question posed to students that requires them to apply the concept under study
- ▶ Individual consideration of the question
- ▶ Collection of individual responses
- ▶ Simultaneous pairwise discussions between students with different answers
- ▶ Collection of revised student responses
- ▶ Explanation of the answer

PI classes give every student regular opportunities to apply the concepts under study and to receive immediate feedback on their efforts from both peers and the instructor. Writing assignments also develop advanced student understanding effectively, but they are often time-consuming to grade. Salemi (2005) and Maier

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and Ruder (2024) provide examples of writing assignments for the LT course that lead to student learning without requiring excessive grading effort by instructors.

CENTER AND COUNCIL DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Mississippi Council on Economic Education

The mission of the Mississippi Council on Economic Education (MCEE) is to increase economic and financial literacy in Mississippi by providing resources and training to K-12 educators, promoting workforce development, and empowering students to create a more prosperous future for themselves and Mississippi. For 23 years, this organization has taken pride in offering master teacher programs that take a deep dive into empowering teachers to offer high-quality instruction in economics, personal finance, entrepreneurship, and college and career readiness. Mississippi requires one semester each of economics and personal finance for high school graduation, increasing the necessity for



Selena Swartzfager

teacher preparation and training. The master teacher programs are each offered at least once per year and are led by university faculty, Federal Reserve Bank partners, and master teachers of economics and personal finance. Each program contains 75 content hours. Before the statewide launch of the Master Teacher of Economics program in 2006, research demonstrated its necessity and effectiveness (Grimes, Malia, and Thomas 2006). Evidence suggests that the level of knowledge gained by teachers and their students when a teacher completes the Master Teacher of Personal Finance program is worth the investment of money and time (Harter 2021). In addition, full-day workshops and webinars are offered to give bite-size lessons to educators. MCEE works closely with the Mississippi Department of Education to make sure that offerings are in line

with state standards. The council offers the Stock Market Game, Economics Challenge, and Personal Finance Challenge where students may earn cash prizes, college scholarships, and time in the limelight on Mississippi Public Broadcasting, where the quiz bowl rounds of the challenges are aired each August. All programming is offered at no financial cost to teachers and schools thanks to generous funding from partner organizations.

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Economic Education Resources from the Cleveland Fed

Jean Burson

The Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland's [Economic Scholars Program](#) provides a unique experiential learning opportunity for undergraduate students, taking them beyond the classroom into a research conference setting to facilitate their understanding of how professional economists advance their research. This hybrid one-day event, inspired by the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas's Economics Scholars Program (which was discontinued in 2024), engages faculty advisors who train participants on their various conference roles. Program dates are aligned with the academic calendar to allow students to coordinate their submission with the requirements of their coursework. Over the past four years, the program has expanded to include national and international participants.

In this student-driven program, participants apply to be peer reviewers, presenters, discussants, or session chairs. Qualified students apply to become members of the peer review



Photos: Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland

Fellow undergraduate students had the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback during the 2025 Economic Scholars Program research presentations.

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board, which acts as a scientific committee scoring research proposals according to a program rubric. Students receive training on preparing a conference-ready research proposal, and those selected by the board to present receive additional training on delivering an effective presentation. Student discussants assigned to each session are trained to provide constructive feedback to presenters, and session chairs are trained to manage the time and flow of each session.

This selective program is designed to build students' confidence in their potential as future economists. Participation offers them not only experience but also knowledge from current Federal Reserve economists and research analysts regarding potential career paths in economics. The program is an important way for



Photo: Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland

Economic Scholars Program 2025 panel discussion, "Perspectives on Careers in Economics," moderated by James Mitchell, vice president in the Research Department at the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland. Left to right: André Victor D. Ludovice, research economist; Dylan C. Jacobs, research analyst; Lara Loewenstein, senior research economist; and Christopher J. Walker, research analyst.

the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland to help expand the pipeline of future economists prepared to both

raise and address important policy questions through high-quality academic research. ■

ECONEVENTS

Information, Calls, Announcements,
and Sessions at Upcoming Meetings

The AEA Distinguished Education Award acknowledges [excellence in economic education](#) at a national level. Recipients are able to demonstrate a sustained and impactful contribution to several areas of economic education. These areas include teaching; the development of curriculum and pedagogy; scholarship of teaching and learning of economics; mentoring of students and young faculty; and service at the institutional, regional, and state levels. The award is conferred annually at the AEA-CEE's Friends of Economic Education Reception at the ASSA Annual Meeting. Please use [this form](#) to submit a nomination by October 1.

Economists at community colleges and anyone interested in community college economics instruction are invited to [subscribe to the newsletter Teaching Resources for Economics at Community Colleges](#). Published twice yearly, it features conference and workshop updates, interviews, teaching ideas, and suggestions for using FRED data. To subscribe, send your email address to mmaier@glendale.edu. To suggest or submit content, contact Brian Lynch at blynch@lakelandcollege.edu.

