Assessing Economics Instruction: Learning Goals and Senior Surveys

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The Department of Economics

Learning Goals

- Economic Literacy
- Economic Numeracy
- Economic Citizenship
- Economic Scholarship

(details attached)

Learning Goals for Economics Majors

Economic Literacy – Students who complete the major in economics should understand and be able to articulate, both orally and in writing, the core economic principles, concepts and theories that form the foundation for modern economic analysis and economic research.

Economic Numeracy - Students who complete the economics major should be familiar with the tools, techniques and methods of empirical economics. They should be able to analyze data using computer applications and should be familiar with regression methods and other statistical techniques. They should be able to read and assess general interest articles on economic topics. In addition, they should be able to understand and evaluate key findings in published economic research from a wide range of sources including academic economists, public policy 'think tanks,' and government agencies.

Economic Citizenship - Upon completion of the major students should be able to apply their understanding of core concepts and quantitative tools to analyze and research real world problems and evaluate alternative economic policy proposals on microeconomic and macroeconomic issues.

Economic Scholarship – Qualified majors should have an opportunity through such avenues as advanced coursework, faculty interactions, national and local competitions and honors courses and programs to utilize up-to-date methodological tools and become fully engaged in economic research and issues on the frontier of economics.

Course Learning Goals – Intro Micro

- Meaning and relevance of basic economic concepts: opportunity costs, positive and normative economics, scarcity, tradeoffs, comparative advantage, marginal analysis, efficiency and equity, and market failure. And
1. How to use the basic supply and demand model to understand how markets work.
2. How elasticity is calculated and its relevance to understanding markets.
3. How to analyze consumer behavior with respect to decisions about consumption, savings and employment.
4. How to analyze decisions firms make about pricing, output, employment and investment.

Intro Micro - Continued

5. How to analyze the behavior of firms in alternative market structures including perfect competition, monopoly, monopolistic competition and oligopoly.
6. How to use the concepts of equity and efficiency to analyze and evaluate government policies in such areas as tax policy, environmental policy, etc.
7. How to apply economic concepts and ideas to situations not specifically covered in class.

Intro Macroeconomics

Students who satisfactorily complete Introduction to Macroeconomics will:

- understand and be able to articulate the core principles, concepts and theories of modern macroeconomics (the basic aggregate demand and supply model, the multiplier, the Keynesian, Classical and Monetarist models, the open-economy macro model, neo-classical and new growth theory, etc).
- begin to develop the ability to interpret and analyze economic data such as aggregate output, inflation, unemployment and growth rates.
- Through lectures, discussions, assignments and readings students will become familiar with the theoretical framework of macroeconomics and learn to apply it to the analysis of macroeconomic policy issues.
- Students will also get smarter and more interesting.

Why Course Goals?

- Teaching by objectives
- Consistency
- Planning, assessment, change within Department
- Core Curriculum

You Gotta Have Goals
Assessing Attainment of the Department and Course Learning Goals

- Mapping Exams into goals
- Student Survey
- Standardized Test - ETS

The Economics Department Senior Survey

- Tenth consecutive exit survey of graduating economics majors - 54.6% response rate
- Anonymous, online survey - grades, employment status, graduate education plans, suggestions
- Student assessment of the undergraduate economics program, and achievement of the department’s learning objectives
- Used by the department’s curriculum and assessment committee as part of ongoing assessment of courses and program

Articulation with Core Curriculum Goals

Survey Assessment Results - Goals

- 95% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they had achieved economic literacy in microeconomics and macroeconomics
- 91% agreed that they had economic ‘numeracy’
- 78% felt exposed to economic research
- 60% actively engaged in research
- Also

Closing the Loop

- Instructors, Curriculum Committee, the Department
- Changes in courses, department requirements
- Trade-offs

Survey Assessment Results - Program Satisfaction

- 85.9% of our students were pleased with the major
  - pleased had average gpa of 3.26 compared to 2.81 average gpa among those not pleased
- 83.7% felt that they learned useful material in the courses
- 79.4% found the major challenging
  - average economics gpa of those who did not feel challenged was .35 points higher
- 76% found the instruction in the major excellent/good
Survey Forms and Results

- Attached and available upon request

Assessment and Learning

Future Plans?