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Report of the Committee on Economic Education

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Report of the Committee on Economic Education

The CEE sponsored three paper sessions as part of the AEA program at the 2006 ASSA annual meetings. The first focused on “Research on Teaching Innovations.” It was organized by Paul Romer and chaired by Charles Ballard. The paper by Susan Pozo and Charles Stull studies the results of a required mathematics unit on students’ overall class performance. The second paper, by Sheryl Ball, Catherine Eckel, and Christian Rojas, reports the results of a controlled experiment testing the effectiveness of the Wireless Interactive Teaching System (WITS) at Virginia Tech. The third paper, by Wayne Grove and Tim Wasserman, reports results in cognitive achievement gains in an introductory economics course by assigning graded problem sets. The session discussants were Julian Betts, Frank Levy, and Michael Murray. The three papers are published in this issue of the *Papers and Proceedings*.

The second CEE paper session centered on “Research on Ph.D. Programs in Economics.” It was organized by Wendy Stock and chaired by Alan Krueger. The paper by T. Aldrich Finegan and John Siegfried analyzed Americans who were admitted to Ph.D. programs in economics, but who did not enroll. The second paper, by T. Aldrich Finegan and Wendy Stock, investigated attrition in doctoral programs in economics. The third paper, by Wendy Stock and John Siegfried, examined elapsed time from entry into a Ph.D. program to completion of the degree for the class of 2001–2002. The session discussants were Jeffrey A. Groen, Robert E. Hall, Richard Freeman, and Alan Krueger. The three papers are also published in this issue of the *Papers and Proceedings*.

Michael Watts organized and chaired the third session on “Teaching and Testing in Undergraduate Economics.” The paper by Michael Watts and William Becker reports new evidence on whether classroom practices have changed over the past decade and in different types of economics courses and institutions. The paper by KimMarie McGoldrick investigates the degree to which institutions have responded to the Siegfried et al. (1991) recommendations that every student be required to “do economics.”

The paper by William Walstad and Michael Watts reports on the test development and preliminary results of the fourth edition of the *Test of Understanding of College Economics (TUCE)*. The paper by Paul Grimes, Jane Lopus, Rodney Pearson, and William Becker examines the effects of mandated human subjects protocols on the amount of research in economic education. Charles Holt, John Siegfried, Theodore Bergstrom, and Claudia Parliament served as discussants for the session.

The Committee continues to believe that workshops on teaching provide a valuable service to association members. So, for the tenth year, the Committee sponsored a one-day workshop as part of the AEA program at the 2006 ASSA annual meetings. The first workshop session, “Teaching Introductory Microeconomics,” was organized and chaired by Daniel Hamermesh. It featured presentations from Kenneth Elzinga, Daniel Hamermesh, and G. Dirk Mateer, all of whom have substantial and varied experience in teaching introductory microeconomics at different universities.

The second workshop session was devoted to the ongoing Teaching Innovations Program (TIP) for economics instructors, which is described later in this report. The workshop was organized and chaired by Michael Salemi, and presentations were made by Gail Hoyt, Mark Maier, KimMarie McGoldrick, Michael Salemi, and William Walstad. The session described the activity of the participants in the 2005 workshops and explained the instructional content, likely experience, and benefits for economic faculty members who enroll and participate in the TIP during 2006.

The third workshop was a poster session organized and directed by Rae Jean Goodman. It included 14 poster contributions on teaching ideas and projects for the undergraduate economics curriculum: (1) using creativity in assessment to teach economics (Mary Ellen Mallia); (2) techniques and effectiveness of interactive classroom instruction software (Michele T. Villinski); (3) using surveys to teach economic concepts (Kirsten K. Madden); (4) using personal response system clickers in principles (Martin Milkman and Barry

Brown); (5) the lesson of the winner's curse: an example from the economics of sports (Suzanne Heller Clain); (6) the concept quiz as a technique for actively engaging students (Gail Mitchell Hoyt); (7) writing to learn economics (Raymonda L. Burgman); (8) using a keypad response system in a large lecture course (William Dawes and Jacqueline Wilks-Nelson); (9) the use of an interactive simulation game to teach microeconomics (Steven Gold); (10) the effectiveness of team-based learning in building content knowledge and problem-solving skills in principles of macroeconomics (Paul Hettler); (11) teaching economics with tunes (G. Dirk Mateer); (12) why my doctor is a Kantian and my car mechanic is an Aristotelian: understanding ethics in economics (Jonathan B. Wight); (13) a learning object for macroeconomic principles (Marilyn Cottrell); and (14) a simulation of counter-cyclical intervention: lessons for theory and practice (Nathan D. Grawe).