This year's National Economics Teaching Association (NETA) Conference, to be held November 5–7 in New Orleans, includes topics such as best teaching practices, current macroeconomic trends, and innovative engagement strategies for in-person and online teaching. Harvard University Professor of Economics Greg Mankiw will be delivering the keynote session.

The twenty-second annual University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW) Economics Teaching Conference is devoted to the teaching of economics and focuses on applicable ideas and information that can quickly be put to use in the classroom. The [one-day workshop](#) will include presentation and networking sessions during lunch and a happy hour. The 2025 workshop will be held October 25.

The fifteenth annual Conference on Teaching and Research in Economic Education (CTREE) will be held May 27–29, 2026, in Las Vegas. Plenary speakers include Peter Felton (Elon University) and Joe Price (Brigham Young University). Submissions will be accepted via the AEA [online submission system](#); the portal will open on September 1 and close on December 1.

The AEA-CEE is pleased to announce the Expanding Diversity in Undergraduate Classes with Advancements in (the) Teaching (of) Economics (EDUCATE) workshop to be held in conjunction with the 2026 CTREE in Las Vegas. The workshop will be conducted as a face-to-face and Canvas-supported workshop May 29–31, 2026. The application portal will open in January 2026 with a rolling acceptance procedure that continues until all workshop slots are filled. Final decisions will be made by May 1. Participants should expect to develop the abilities to do the following:

- ▶ Apply the scientific process so as to choose between competing evidence-based teaching practices that might have disparate effects on those of different races, genders, and ethnicities
- ▶ Analyze and evaluate how classroom climate, pedagogy, and assessment impact student behaviors and outcomes, recognizing that these impacts are heterogeneous
- ▶ Teach students to learn economics using some of the quantitative approaches employed by economists

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- ▶ Think critically about course goals and learning outcomes and their relationship to pedagogical choices and assessment, with special attention to enhancing diversity and inclusion
- ▶ Communicate motivations for, and outcomes of, teaching enhancement to diverse audiences

Workshop staff include Sam Allgood (University of Nebraska–Lincoln), Gerald Daniels (Howard University), Tisha Emerson (East Carolina University), Gail Hoyt (University of Kentucky), and KimMarie McGoldrick (University of Richmond).

At the Southern Economic Association Ninety-Fifth Annual Meeting, to be held **November 22–24** in Tampa, Florida, the Presidential Economic Education sessions will include topics such as teaching with experiments and simulations, generative AI in the economics classroom, pedagogy in economic education, teaching macroeconomics and policy, student academic mindset, assessment and incentives in economic education, student background and higher education, and competencies and experiential learning. One panel will also be conducted on improving efficiency and effectiveness in economic education with AI, Python, and R.

The twenty-third annual St. Louis Fed Professors Conference will be held **November 6–7** in St. Louis. The conference allows economic educators

an opportunity to learn about innovative classroom instruction and present their own novel techniques.

The Cleveland Federal Reserve Economic Scholars Program is an undergraduate **economics conference** for students to gain experience presenting in an academic setting and share their work. Applications will be accepted starting in January.

The University of Chicago's Expanding Discovery in Economics+ (EDE+) Summer Institute aims to increase the diversity of students majoring in economics and motivate them to persist in the field, either through graduate

study or a career. Students can apply for the 2026 Summer Institute beginning in fall 2025.

The AEA-CEE is sponsoring seven sessions at the ASSA Annual Meeting January 3–5, 2026, in Philadelphia. They are AI-Powered Teaching: A Workshop on Practical Strategies for Economics Educators; Difficult Conversations in the Economics Classroom; Research in Economic Education; Evolving Trends in Economics Majors: Demographic Shifts and Future Implications; The Intermediate Macroeconomics Course: Current Challenges and Future Directions; Civic Thought, Civil Society, and Economics; and a poster session. ■

SAVE THE DATE!



Allied Social Science Associations Annual Meeting

January 3-5, 2026 • Philadelphia, PA



www.aeaweb.org/conference/



ABOUT THE AEA-CEE



The **AEA-CEE** is a standing committee of the American Economic Association that has been in existence in one form or another since 1955. The mission of the committee is to improve the quality of economics education at all levels: precollege, college, adult, and general education.

The committee supports many activities of interest to the community of economic educators. It sponsors paper, panel, and poster sessions and workshops at the ASSA Annual Meeting. The committee also organizes the annual CTREE and the EDUCATE workshop. Resources supporting economic research and teaching are also housed on the committee's website and include information about **organizations that support economic education**, academic journals publishing economic education research, and resources for **changing course content or curriculum to appeal to a broad range of students**.

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