

## Report of the Committee on Economic Education

The Committee presented six sessions at the 2008 ASSA meetings in New Orleans. A session on “Assessment of Economics in US High Schools and Undergraduate Programs” was organized by Michael Watts (Purdue) and chaired by Wendy Stock (Montana State). The first paper in the session, by William Walstad (Nebraska-Lincoln) and Stephen Buckles (Vanderbilt), provides the first analysis of determinants of student performance on the first National Assessment in Educational Progress (NAEP) exam in economics. The second paper, by Walstad and Ken Rebeck (St. Cloud State) analyzes national norming data from a new edition of the Test of Understanding in College Economics (TUCE). The third paper, by Georg Schaur (Tennessee-Knoxville), Watts, and William Becker (Indiana), presents national survey data on assessment methods used by economists in four different types of undergraduate courses. Discussants for these papers, which are published in this issue of the *AER*, were Alan Krueger (Princeton), Stock, and Tisha Emerson (Baylor).

The second session was a panel discussion on “What Should Be the Core of Graduate Economics?” organized by David Colander (Middlebury). The panel members were Edward Glaeser (Harvard), Susan Athey (Harvard), Bo Honoré (Princeton), Blake LeBaron (Brandeis), Michael Woodford (Columbia), and Derek Neal (Chicago).

The third session featured papers selected from a call for papers on “Undergraduate Economics Courses and Majors,” organized and chaired by Watts. The papers presented were: “30,000 Principles Students: Some Lessons Learned,” by Ken Elzinga and Daniel Melaugh (both at Virginia); “Weathering the Perfect Storm or Thriving in a New Environment: Assessing a Proficiency-Based Economics Major,” by Steven Myers, Michael Nelson, and Richard Stratton (all at Akron); and “The Economics Classroom without Grades: Promoting a Learning Environment by De-emphasizing Grades,” by Lester Hadsell (SUNY-Oneonta). Discussants for these papers were Colander, Buckles, and Mary Ellen Benedict (Bowling Green).

Rich MacDonald of the National Council on Economic Education (NCEE) and Walstad organized a session on “K-12 Economic and Financial Literacy.” The papers in this session were: “District Level Mandates and High School Students’ Understanding of Economics,” by Paul Grimes, Meghan Millea, and Kathleen Thomas (all of Mississippi State); “Is Financial Literacy Improved by Participating in a Stock Market Game? Preliminary Results,” by Cynthia Harter and John Harter (both at Eastern Kentucky); “Measuring the Effects of the *Financial Fitness for Kids* Program for Early Elementary School Students in Chicago,” by Helen Roberts (Illinois-Chicago); and “Establishing State Specific Benchmarks in Economic Education,” by Roger Butters and Tammie Fischer (both at Nebraska-Lincoln). Discussants in this session were Jane Lopus (California State-East Bay), George Vredeveld (Cincinnati), James O’Neil (Delaware), and William Bosshardt (Florida Atlantic).

As in the past 11 years, the Committee sponsored sessions of teaching workshops as part of the ASSA program. The first of these sessions was organized by KimMarie McGoldrick (Richmond) and chaired by Michael Salemi (North Carolina). The papers presented were: “Formative and Summative Assessment in Economics Principles Courses: Are Applied Group Exercises Effective?” by Dagny Faulk (Indiana Southeast), “Student Effort, Feedback about Their Effort, and Learning,” by Wayne Grove (Lemoyne) and Jerry Evensky (Syracuse); “Using Cooperative Learning to Enhance Student Research and Writing,” by Gail Heyne Hafer (St. Louis Community Meramec); and “Engaged Learning with the Interpretive Question Cluster Discussion Technique: Student Outcomes in a History of Economic Thought Course,” by Kirsten Madden (Millersville). Discussants for these papers were Yu-Mong Hsiao (Campbell), Tom Scheiding (Elizabethtown), Brian Peterson (Central), and Judy Smrha (Baker).

The second teaching workshop was the annual poster session, organized by Stock, with a record 27 presentations by: G. Dirk Mateer (Penn State); Mine Cinar (Loyola-Chicago); Pródromos Prodromídís (Centre of Planning

and Economic Research-Athens); Charles Rock (Rollins); K. K. Fung (Memphis); Joshua Hall (West Virginia–Morgantown), Robert Lawson (Capital), and G. Dirk Mateer (Penn State); Nancy Brooks (Vermont); James Bruehler and Linda Ghent (both at Eastern Illinois); Osman Gulseven (North Carolina State–Raleigh); Holly Fretwell (Montana State), Noreen Lephardt (Marquette), and Robert Reinke (South Dakota); Rebecca Summary (Southeast Missouri State); Laura Shinn (Temple); Marilyn Cottrell (Brock); Johnnie Linn III (Concord); Catherine Lawson and Larry Lawson (both at Missouri Western State); Tom Creahan (Morehead State); Steven Myers (Akron); Jay Corrigan (Kenyon); Gwendolyn Morrison (Indiana–Purdue at Indianapolis), Gene Beyt (Tulane), Thomas Inui (Rengengrief Institute), and Debra Litzelman (Indiana-Indianapolis); Carsten Lange (California State Polytechnic–Pomona); Lynn Hunnicutt and Karen Travis (both at Pacific Lutheran); John Crooker (Central Missouri); John Kane (SUNY-Oswego); Zhifang Peng (Southern Illinois); Yelena Takhtamanova (Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco); Mike Allgrunn, David Carr, and Robert Reinke (all at South Dakota); and Barb Bloemhof (McMaster).

