**Department of Economics**

**Assessment Activity AY 2015-2016**

**1. What learning outcomes did you assess this year?**

One assessment of general Economic Competency (Goal #1a) was conducted during AY1516. (See Item #5 below.)

**2. What instrument did you use to assess them?**

A pilot effort at using targeted-topics questions embedded in the course final exams for both Econ40 and Econ50 was made. At the beginning of the term all instructors teaching Econ40 (N = 12 sections) and/or Econ50 (N = 11 sections) were advised of the assessment plan.

Twenty-one (21) fundamental concepts were identified for microeconomics; fifteen (15) fundamental concepts were identified for macroeconomics. These concepts align with the articulation parameters spelled-out by the CSU System. Instructors were asked to include one multiple choice question for each of *at least five* (but not all) of the identified concepts. The questions were stipulated to be of “medium” (or “moderate”) difficulty (publisher-supplied test bank questions are routinely classified along a “difficulty” dimension, among others). The selection of the specific questions was left to the instructor owing to the different textbooks and terminology/phraseology used by each person. An Excel spreadsheet template was distributed to all Econ40/50 instructors to facilitate compiling the information. For the respective concept(s) evaluated, instructors were asked to record: (1) the number of students sitting for the exam; and (2) the number of those students correctly answering the particular question. From this information, an aggregate was produced and is reported in the table attached at the end of this memo.

The response to this pilot was mixed. In total, five (5) instructors complied with the process; one other (1) requested another copy of the Excel file but failed to return results; and another (1) apparently failed to understand the instructions. Of twelve sections for Econ40, five were included in this assessment (41.67% representation; 2 instructors). From Econ50, sections responded (36.36% representation; 3 instructors).

**3. What did you discover from this data?**

Using a pass rate of 70% as the standard for adequacy: only three (3) of the twenty-one (21) fundamental concepts for Microeconomics met the “satisfactory mastery” level. A less restrictive “near-satisfactory” (better than 65% pass rate) increased performance on two additional concepts. For Econ50, Macroeconomics, the results were better: seven (7) of fifteen (15) fundamental concepts were adequately mastered; the number improved to ten (10) of fifteen (15) at the lesser-threshold. There is a lot of room for improvement.

It was hoped the “embedded questions” pilot would be a feasible means to address the breadth of sections (and instructors). It would not suffer the difficulties presented by the earlier Pre-/Post-Testing that the Department tried in the past

**4. What changes did/will you make as a result of these (and earlier) findings?**

“Closing the Loop” Activities & Efforts

Copies of this Assessment Report were disseminated to all full-time and part-time faculty.

Communication Skills. All Econ40 and Econ50 faculty were reminded of the General Education requirements necessary for these classes. In particular, the GE Writing Requirements were re-iterated. It will be necessary to discuss with each instructor directly how they are presently meeting these requirements. It will be necessary for the Department to evaluate the sufficiency of these assignments.

**5.  What assessment activities will you be conducting in the 2015-16 academic year?**

Upon consultation with the University Assessment Coordinator Melissa Jordine, it was recommended our entire Department review the existing SOAP to bring it into conformity with the University’s requirements. Dr. Qin Fan will be assuming the role of SOAP coordinator for the Department starting AY2016-17; Dr. Van Vleck is stepping down from that role upon completion of this report.

The Department has not made a decision yet regarding assessment activities, but *possibilities (\*)* include:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **SOAP Goal** | **Assessment Plan(\*)** | **Time Frame(\*)** |
| Economic Competency  (Goal #1) | 1) New Pre-Test/Post-Tests for Econ40/ Econ50 | Fall 16, Spring 17 |
| Communication Skills  (Goal #4) | 1) Reinforced writing requirement expectations with faculty in lower-division GE Econ40 and Econ50;  2) Writing Process and Product assessment in upper-division GE Econ146. | Fall 16, Spring 17 |
| Application of Economics  (Goal #5) | 1) Research Project/ Case Study methodology in Econ117 (Environmental Economics), Econ119 (Urban & Regional Economics), and/or Econ146 (Economics of Crime) | Fall 16, Spring 17 |
| Social Awareness and Responsibility  (Goal #6) | 1) Student survey in Econ146 (Economics of Crime) | Fall 16 |
| Community Economic Education  (Goal #7) | 1) Embedded Service Learning option in Econ119 (Urban & Regional Economics) | Fall 16 |

