

2019-2020 Program Review



CAN Program Review (Instructional) - Economics (Odd Year)

Program Review Narratives

2019-2020

Instructional Program Review (IPR)

Lead Contact Person: *Paul Roscelli

Writing Team: *Paul Roscelli, with information from Michelle Williams

Executive Summary

O. Executive Summary: Enrollments/productivity: Since 2015 the college as a whole has experienced about a 14% drop in enrollments and about an 8% headcount drop. During that same time frame the economics department has experienced modest growth of 4.5% in enrollments and about a 3% uptick in headcount

Strengths: ECON enrollments up, bucking the overall downward trend at the college. This is a welcome, albeit, surprising trend. I anticipate that these rates will, if the economy continues to improve, start to fall or at best flatten. What explains the current "success"? Perhaps the increasing enrollments of online sections. That seems to be what the data suggests.

Student rates of success and retention: Rates in both categories for most populations are up from a year or so ago. In fact, many rates have returned to their 2016 high water marks. However, some groups have yet to return to prior year highs. It does appear that these rates, when looking at other disciplines, correlate with the grade distribution. Economics has one of the more "stingy" distribution of A and B grades, that may explain the somewhat lower rates of student success and retention. Beyond noting this correlation, I do not wish to speculate on other departments "ease of grades equalling high rates of success/retention."

Equity/disproportionate impact. Economics has only one flagged "deficiency". The department shows a negative imbalance of women. It's worth noting that economics also shows a positive imbalance of men. As to the absence of females, this is hard to explain or propose a solution. However, the distribution of females to males is in line with most economics departments across the country. As far as correcting it. As you can read later, I am not sure it is even something that should be corrected--at least not without additional, complementary evidence supporting the notion that this imbalance is a problem.

Opportunities: Program could look to increase offerings (e.g. ECON 230 History) and honors courses, and increase different ways to offer existing courses e.g. short courses, hybrid, online.

See below for greater detail about my request for free online access to Wall Street Journal and New York Times for all students, as CSM and Skyline do.

Challenges: Requirements that TMC's place on students with respect to taking courses outside the TMC model make offering new courses, with current college enrollments, difficult. Additionally, the SS continue to need support in and/or struggle with

- Maintaining a secure and stable place that social science students can call their own i.e. the SS HUB
- Finding resources for a SS Coordinator
- Assisting with the marketing of our programs
- Recognizing the challenges /limits of 1-person disciplines, especially as it relates to marketing, updating curriculum and keeping current in our disciplines.
- Maintaining a balance between looking at program efficiency and ensuring a full complement of course

offerings that allow SS majors and non majors the opportunity to get their courses in a timely manner.

Action Plan: Currently economics seems to be in an equilibrium that is not in need of a dramatic change. As such, the action plan should be to stay the course and emphasize the courses that transfer to both CSU and UC. Additionally, addressing the ongoing concerns (listing in the challenges area above) would be of value. Some greater exploration of course delivery might be in order. With respect to specific responses to issues raised in PR parts 3-4 and 5-11 see comments in individual boxed areas.

Program Context

1. Mission: It is the mission of this economics department to ensure that students from diverse backgrounds have the opportunity to achieve their educational goals by providing quality education in general education/core transfer material in the area of economics. The discipline serves both transfer students (GE, Econ & Bus) as well as serving workforce, primarily in the certificated areas of business. Per the College's request years back that smaller disciplines look at collaborating with other smaller disciplines that share a common ancestry (i.e social sciences), the Economics Discipline is a discipline within the greater Social Sciences program.

This grouping recognizes both the natural connections of all social sciences as well as the reality that, at Canada College, the social sciences are made up of almost exclusively one full time discipline expert per discipline. Thus, this aggregation serves the social sciences writ large, leveraging out talents.

2. Articulation: The economics professors are unaware of any changes in curriculum and degree requirements at high schools that would impact the discipline. Both CSU's and UC's continue to stress both competency in math as a recommended prerequisite as well as greater amounts of math (i.e.calc. differential equations, linear algebra). Evidence, other than anecdotal conversations, articles in the WSJ and The Economist, cannot be provided as there are no formal declarations issued from either the UC's or CSU's. My information comes from speaking with recent transfers to four year schools, graduates of four year schools and, as noted, my readings in various newspapers and magazines.

