

# **EVALUATION REPORT**

**Foundation for Teaching Economics  
2019 Programs in Economics Education**

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## Overview

This independent evaluation of the Foundation for Teaching Economics' 2019 programs for teachers and students includes the following programs conducted from fall 2018 through summer 2019:

- Economics for Leaders (16)
- Economic History for Leaders/Economic Forces in American History (2)
- Environment and the Economy (1)
- Fundamentals of Environmental Economics (6)
- Rejuvenating the Economics Classroom (1)
- Understanding Global Economic Issues (6)
- Issues of International Trade (5)

- Online courses (5):
- (1) Economics, Entrepreneurship and Environmentalism Online, (1) Economics of Disasters Online, (2) Economics Online for Teachers, (1) Economics History Online for Teachers, (1) Economic Demise of the Soviet Union

The evaluation is based on feedback from more than 1380 individuals (approximately 651 high school students and 730 teachers) served by FTE programs this past year. Participants in all programs completed questionnaires after each program, rating and providing written comments about the instructors, the content, materials, program format and efficacy, and accommodations, among other specifics of the courses, presentation, meals and activities.

The evaluation methodology for the *Economics for Leaders* program, *Economic History for Leaders*, and some online courses also included pre-tests and end-of-course tests aligned with course content to provide information about the efficacy and impact of the program on learning and comprehension. Follow-up surveys with participants in prior-year programs were conducted this year and are included in the final table.

FTE continues to use online platforms to enhance the type and quality of data collected with online surveys collected from program participants. The continued use and refinement of online data collection has many benefits which include better data quality and reduced errors from transmitting data from paper surveys to online forms; reduced staff resources dedicated to copying and mailing tests and forms; and a higher completion rate for surveys and evaluations which provides more robust data. All program locations were able implement the online data survey collection methodology this year.

The purpose of FTE programs is to bring accessible economic thinking and to provide pedagogical tools and instruction methods around the basics of economics to teachers as well as to introduce students to the economic way of thinking through activities and content. Results from participants' feedback and comprehension tests clearly show the positive impact of FTE programs on participants' learning and their ability to bring the economic way of thinking into the classroom. Participants praised both the passion, energy, and quality of the instruction and the materials to provide a new framework for classroom instruction. They declared that they were given new insights and a fresh analytical perspective not previously known to them. Participants felt that the programs introduced a new way to understand economics and provided clarity on complex topics.

Overwhelmingly and consistently, across the programs executed this year, participants praised:

- FTE instructors for their commitment to the ideas and the courses, clarity and effectiveness and ability to stimulate interest of the participants;
- FTE programming content for its relevancy, accessibility and importance;
- FTE programs for enhancing the participants' understanding of the importance of thinking like economists across historical and current policy issues

Across FTE programs, participants gave outstanding reviews of the course content and especially the course instructors. Students in the *Economics for Leaders*, the largest student program at 616 participants, gave exceptional ratings for the clear and challenging content, instructors and teaching quality, and for the program staff. An overwhelming majority (91%) said they would recommend the program to a peer and that it clarified their thinking on fundamental economic theories.

Teachers were also impressed with the *Economics for Leaders* program—of the 75 participants, 96% said that the content was stimulating and clear and would assist their teaching in the classroom. 97% indicated they would recommend the program to their colleagues. Teachers overwhelmingly benefited from the program and stated that they gained specific tools for teaching the foundations of economics.

Additionally, there were significant knowledge gains in *Economics for Leaders* courses, with students and teachers demonstrating higher performance from pre-tests to post-tests based on course content. Students increased their pre-test average from 72% to 81% average post-test score, a gain of 9% over the average pre-test score and a one-percent overall score increase from last year. In some cases, the gain was an impressive 18% (SMU and Emory programs).

Students in the *Economic History for Leaders* program also reported significant knowledge gains and clarity in the teaching. In both the New York and Berkeley programs teachers gave perfect marks on every margin of the programs (stimulated interest, clear content, responsive instructors, challenging content, would recommend the program). Ninety-seven percent of the students reported that the content was clear and that the instructors were responsive and engaging.

FTE's One Day programs and Online courses were successful and received high praise for both important and relevant content and effective and interesting delivery.

With an impressive set of programs addressing salient economic issues and a framework for analyzing economic problems, a superb team of instructors and leadership staff, FTE continues to make a profound impact on teaching the economic way of thinking in the classroom.

In each section below, the results from surveys completed by program participants are summarized. When applicable, test results are also described.

## Economics for Leaders

### Test of Students' Economic Understanding

Students' understanding of the *Economics for Leaders* economics curriculum was measured by a test given to all students at the end of the weeklong sessions. This test comprises 30 multiple-choice questions from the U.S. Department of Education's National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)—*The Nation's Report Card*—economics assessment.<sup>1</sup> Economics content experts selected, from among released NAEP questions, 30 that are aligned with the tools of economic reasoning and the five economic reasoning principles at the heart of the *Economics for Leaders* course curriculum to serve as the test of economic understanding. A short pre-test based on these questions was given to students at the beginning of the week to gauge comprehension and learning gains.

