Core Curriculum Assessment Annual Report

General Information

1. Name / Number of Course / Sequence:
   ECON2020/ECON2030: Introduction to Microeconomics; Introduction to Macroeconomics

2. SLO(s) being assessed:
   Student will be informed and engaged citizens of the United States and the world.

3. Department:
   Economics

4. Department Representative:
   T R Beard

5. AGSC Content Alignment:
   AREA IV: History, Social, and Behavioral Sciences

Assessment Information

6. Assessment Method: [Explain how assessment for the measures associated with this SLO – not grading for the course as a whole was conducted.]

   Assessment was conducted using common questions included in multiple choice exams for sections of ECON2020 and ECON2030. The questions were developed by a committee composed of department faculty, including all affected instructors, and other interested persons. Questions differed between ECON2020 and ECON2030. Four questions were used in both cases. The assessment questions were designed to evaluate the abilities of students to apply basic economic principles to problems of global/international significance. Competence
in basic economics applied to international economic relations was felt by the department committee to be a necessary skill for informed participation as envisioned in SLO8.

An example question used in the ECON2020 assessment was:
"The US Congress proposes an increase in the minimum wage to $10/hour. Implementation of this proposal is likely to:

a. Decrease the price of luxury goods;
b. Increase taxes paid by small business
c. Increase youth employment
d. Increase unemployment among young people. "  (Correct answer is d)

An example question used in ECON 2030 assessment was:
"Which of the following will decrease aggregate expenditure (AE) in the United States?
a. a decrease in interest rates;
b. a decrease in the price level;
c. a decrease in government purchases;
d. a decrease in the value of the dollar."  (Correct answer is c)

7. Findings: [What assessment data did each assessment method produce?]

For every section we compiled rates of correct responses by students to each question. In total, 903 students were assessed in ECON 2020, while 277 were assessed in ECON 2030.

Typical rates of correct response were around 85%, but varied from a low of 45.5% for one question in one section, to highs well above 90%. Overall, the data suggest a competent job is being done, but there is certainly room for improvement. Especially depressing was the fact that about 25% of students in macroeconomics could not correctly identify the chairman of the US Federal Reserve Board of Governors.

8. How did you or will you use the findings for improvement:  [What questions / issues/ concerns did your data raise for the faculty teaching the course? What discussion did the faculty have about the findings? What future actions to improve student attainment of this outcome will the department / program take as a result of this analysis?]

Faculty were fairly unsurprised at the results. In the very large sections of ECON 2020 and ECON 2030 we teach (often exceeding 200 students), attendance is generally much worse than in small sections. If students do not attend, then it is difficult to
communicate this material to them. It is also impractical to take attendance in such courses. We attribute a large part of the shortfall in student performance to nonattendance.

We have discussed attempting to integrate more news/current events material into our lectures, as students find such material fairly straightforward to assimilate. This is likely to be implemented in ECON 2030 next cycle.

9. Additional comments: [What else would you like the Committee to know about your assessment of this course or plans for the future?]

We believe we could do a better job of providing students with the knowledge they need to be engaged citizens if we were able to teach more of them in smaller classes. Faculty feel that poor attendance in huge lecture sections inhibits our ability to promote the sorts of holistic learning goals envisioned in the SLO roster. We have known for many years that large sections are a poor way to teach principles of economics.

10. Core Curriculum General Education Committee Comments:

Questions used to assess the measures might address content about microeconomics, but they do not do so in a way that is clearly linked to the measures for SLO 8. It appears that new questions need to be adapted or developed to achieve this assessment. The Assessment Report should directly tie each instrument to a measure(s) being assessed. Reporting and analysis should be done separately by each core course and measure.