We should watch to see if more STEM type students look at economics as an alternative major. Since economics majors today are often effectively applied math majors, this would be a natural relationship that we should exploit more effectively. How we do this, given our scant resources at both the college level and my level is an open question.

3. Community & Labor Needs: The economics professors are unaware of changes in community needs, employment needs, technology, licensing, or accreditation that may affect this program. The discipline of economics primarily draws on transfer students for its enrollments--though there are some workforce students enrolled as well. Economics continues to become more mathematical and computer science oriented, at least at the higher division and grad school levels. Economics courses should be looked at as courses that primarily serve general education students as well as those majoring in business, economics and environmental sciences. Indeed that's what our "Ed goal" data says.

Jobs for students with 2 year degrees in economics are effectively non-existent. Jobs for economics students with BA, MA are robust: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/life-physical-and-social-science/economists.htm> with median salaries in the 140K range and starting salaries in the 95K range. In our local community the tech companies continue to be a source of hiring economics majors--even more so if they have heavy in math and computer science backgrounds.

As for how changes in employment trends affect my program and its offerings, they do not. The basic coursework, which is all that we offer, has not changed due to employment changes. However, stronger overall employment does depress night enrollments. As, this tends to be cyclical, I do not think it warrants significant attention

Looking Back

4. Curricular Changes: No significant changes have been made in the last year, nor do we anticipate many new offerings. This is due, in part, to the nature of the subject matter-it doesn't change quickly. The discipline has increased its online offerings and has tried to extend its honors opportunities to more students. Both contracts and dual enrollment strategies continue to be implemented.

As noted in the exec summary, enrollment patterns have not changed significantly. The advent of TMCs severely limits what the CSU's will accept as a transfer class for purposes of a degree in economics. In addition, The District is now "basic aid," thus, the urge to grow the student body must be looked at in a different light.

5A. Progress Report - IPC Feedback: 2017 responses to some of the feedback; numbers refer back to the comments

1. Summaries are supposed to be brief.

3. The discipline of economics primarily draws on transfer students for its enrollments--though there are some workforce students enrolled as well. Economics continues to become more mathematical and computer science oriented, at least at the

higher division and grad school levels. Introductory economics courses should be looked at as courses that primarily serve general education students as well as those majoring in business, economics and environmental sciences. Indeed, that's what our "Ed goal" data says.

Jobs for students with 2 year degrees in economics are effectively non-existent. Jobs for economics students with BA, MA are robust: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/life-physical-and-social-science/economists.htm> with median salaries in the 140K range and starting salaries in the 95K range. In our local community the tech companies continue to be a source of hiring economics majors--if they are steeped in math and computer science.

6B. We did not lose the online faculty member. We did lose a face to face member and he has been replaced.

8B I have no idea. As noted earlier rates have rebounded. Why? I don't think anyone really knows so speculating on ways to improve the rates are just that, speculative. As noted, higher grades often correlate with higher rates of success and completion within a given program. Is economics offered in an overly difficult manner such that it would cause lower rates of success and completion? We can no more know this than we can know if the offerings in OTHER disciplines, with higher rates of success and retention, are taught in such a manner that they are overly easy and thus contribute to inflated grades and thus, greater rates of success and retention.

9A. Dollars

5B. Progress Report - Prior Action Plans: Proposed Actions (and the progress made)

- 1) Developed some longitudinal SLO evidence. In the last program review document mention was made of looking at SLO results over time. However, due to curriculum committee re-interpretation of ed code, two SLOs in ECON 100 and 102 required revision. This set back longitudinal data collection.
- 2) A college researcher was to examine the SLO, PLO and ILO efforts to determine if they have an efficacy level commensurate with the current allocation of time and energy by this department and the SS's in general. We await fulfillment of that request.
- 3) Have made several requests, albeit in the context of a broader college request, to look at several historical metrics used to evaluate courses (e.g. retention, success) using courses that existed prior to SLOs and still exist with SLOs. The goal was to take these pre and post SLO courses and probe point #2 (i.e. to see if there was any measurable change in the historical metrics post SLO) -as yet nothing has been provided. Requests will continue.
- 4) Attended economics conferences to stay current in the field. Spoke to peers (in the district, outside the district and at conferences) to see what they are doing in the very important area of assessment. I have, in a sense, used the National Collegiate Honors Conference in place of economics conferences due to my participation in the the Honors Transfer Program. I did attend some SF Federal Reserve meetings on the macro economy.