The CEE continues to offer and sponsor programs for particular groups at the ASSA annual meetings. For the second time, it offered a session for faculty members who serve as directors of undergraduate studies in economics departments, to give them an opportunity to discuss issues of concern and share information. The session was directed by Paul Romer; John Siegfried made a presentation.

The CEE sponsors TIP for faculty members in economics, funded by a \$675,000 grant over five years from the National Science Foundation and codirected by William Walsstad and Michael Salemi. A major development in 2005 was the launch of the first phase of the project, which consists of workshops for faculty members on interactive teaching strategies. Two such workshops were held in 2005—one at the University of North Carolina and one at Georgetown University. The staff included Denise Hazlett, Mark Maier, KimMarie McGoldrick, and the two project directors. There were 104 applications from economics instructors to attend the workshops and 36 participants were selected to attend each one. Future workshops will be held in Santa Fe (2006), Chicago (2006), Boston (2007), and Santa Barbara (2007). The second phase of the project involves on-line instruction for faculty members at their home institutions to help them apply the new teaching strategies they learned at the workshops.

That on-line instruction phase was also started in 2005 with the development of instructional modules on assessment, classroom experiments, cooperative learning, and discussion and enrollment in the modules by the majority of the 2005 workshop participants. In the third phase, they will have opportunities to advance the scholarship of teaching and learning in economics by sharing teaching experiences, writing papers, and attending meetings on teaching. A more detailed description of TIP, and information on how to apply for workshops, can be found at www.vanderbilt.edu/AEA/AEACEE/TIP.

The CEE partners with the *Journal of Economic Education (JEE)* on paper sessions, projects, and issues of mutual interest. William Becker, *JEE* Editor, serves as a member of the CEE to facilitate this relationship. For example, several years ago the CEE worked with the *JEE* to establish 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 Academic Questionnaire show that the number of economics majors continues to rise above the trough levels reached in the mid-1990s. The number of B.A. degrees in economics awarded in 2004–2005 was 1 percent higher than in 2003–2004, based on a sample of 135 institutions, and is now 50 percent higher than the total number of degrees awarded in 1995–1996, the date of the cycle's trough. More detailed information on the survey results is available in a forthcoming report (Siegfried, *Journal of Economic Education*, Summer 2006).

This year will be a transition for the CEE in several ways. Michael Watts from Purdue University succeeds me as the CEE chair, with his first three-year term having started in January 2006. I extend my best wishes to him as he assumes these important duties for the Association. Special recognition should also be given to Daniel Hamermesh, who has completed two three-year terms on the CEE. He gave invaluable service to the CEE in all aspects of its mission.

Finally, let me offer a thank you to all the CEE members with whom I have served during my six

years as CEE chair. They are William Becker, David Colander, Kenneth Elzinga, Rae Jean Goodman, Daniel Hamermesh, Charles Holt, Alan Krueger, Mark Maier, Gregory Mankiw, Michael Murray, Paul Romer, Michael Salemi, Wendy Stock, and John Taylor. Each one gave thoughtful and effective service to the CEE over the years through such activities as organizing and chairing paper sessions, reviewing and discussing papers, arranging and conducting workshops, and

making other positive contributions. The CEE annual meetings have also benefited from the participation and insights of Robert Duvall, President of the National Council on Economic Education. I have appreciated the help from each one.

Current information about the Committee on Economic Education and its activities is available at www.vanderbilt.edu/AEA/AEACEE.

WILLIAM WALSTAD, *Chair*