For the fourth time the Committee offered a continental breakfast for departmental directors of undergraduate studies in economics, to provide an opportunity to discuss issues of concern and share information. The session was organized by Paul Romer (Stanford) and McGoldrick.

The Committee sponsors the “Teaching Innovations Program” (TIP) for faculty members in economics, funded by a \$675,000 grant over five years from the National Science Foundation and co-directed by William Walstad and Michael Salemi. The project began in 2005 and features ten workshops (two per year) on interactive teaching strategies. The 2007 workshops were held in Santa Barbara and Boston, with 66 participants. The workshop staff included Salemi, Pat Conway, Denise Hazlett, Mark Maier, and McGoldrick. The 2008 workshops will be held in San Antonio and Chapel Hill. The second phase of the program involves on-line instruction for participants after they attend the workshops, to help them apply the strategies in undergraduate courses. On-line Blackboard modules have been developed on assessment, case studies, classroom experiments, context-rich problems,

cooperative learning, discussion, and interactive strategies for large classes. Participants who complete two of these modules receive a Certificate of Achievement from the Committee; the recipients of certificates awarded in 2008 are listed at the end of this report. In Phase III of TIP, participants have opportunities to advance the scholarship of teaching and learning in economics. One session at the 2008 ASSA meetings, described above, was organized by Salemi and McGoldrick. Other sessions organized by the TIP staff were presented at the 2007 Western and Southern Economic Association meetings. A home page on TIP with information on how to apply for workshops has been posted at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/AEA/AEACEE/TIP.htm>.

In November 2006, the Teagle Foundation awarded a grant of \$74,500 to the Committee to investigate the purpose and practice of economic education, and especially the undergraduate major in economics, in relation to the goals of a liberal education. David Colander and KimMarie McGoldrick serve as the co-principal investigators and developed a preliminary draft of a white paper that was first reviewed by a subset of Committee members in January 2007. Revised versions of the report were then discussed at small conferences held at Middlebury College in May 2007 and at the University of Richmond in October 2007. Recommendations from the report will be presented at various regional and national meetings through 2008. A summary of the final report, with reactions from a panel of prominent economists who have served as college and university administrators, will be featured at a session of the 2009 ASSA meetings, and are tentatively slated for publication in the May 2009 *AER Papers and Proceedings*.

A Committee proposal to offer training on advanced econometric methods in economic education research is currently under review at the National Council on Economic Education.

Since the founding of the *Journal of Economic Education (JEE)* in 1969, the Committee and *JEE* have partnered on many research projects, training programs, conferences, and other projects of mutual interest. William Becker, the current *JEE* editor, serves as an *ex officio* member of the Committee. In January 2009, with *JEE* co-sponsorship, the Committee plans to host a small conference that will compare

precollege and undergraduate economic education initiatives and research in four other nations (Australia, Japan, Korea, and the United Kingdom), where there are relatively “mature” and extensive programs, to current US practice. Several papers from the conference are expected to be published in *JEE*.

The Committee annually tracks the number of bachelor’s degrees conferred in economics. Data collected from a preliminary and partial sample of 98 departments that have responded to the AEA Universal Questionnaire each year from 1991 to 2006 show the number of degrees awarded in 2006–2007 dropping slightly, as it did in 2005–2006. Those small declines follow seven years in which the number of degrees awarded increased, by a cumulative total of roughly 65 percent. The share of degrees earned by women also dropped slightly in 2006–2007, again for the second consecutive year. These declines are so small, however, that the summary view for both the number of degrees awarded over the past three years, and the share awarded

to women, is that they have been essentially flat. More detailed information will be provided in a forthcoming report (John Siegfried, *Journal of Economic Education*).

Every member of the Committee was called on to provide time and service to the Committee over the past year, and they generously answered that call. For their commitment and support, I sincerely thank William Becker, David Colander, Kenneth Elzinga, Ben Friedman, William Greene, Alan Krueger, KimMarie McGoldrick, Paul Romer, and Wendy Stock. Staff members at the National Council on Economic Education, including NCEE President Robert Duvall, are also regular participants in the Committee meetings, and the NCEE regularly co-sponsors various Committee projects.

Current information about the Committee on Economic Education and its activities is available at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/AEA/AEACEE/index.htm>.

Respectfully submitted,  
MICHAEL WATTS, *Chair*

#### RECIPIENTS OF 2008 TIP CERTIFICATES OF ACHIEVEMENT

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Joann Bangs, College of Saint Catherine  
Gerald Baumgardner, Pennsylvania College of  
Technology  
Kate Silz Carson, US Air Force Academy  
Xiaofen Chen, Truman State University  
Michael Curme, Miami University  
Craig Heinicke, Baldwin-Wallace College  
Kristen Madden, Millersville University  
Shremoy Mishra, Oberlin College  
Robert Moore, Occidental College

Sean Mulholland, Moravian College  
Brian Peterson, Central College  
Chris Phillips, Somerset Community College  
Roisin O’Sullivan, Smith College  
Robert Rebelein, Vassar College  
Thomas Scheiding, Saint Louis University  
Judith Smrha, Baker University  
Andrew Tucker, Tallahassee Community College  
Geoffrey Woglom, Amherst College  
Richard Wood, Stetson University