6A. Impact of Resource Applications: There have been no material requests made for new resources by the economics staff. Thus, the impact to-date that new resources (equipment, facilities, research) would have on the program is nil. However, I would appreciate it if the college, in the context of resource allocation, took notice of the following piece that calls into question the efficacy and value of SLO's--the time spent by me (and others) doing this work is a "resource" that this study suggests is largely a wasted effort. If these resources of time were released back to me, I might have more to say in this section. An Insider's Take on Assessment: It May Be Worse Than You Thought <https://www.chronicle.com/article/An-Insiders-Take-on/242235>

6B. Impact of Staffing Changes: As noted before, enrollment patterns have not changed significantly since the last program review. The advent of TMCs severely limits what the CSU's will accept as a transfer class for purposes of a degree in economics. In addition, The District is now "basic aid," thus, the urge to grow the student body must be looked at in a different light. With respect to current faculty staffing in economics we have one full time faculty member and two part-timers. One part-time person, who teaches all the online courses, just got a full time job so it may be that down the road we will need to find another person to pick up those online courses. However, we did have a part-timer retirement this past year. We have hired different individuals to compensate for that loss. Absent any big changes we see no reason to change staffing levels.

Current State of the Program

7. Enrollment Trends: As noted in the exec summary, the economics department, in the face of negative campus enrollment headwinds, showed modest growth as measured by headcount and enrollments. As a consequence of both these factors, course offerings have not changed dramatically. Additionally, enrollment patterns, in term of ethnicity or gender and other

variables have not changed much. Economics enrollments tend to mirror the greater college in terms of all demographic variables with one exception--female enrollees (more on that in section 8-A) . Online enrollments are trending up slightly, face to face are trending down slightly while hybrid is flat.

Changes could be implemented, including changes to course scheduling (times/days/duration/delivery mode/number of sections), marketing, and articulation of pathways that might improve enrollments include:

Looking at offering the two sequenced economics courses of 100 and 102 less frequently at night on campus. Night enrollments here seem to have suffered the most on our campus, perhaps due to our robust economy. However, to meet our commitment to getting night students in and through their courses in a timely manner we still need to create pathways for them. To address falling night enrollments while still maintaining our promise to night students, we now offer the night version of 100 in the fall and 102 in the spring--rather than running them both in each semester. We are also looking at altering the face to face time commitment to one of several non standard approaches.

I cannot say that anything jumps out at me from the data. With respect to the number of course offerings, I do think that we are getting dangerously close to not being able to offer day and evening students a full complement of courses for a variety of majors, of which one is economics. We will continue to explore alternative modes of delivery of the content in an effort to meet student needs. Again this is a difficult and time consuming task--as a one person department these things take time. As far as pathways are concerned the college is at the start of defining pathways for students. We we know more in a few years. Finally, as far as marketing goes, go for it--I am a one person department and I have do not have the time or financial resources to engage in marketing--now maybe if the college gave back all that we have to spend on SLO's....

8-A. Access & Completion: As noted briefly in the executive summary, student rates of success and retention for most populations are up from a year or so ago . In fact, many rates have returned to their high water marks of 2016. However, some groups have still not returned to prior year highs. It is worth noting that while economics rates of success/retention are sometimes lower than other disciplines, it is also true that those other disciplines seem to be awarding more grades of A and B. That correlation may help to explain why those disciplines perform better on these metrics. Given the "harder grading curve" that students in economics appear to face, slightly lower rates of success/retention might be a natural by-product.

