

Report of the Committee on Economic Education

In May 2000, a Research Projects Conference was sponsored by the AEA Committee on Economic Education (CEE). Selected research papers from three funded projects were presented at the first CEE paper session at the 2004 ASSA meetings. Paul Romer chaired this session on "Recent Research in Economic Education." The paper by Kim Sosin, Betty Blecha, Rajshree Agrawal, Robin Bartlett, and Joe Daniel reports on the cost-effectiveness of using technology to improve college economics instruction. The paper by Sam Allgood, William Bosshardt, Wilbert van der Klaauw, and Michael Watts presents a long-term effects study using survey and transcript data from four universities to investigate student remembrances and opinions of college economics years after graduation. The paper by W. Lee Hansen and Wendy Stock studies the match between the perceptions of graduate training by recent Ph.D. graduates and the desired skills and proficiencies sought in graduate education in economics. Michael Murray, Michael Salemi, and William Becker served as discussants for the session. The three papers are published in this issue of the *Papers and Proceedings*.

The second CEE paper session focused on "Economic Education and Journalism." It was organized by Dan Hamermesh and chaired by William Becker. The paper by R. Glenn Hubbard discusses the role that an academic economist can serve as a public intellectual in government or business. The second paper by Klaus Zimmerman describes his experiences in advising policymakers through the news media in Europe. The third paper by Hal Varian explains the academic path that led him to become a columnist for *The New York Times* and the activities he undertakes to prepare such a column. The fourth paper by Daniel S. Hamermesh offers a media guide for economists so that they can increase the value of the economic content they provide through the media. The session discussants were Michael Mandel, and Paul Solman. These papers will likely be published in a future issue of the *Journal of Economic Education*.

The Committee continues to believe that teaching-methods workshops provide a valu-

able service to association members, so for the eighth year, the Committee sponsored a one-day teaching workshop as part of the AEA program at the ASSA meetings. There were three workshops. The first workshop session included five poster contributions on teaching to literacy in the Principles of Economics course: (1) Strategies for teaching to literacy in the Principles course: An overview (Michael Salemi); (2) Using position papers to assess economic reasoning skills and knowledge (Kay Strong); (3) Active learning: Innovations from undergraduate courses at the open university (Paul Anand, Graham Dawson, Chris Downs, Ian Fribbance, and Mariana Mazzucato); (4) Promoting economic literacy through information literacy in introductory economics classes (Aju Fenn, Robin Satherwhite, David Schodt, and Jonathan Powers); and (5) On the active learning curve: Using experiments and activities in the Principles class (David Eaton). Michael Salemi organized and chaired this workshop session.

The second workshop focused on using experiments to teach new concepts and theories in the Principles class. Laura Razzolini served as chair for the session. Lisa Anderson and Charles Holt made presentations at this active-learning workshop.

The third workshop, organized by Rae Jean Goodman and Mark Maier, was entirely devoted to poster presentations of teaching ideas. The session included six interesting contributions from nine economics professors: (1) Active communication (E. B. Gendel); (2) Enhancing student reading of scholarly articles (Steven Greenlaw); (3) Using computer-based technology for teaching game theory in a constructivist way (Carsten Lange and Amy Baylor); (4) Oxford's interbeing project: Employing Eastern perspectives to teach principles of economics (Frank Mattox); (5) Six ways to use existing technology to enhance student learning and reduce faculty time (Steven Myers); and (6) Student quantitative literacy: Importance, measurement and correlation with economic literacy (Peter Schuhmann, KimMarie McGoldrick, and Robert Burrus).

For the first time, the CEE sponsored a program for high-school teachers of economics as part of the ASSA meeting. This program is conducted in cooperation with the National Council on Economic Education with the assistance of Robert Duvall, Claire Melican, and John Morton from that organization. The program included an opening breakfast session for high-school teachers, a special ASSA program listing that identified sessions of particular interest to high-school teachers, an evening reception, and a dinner meeting. Dan Hamermesh from the CEE gave a talk on "Economics as a Way of Life" at the dinner meeting. The CEE expects to sponsor a similar program for high-school teachers at the 2005 ASSA meeting.

Another CEE initiative is a three-year project to provide matching funding for regional workshops that are held at colleges and universities to improve the teaching of economics. In 2003, nine workshop proposals received matching funding from a grant provided by the Kazanjian Foundation. The workshops were conducted at Montana State University, Bowling Green University, the Western Economic Association meetings, the U.S. Naval Academy, Idaho State University, the University of Richmond and the University of North Carolina–Wilmington (held in North Carolina), Claremont-McKenna College, the University of Akron, and the Southern Economic Association meetings. A total of 337 faculty members attended the workshops in 2003 and gave a very positive rating to the experience (74 percent rated them as a better use of their time than the alternative, and 24 percent rated them as just as good a use of their time as the alternative). A total of 777 economics faculty members attended 24 regional workshops over the three years (2001–2003) of this program.

The new teaching project the CEE is co-sponsoring builds on its past teacher training programs and regional workshop activities. The proposal for "Interactive Teaching in Undergraduate Economics Courses" will be funded by the National Science Foundation for \$675,000 over five years and has three phases. In Phase 1,

faculty participants will attend instructional workshops where they will work in teams to learn about interactive learning strategies and materials. In Phase 2, faculty members will return to their home institutions and receive online instruction to help them use the new teaching strategies they learned at the workshops. In Phase 3, they will have opportunity to advance the scholarship of teaching and learning in economics by sharing teaching experiences, writing papers, and attending meetings on teaching. The principal investigators for this project are William Walstad, Michael Salemi, and Robin Bartlett. They will be aided in their work by many economics faculty with special expertise in teaching.

The CEE continues to cooperate with the *Journal of Economic Education* and the National Council on Economic Education on providing an electronic journal for working papers in economic education. The *Economics Research Network Educator* or *ERN Educator* is part of the Social Science Research Network (SSRN) to which many economists subscribe.

The CEE tracks 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 the mid-1990's. The number of B.A. degrees in economics awarded in 2002–2003 was 14 percent higher than in 2001–2002 based on a large sample from 131 institutions, and is now 96 percent of the total number of degrees awarded 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 2004).

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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