* Evaluate adoption of “Pathbrite” e-portfolio to various goal assessments.
* Develop concrete written communication rubrics.
* Develop concrete rubrics for oral presentations and for application of economic competencies.
* Structured checklists or pre/post surveys for Service Learning opportunities (available as option in Econ119).
* Collect community organizations’/partners’ (learning site) supervisors evaluations of Service Learning benchmarks.

**6.  What progress have you made on items from your last program review action plan?**

Two new tenure-track faculty have joined the Department this AY2016-17; the faculty now stands at eight (8) tenured/tenure-track faculty. Faculty retention, stability, and continuity is expected to strengthen/ revitalize the depth and breadth of SOAP assessments.

A streamlined SOAP (upon advisement from the University Assessment Coordinator and yearly review process) will be easier to execute. It will improve transparency between the Department, the Craig School of Business, and the University.

**Summary: (Instructor-selected) Topic Questions Embedded in Final Exams, Econ40 & Econ50**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Topic/ Item**  **Econ40 Principles of Microeconomics** | **Number of Students Assessed** | **# Answering Correctly** | **%** |
| opportunity cost | 108 | 47 | 43.5% |
| comparative adv/ gains from trade |  |  |  |
| supply & demand & market equilibrium |  |  |  |
| price mechanism/ shortages & surpluses | 108 | 74 | 68.5% |
| consumer- /producer- /economic surplus |  |  |  |
| price controls, circumstances & conseq |  |  |  |
| (own) price-elasticity of demand | 108 | 62 | 57.4% |
| production function, productivity & costs | 108 | 66 | 61.1% |
| economies/ diseconomies of scale | 108 | 57 | 52.8% |
| firm profit-maximization decision(s) |  |  |  |
| accounting- /economic- /normal- profit |  |  |  |
| perfect competition in the short-run |  |  |  |
| perfect competition in the long-run |  |  |  |
| monopoly & deadweight loss | 177 | 158 | 89.3% |
| monopoly & price discrimination | 69 | 33 | 47.8% |
| monopolistic competition in the SR | 69 | 26 | 37.7% |
| monopolistic competition in the LR | 177 | 129 | 72.9% |
| Oligopoly, strategic behav/ game theory | 108 | 45 | 41.7% |
| oligopoly, market conc, & antitrust | 69 | 38 | 55.1% |
| negative- &/or positive-externalities | 69 | 65 | 94.2% |
| public goods | 177 | 120 | 67.8% |
| **Topic/ Item**  **Econ50 Principles of Macroeconomics** | **Number of Students Assessed** | **# Answering Correctly** | **%** |
| opportunity cost | 44 | 30 | 68.2% |
| economic growth | 173 | 118 | 68.2% |
| nominal v real measures | 44 | 25 | 56.8% |
| price index/ inflation | 129 | 98 | 76.0% |
| business cycle/ recession/ expansion | 173 | 129 | 74.6% |
| labor force/employment/unemployment | 129 | 98 | 76.0% |
| savings & investment | 44 | 43 | 97.7% |
| role of interest rates | 44 | 24 | 54.5% |
| money/ money supply | 85 | 52 | 61.2% |
| money creation & the financial system | 44 | 37 | 84.1% |
| role & function of central banks | 44 | 26 | 59.1% |
| fiscal stabilization tools/ policy | 44 | 29 | 65.9% |
| monetary stabilization tools/ policy | 44 | 33 | 75.0% |
| international trade, exports & imports | 44 | 41 | 93.2% |
| international trade, exchange rates | 44 | 30 | 68.2% |

Satisfactory demonstration of topic/concept mastery was a 70% or better pass rate.