With respect to access/equity, I will respond though I wish to point out the assumptions behind the "variances" to me, appear dubious-- at best. To assume enrollments should, ex ante, reflect some pre-determined parity --when then when do NOT, offering the variance as some sort of evidence indicating that there is a problem of "equity/access" seems very arbitrary and not well grounded in science or logic. There is little reason to expect parity along various lines of race, gender, age etc. as it relates to any department on campus, e.g. why should fashion design programs or apprentice electrician programs expect to see some sort of parity in enrollments across various demographic groups? How students discern what to major in isn't a simple. It's a rich, complicated and often a difficult thing to comprehend. Is it possible that parity across multiple different variables could happen? Sure. Is evidence of it NOT happening a problem? Perhaps, perhaps not. Without more information, speculating on the reason for the variance, or attempting to change it is, in my opinion, risky.

That being said, as noted in the exec summary economics experiences a negative imbalance of females. Parenthetically, it's worth noting that economics also shows and a positive imbalance of men--and given the dearth of men in college across the country and at Canada maybe we ought to be asking why economics is, relatively, more successful at attracting men than other disciplines? As to the dearth of females, this is hard to know. Most most economics departments across the country have experienced similar imbalances. That isn't a comment on its correctness or incorrectness, just an observation that this variance is not unique to economics at Canada. As far as correcting it. I am not sure it is even something that should be corrected--at least not without additional, complementary evidence that indicates that a material barrier (intentional or unintentional) to entry or success is present. I will say this however, about ensuring students of all types consider economics as something to enroll in.... it sure would be nice to have the resources STEM has on this campus to offer lecture series and other such events that target women. Again, that's out of my control.

8-B. Completion - Success Online: What significant gaps do you see in success between online/hybrid and non-online courses? As expected, success and retention rates are higher for "non online" vs online classes. However, the difference is not pronounced. In general, these patterns mirror what others see both on our campus and at other campuses across the country. To reduce these gaps the college could invest in finding out what are the key attributes that successful online students possess and then screen all online enrollees, ex ante, for these attributes. Those not possessing these attributes could be counseled to take the course in a different manner. Alternatively, the college could simply accept that, given we let almost anyone enroll in an online class, it should not be surprising that success/retention rates are lower than in face to face courses. Again maybe we should ask for the help to know what we can change along with the wisdom to accept what we cannot.

9A. SLO Assessment - Compliance: Coordination is difficult and time consuming effort. Especially given that economics is a one person department and there is virtually no way to compel part timers to turn in SLO results in a timely manner. That being said,

the changes the campus made to our compliance measures for SLO's have led to greater compliance in the economics department. Each part timer is told at the start of the semester which SLO is to be measured, the time for measurement and the tool is up to each faculty member. The results are sent to the full time person with the aggregation being done by that individual in a qualitative manner. Econ's SLO's have been consistently measured within the 3 year mandated time frame, with the students almost always performing at or above the expected level of success. However, trends in student SLO mastery can only be studied over time so it is the belief of the economics faculty that, rather than change the existing SLO's, we should continue to measure existing SLO's to see if any patterns worth studying emerge.

9B. SLO Assessment - Impact: Impact will be discussed below, however it is worth noting that conclusions drawn from assessment are weak for the following reasons:

1) The variety of methods employed to collect the data do not allow for statistically valid aggregation. Additionally, the methods of assessment are different from instructor to instructor. Requiring the same method of data collection would raise serious questions around academic freedom. Moreover, often the numbers are simply too small to draw much confidence around. Finally, recent studies question if all of these efforts are not worth the investment of time. <https://www.chronicle.com/article/An-Insider-s-Take-on/242235>

That being said, faculty have complied and assessed students, noting where their successes and failures have occurred and have:

- 2) Experimented with different methods of assessment (e.g. open book, multiple choice, essay, etc.) in an effort to improve performance.
- 3) Talked with other faculty in other disciplines about what they use to measure/improve student performance
- 4) Discussed different ways to improve student performance at conferences.

