

Report of the Committee on Economic Education

The Committee sponsored two sessions at the 2003 ASSA meetings. Gregory Mankiw chaired the first session on “Preparing and Improving the Economics Teacher.” It included three papers that are published in this issue of the *Papers and Proceedings*. The paper by William Walstad and William Becker reported the results from a survey of all Ph.D.-granting economics departments on the instructional use and teaching preparation of graduate students. The paper by Michael Salemi described a model program for providing teacher education for graduate students in economics based on experiences at several universities. The paper by Rae Jean Goodman, Mark Maier, and Robert Moore explained how regional workshops on teaching are used to improve the instructional skills of economics faculty. KimMarie McGoldrick, Stephen Buckles, and Thomas Husted served as discussants for the session.

The second session focused on “Outcomes Assessment in Undergraduate Economics” and was chaired by William Becker. The paper by Paul Grimes, Meghan Millea, and Thomas Woodruff studied the influence of student perceptions of internal and external control on their evaluations of teaching in a Macro Principles course. The second paper by Joseph Santos and Angeline Lavin assessed student outcomes from a money and banking course that included an economics research component for undergraduates. The third paper by William Bosshardt investigated the factors affecting student drops and failures in Principles courses. The fourth paper by Wayne Grove and Tim Wasserman examined factors associated with changes in grades during an undergraduate education for an initial cohort of Principles students. The session discussants were William Becker, Masanori Hashimoto, Kim Sosin, and Gary Fournier. These papers will be published in a future issue of the *Journal of Economic Education*.

The Committee continues to believe that teaching-methods workshops provide a valuable service to Association members, so for the seventh year, the Committee sponsored a one-day teaching workshop as part of the AEA program at the ASSA meetings. There were

three workshops. In the first workshop, Myles Boylan and Mary Huber made presentations on funding for projects to advance the teaching and learning of economics. The session included poster contributions on funded teaching projects from eight economics professors: Anne Bresnock (“SimEcon: Economic Issues and Principles”); Charles Holt (“Veconlab”); Sheryl Ball and Catherine Eckel (“Classroom Experiments for Large Lecture Courses: A Wireless Solution”); Scott Simkins (“Just in Time Teaching”); Tod Porter (“An Internet Simulation for Microeconomics”); Rochelle Ruffer (“Identifying Conceptual Problems in Principles of Microeconomics”); and, Laurence Malone (“Peer Critical Learning in Microeconomic Principles”). Mark Maier chaired the session.

The second workshop focused on web games and strategy—recipes for interactive learning in economics. Laura Razzolini served as chair for the session. Charles Holt and Lisa Anderson made presentations at this technology-based workshop.

The third workshop, organized by Rae Jean Goodman and Mark Maier, was entirely devoted to poster presentations of teaching ideas. The session included 14 contributions from 20 economics professors: Calvin Blackwell (“Eliciting Information from Students in an Incentive Compatible Manner”); Marcelo Clerici-Arias and Mark Tendall (“Using an Automated Student Response System in the Classroom”); Donald Coffin (“An Industry-Based Course in Introductory Microeconomics”); Maya Federman (“Small Group Discussions”); Alan Haight (“The Grade Tax: A Civics Lesson”); Gail Mitchell Hoyt, Rachel Lange, and Christine Lloyd (“A Dramatic Change for the Dismal Science: Using Dramatic Presentations in a Microeconomics Principles Course”); Brooks Kaiser and Charles Weise (“A Financial System for Principles Courses”); Jennifer Keil (“Pre and Post Knowledge Check in Microeconomics Principles”); Peter Kressler and Christine Johnston (“Innovative Teaching: What Is the Missing Link”); Robert Moore (“A Different Introductory Economics Sequence”); Steven

Myers and Michael Nelson (“Teaching Economics on the Web—A Study of Student Success”); Nichols Noble (“A Service Learning Project in a Principles of Economics Course”); Robert Rycroft (“Estimating a Plane: Economics in the Third Dimension”); and Michael Salemi (“Organizing and Conducting Regional Teaching Workshops”).

The purpose of the last poster was to highlight another CEE initiative, a project to provide matching funding for regional workshops to improve the teaching of economics. Eight workshop proposals received matching funding in 2002 from a Kazanjian Foundation grant that is administered by Michael Salemi and William Walstad. The 2002 workshops were conducted at Bowling Green University, the Midwest Economic Association meetings, U.S. Naval Academy, the Western Economic Association meetings, Idaho State University, University of Richmond (held in Wilmington, NC), University of Memphis, and Claremont-McKenna College. A total of 255 faculty members attended the workshops. The evaluation results showed that the participants gave a very positive rating to the experience (73 percent rated them as a better use of their time than the alternative, and 23 percent rated them as just as good a use of their time as the alternative). This project will be continued for 2003 with additional funding from the Kazanjian Foundation. Information on workshop opportunities can be found at the Committee web site.

In May 2000, a Research Projects Conference was sponsored by the Committee to prepare proposals to advance economic education. A total of \$675,000 in funding was secured for three projects: (1) long-term effects of learning

economics; (2) efficiency in the use of technology in economic education; and (3) a study of Ph.D. education in economics. Research papers from these three projects will be presented at the 2004 ASSA meeting.

This past summer the Committee cooperated with the *Journal of Economic Education* and the National Council on Economic Education to establish an electronic journal for working papers in economic education. It is called the *Economics Research Network Educator*, and the editor is William Becker. *ERN Educator* is part of the Social Science Research Network (SSRN) to which many economists subscribe.

The Committee continues to track the number of bachelor’s degrees conferred in economics. The data that John Siegfried collects from the AEA Universal Questionnaire show that the number of economics majors continues to rise above the trough-levels reached in 1995–1996. The number of B.A. degrees in economics awarded in 2001–2002 was 12 percent higher than in 2000–2001, 33 percent higher than in the 1995–1996 trough, but only 93 percent of the total in 1991–1992, the date of the cycle’s peak. More detailed information on the survey results is available in a forthcoming report (Siegfried, *Journal of Economic Education*, Summer 2003).

Information about the Committee on Economic Education and its activities is available on the World Wide Web by connecting to the American Economic Association web page at www.vanderbilt.edu/AEA and choosing the “Committee” option.

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