

PROGRAM REVIEW 2008-2011

Division: Social Sciences and Humanities

Department: Economics

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I. Description and Mission of the Program

Our program addresses: X Basic Skills X Transfer

- A. We provide instruction in the Principles of Economics series, including Macroeconomics (Economics 1) and Microeconomics (Economics 2). Additionally, an Economics Issues class is taught during Winter Quarter.

Since the principles series is a requirement for those seeking a 4-year business degree, an important outcome of our courses is to prepare business majors for their upper division business coursework.

Additionally, those choosing a 4-year economics degree must master the principles series before going on to any of their upper division coursework.

We also provide for general education with our focus on the economic foundations of social systems.

- B. Our principles courses transfer to all major 4 year colleges and universities through our articulation agreements. In regard to general education, we help students become aware of the enormity of economic forces in society, and the effects of these forces on their own lives.

Our faculty represents a broad range of ethnicities and professional backgrounds. Their collective experience in markets, private, and public sectors in many different societies and cultures throughout the world allow for unique learning opportunities for their students.

In offering over 100 sections of principles classes during the course of an academic year, we are one of the largest economics departments in the United States.

- C. The transition of many of our sections into the "smart" classrooms in S-55 and S-56 has resulted in a measurable improvement in student learning, across all ethnicities, genders and age levels. We would like to see the remaining sections scheduled into "smart" classrooms on an on-going basis.

We would also like to see improvements in student success rates among all demographic categories.

We continue to explore audiovisual materials that are content specific to improve student learning outcomes.

D. Economics 1:

Economics 1 is a beginning theory course in Macroeconomic Principles. In general, this is economic analysis of the theory of income determination. In specific, related topics include the nature of resources, demand and supply analysis, national income analysis, business fluctuations, the consumption functions, the multiplier, fiscal policy, money and banking, monetary policy, economic growth and development, international economics and comparative economic systems.

Economics 2:

Economics 2 is a beginning theory course in microeconomic principles. A central concept in microeconomics is the theory of price determination in a market society, and during the course of the quarter we will cover: the nature of resources, demand and supply analysis, demand elasticity, consumer and producer behavior, the theory of production, the determination of production costs, market functioning under various degrees of competition, pricing of the factors of production, and the role of government in a market society.

II. Retention and Growth

- A. During the 3 year period from 2005-2008, the economics program has produced significant gains in access, growth and retention.

Total enrollments have increased 9.6%, to 4,359 in 2008 from 3978 in 2005. WSCH has risen 9.5%, and productivity is up by 8.2%. Our classes are now filling to capacity each quarter, with large waiting lists during the most popular times, and there remains a large unserved student population.

Our student retention rates have also improved, rising to 87% in 2008 from 83% in 2005.

- B. While the enrollment of targeted group students has fallen slightly in the past 3 years (645 to 614), our retention rates for that group have improved from 77% to 83%. This is somewhat faster than the improvement in retention rates for all ethnic groups during the same three year period, which has risen from 83% to 87%. Targeted group enrollment in 2008 represents about 14% of our total enrollment.
- C. Certainly, our retention and success rates have a great deal to do with the basic skills preparation possessed by our students. We build on basic skills with vocabulary terms, writing, and numeracy applications.

As a subject, economics involves a unique integration of both qualitative and quantitative reasoning, and it is likely that when our students come to us, basic skills are not evenly distributed within the class. Improvement here is likely to be the single most significant factor in contributing to our equity goals and student success rates.

III. Student Equity

- A. During the 2005-2008 period under review, our success rates have experienced improvement, among both targeted group and all ethnic groups populations.

For all ethnic groups, success rates rose from 70% to 73%, while non-success rates rose slightly from 13% to 14%. The rate of improvement for the targeted group was faster than for all ethnic groups as a whole, rising from 56% to 62%. The non-success rates for the targeted group fell slightly from 22% to 21%.

Clearly, improvement has been achieved in reducing the equity gap of the targeted group, while improving success rates of all students simultaneously. The economics department faculty can take a measure of satisfaction in their work in this regard, through the use of the methods indicated in our last program review document.

- B. While improving, targeted group success rates are still below those of all ethnic groups. Further improvement should be facilitated by:
1. Faculty taking extra time to encourage targeted group students with special attention.
 2. Early intervention when test performance is lagging.
 3. Getting tutorial help for targeted group students, and continuing to recruit high-performing targeted group students to serve as tutors and thus role models and mentors for other targeted group students.
 4. As many students seem unsure of their purpose and goals in college (uncommitted), we want to emphasize the idea that they are investing in themselves for a brighter personal future. Students develop a more committed attitude when they become aware of the rather large differences in expected lifetime earnings between those who have completed a four-year degree program and those who have not, and we will continue to make them aware of this information.
 5. As a group, our faculty are enthusiastic and use a variety of instructional methods and styles so as to reach students who themselves learn in different ways.
- C. With our courses offerings fully subscribed, waiting lists, and no new sections being offered, our department is unlikely to increase its enrollment totals.

Obstacles to achieving our equity goals are reduced when faculty, on a daily basis, look for the opportunities to implement the strategies that seem to have brought success over this last 3 year review period.

IV. Budget Limitations

- A. Securing "smart" classrooms, and the maintenance of the equipment therein, are key to further improvement in the

quality of our program. Faculty should remember to close and lock the doors of the classrooms when class is over, lest equipment disappear and put greater budget limitations on us all.

- B. Significant reductions (or elimination) of the economics department courses would cause great injury to our community's understanding of the economic forces around them.

Students would have to find another way of satisfying the requirements for the principles series at the 4 year schools, and this would likely delay or prevent them from achieving their educational goals. Hardest hit would be low income students and their families.

Moreover, our productivity figures demonstrate that the economics program generates a large profit (revenues produced over costs) for our college. Among college segments, our productivity is among the highest. Reductions in our offerings would not be in the college's financial interests.

V. Additional Comments

A. Initiatives:

1. Members of The Economics Department participate each quarter in the Social Science Division "CAR" project.
2. With the direction of Ravjeet Singh, we now have a website for our department available to the public.
3. The department has been a participant in the "Parent Night" events.
4. Adjunct faculty participate broadly in the office hours program, improving their accessibility to students.

- B. Relationship with Other Programs: We continue to strengthen our ties to the major 4 year institutions for articulation agreements. This has been a major factor in the improvements over these past three years in our enrollment advances and productivity gains. It is vital that our transfer schools have confidence that our students receive the same instruction and information as is contained in the articulated courses, and that they emerge from De Anza with that knowledge.

Should our students be inadequately prepared here at De Anza, they will not fair well in the upper division classes they must take after transfer. The personal contact that I and other members of the economics department have with the economists at our major transfer schools do much to help create that sense of confidence. This has been an important element of our enrollment growth, and we hope to have cooperation from our college in continuing to hire faculty that will meet the expectations of those universities.

It is vital that hiring committees for future faculty have, as our Board of Trustees have specified, a voting majority made up of faculty with degrees in economics. Failure to create these voting majorities significantly increases the risk of hiring mistakes that will erode the confidence of our transfer institutions, and reduce department enrollments.