10. PLO Assessment: Program Learning Outcomes assessment plan.

The Social Sciences consists of nine departments: anthropology, communication studies, economics, geography, history, philosophy, political science, psychology, and sociology, and have three PLOs. Mostly these are one full-time person departments. In order to assess the PLOs efficiently, the Social Science faculty have created a general analytic rubric to be used across the departments to directly measure student writing assignments as a program (note: an analytic rubric is a rubric that provides descriptive feedback along several dimensions or parts, and a general rubric is one that can be used across assignments and/or disciplines). Each department brought 5 ungraded student writing samples selected by lot from one assignment administered during the semester to create a pool of assignments to draw from (the writing prompt was also attached to each of the samples). The rubric was then used to score a random sample of student writing assignments from the program as a whole. All faculty scored student writing assignments outside of their disciplines.

Rubric scoring. The rubric was organized into three rows, one row for each PLO, and into three columns that included descriptive feedback for each level of competency: "Incomplete", "Acceptable", and "Accomplished." During the 2018-2019 assessment period the Social Science faculty examined the PLO "Produce evidence-based arguments." When evaluating the student writing assignments, the faculty selected one of the five scoring options (0, 0.5, 1, 1.5, or 2) to indicate the students' level of competency ("incomplete" was represented by the scores 0 and 0.5, "acceptable" by 1 or 1.5, and accomplished by a 2). An average score of 1.0 ("acceptable") was desired.

During the 2018-2019 assessment period 76 papers and exams were assessed. 92% (70/76) of the papers/exams received at least a 1 "acceptable" score. The average score for the PLO "Produce evidence-based arguments" was 1.43 which is similar to the previous program review assessment period. The criterion was met. During the first 2 years using the current assessment method major areas of concern that were discussed during the scoring of the samples included: difficulty identifying the social science theories that the writing assignments were targeting (although faculty attached the writing prompt) and confusion with sampling methods. Discussion from the above assessment period demonstrated continued improvement in random sampling. During the previous assessment period faculty discussed difficulty in identifying social science theories that the writing assignments were targeting. This concern was not addressed during the 2018-2019 assessment period as that PLO was not examined. Faculty will address this specific concern during the next assessment period. Also, faculty discussed a benefit to using the rubric as a way to improve instruction. The general analytic rubric was viewed as a tool to share and learn from each other, which was viewed as refreshing given the diversity of the social sciences program.

Looking Ahead

11. Program Planning: For this prompt, it is important to remember that Economics is NOT a program at Canada, it is a discipline within the "Social Sciences" program which consists of nine departments: anthropology, communication studies, economics,

geography, history, philosophy, political science, psychology, and sociology. Mostly these are one full-time person departments. With this in mind, I will distinguish between discipline needs (economics) as contrasted from program needs (social sciences writ large)

Planning Objectives Economics

Economics Training: The need for funding and time to attend economics conferences to discuss teaching and content trends in economics and to stay current with the literature is ever present. I have had countless trainings on teaching, in contrast attending purely content trainings have been scarce.

Economic/business literacy: CSM offers, for free, online subscriptions to both the New York Times and Wall Street Journal, Skyline offers one of the two. This is free for ALL students enrolled at the institution. Our college (library perhaps) should find out how this is accomplished. I would support resources being allocated for this purpose. Students should not have different access to different online services simply by where they enroll.

Support honors transfer program (HTP): Offer dual enroll and contracts for students in economics. This should contribute to enrollments.

Student Presentations: Continue to push honors students to present at local honor symposiums. This would also include PTK student research.

Attend conferences on honors: Continue to seek our opportunities that will explore new methods or ways of offering honors courses to a diverse student body e.g. attending the National Collegiate Honors Conference (NCHC). This should contribute to the variety of ways students can complete honors.

Facilities: none.

Planning Objectives Social Sciences:

- 1) Currently we have a space in the library for social science students to gather, we should maintain that space.
- 2) Coordination time for the social sciences. The college needs to decide if it wants SS to do things beyond teaching classes and keeping curriculum current, if so then coordination time needs to be found. MESA/STEM is does these sorts of things--but they are funded.
- 3) Marketing of the SS disciplines has been less than successful. The execution of any plans needs to come from those on campus who are responsible for marketing duties. As mostly one person departments with no release time, the SS professors cannot be expected to shoulder the lion's share of this burden.
- 4) Facilities, perhaps the SS hub should become a smart room.

Program Review Narrative Status: In Progress

No Objective were returned for this Program based upon the selected parameters.