The average percent correct on the end-of-course test across all FTE programs using the test based on NAEP in 2012 was 81, a nine percentage-point increase from the pre-test (Table 1) and a one-percentage improvement over the FTE 2018 average. Performance on the end-of-course test ranged from 71 percent correct to 88 percent. The overall percent correct on the post-test was 28 percentage points higher than that for the national sample of grade 12 students (53 percent correct) who answered these questions on the NAEP assessment in 2012.

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/economics/> for more information about the NAEP economics assessment.

Students who choose to attend the *Economics for Leaders* program are likely to be, on average, more academically oriented and perhaps have had more relevant coursework prior to attending than many high school students, suggesting some selection bias. Nevertheless, the NAEP national data provide a point of comparison against which we can assess the performance of students exposed to FTE's *Economics for Leaders* curriculum.

### Students' Evaluations

At the end of the weeklong program, students completed evaluations of the economics and leadership sessions, staff, overall program, and aspects of the accommodations. Results overall and by site for the program content, materials, instructors, and overall program are shown in Table 2. Table 3 presents results of evaluations of the staff, residence halls, food and recreational activities.

Students' ratings of the program content, materials, responsiveness of instructors, and overall program were overwhelmingly positive (Table 2). Overall, 83 to 94 percent of students agreed or strongly agreed that the morning economics sessions stimulated their interest, the content was clear, and the instructors were responsive. One hundred percent of students at the Winston-Salem and Cleveland programs would recommend the program to a friend.

Most respondents suggested that the instructors effectively made difficult material easy to digest and understand. Overall, 91 percent of students said they would recommend *Economics for Leaders* to their friends. Eighty-three percent indicated that their understanding of economics had improved because of the program.

When asked about their favorite sessions, students' comments indicated across the board that they enjoyed the activities and the teaching. The comments on the teachers including Mr. Lampe and Dr. Butters stated that they were dynamic, funny, taught using stories to make the lessons relevant and understandable, and were approachable. The FTE teaching staff is a great asset to the programs and generate interest and enthusiasm from the students.

Students' ratings of and comments about the economics and leadership staff were positive (Table 3). Eighty-four percent of the students rated the economics teams exceptional or superb and 85 percent rated the leadership team (student administrators) exceptional or superb. Program coordinators were rated exceptional or superb by 87 percent of students overall. The leadership teams in the Houston, Winston-Salem and Cleveland programs were rated at exceptional or superb by 100 percent of students. Only Houston received the lower than average scores for the economics team with only 50 percent of students giving an "exceptional" or "superb" score.

It is not unusual for the residence halls and food to have markedly lower ratings than the substantive parts of the *Economics for Leaders* program, which was the case this year. Forty-four percent rated the residence halls exceptional or superb and 35 percent rated the food as excellent or superb.

### Teachers' Evaluations

Teachers participating in the *Economics for Leaders* program were asked to evaluate different aspects of the sessions, program faculty, the program overall, and the accommodations. Feedback from 75 teachers across five sites is presented in Tables 4 and 5.

Teachers were pleased with the *Economics for Leaders* sessions and gave high scores across sessions. Overall, 96 percent or more strongly agreed or agreed that the content was clear and challenging, the materials were helpful, and the instructors were responsive. Ninety-seven percent said they would recommend the program to colleagues and the program would improve their ability to teach and implement the economic way of thinking into their classrooms. In two programs, 100 percent of teachers reported that the content was stimulating.

The instructional staff received very high scores and ratings as well (Table 5). Ninety percent of the teachers rated the professors as exceptional or superb and 89 percent extended that rating to mentor teachers. Teachers gave high marks for the program components including activities and overall benefits. St. Louis received the highest across the board marks, with 100 percent of the teachers reporting that the professors, mentor teachers and overall program components were exceptional or superb.

When surveyed about the *Economics for Leaders* curriculum, 80 percent of the teachers rated the lectures and 91 percent rated activities exceptional or superb. Teachers' comments indicate that they enjoy the hands-on approach that can be carried into their classrooms. High praise was given in the comments to activities and simulations which participants felt gave them practical ways to implement the economic lessons. Some comments said the course gave the teachers confidence to bring these concepts into their classrooms. Comments were near unanimous in their praise of the program for providing new insights into teaching and a wealth of resources for the classroom. The program injected enthusiasm into the participants' desire to teach economics to their students which was quite clear in their comments.

Overall only 30 percent of teachers gave the residence halls an exceptional or superb rating and 50 percent rated the food as exceptional or superb. Most of the comments centered around lack of air conditioning, small dorms and uncomfortable beds. The teachers would have preferred to stay in hotel rooms which was common feedback.

When asked about whether the program had changed their understanding of economics and their ability to import that understanding into the classroom, 57 percent reported that their understanding had changed quite a bit.

## Economic History for Leaders/Economic Forces in American History

*Economic History for Leaders* combines the history and economic content of FTE's *Economic Forces in American History* program with the student-teacher format of the *Economics for Leaders* program. It was offered once this year in Berkeley. The *Economic Forces in American History* program, a teacher-only version, was held in New York.

### Test of Economic Understanding

To gauge the impact of the *Economic History for Leaders* program on student learning, a test based on the program curriculum was given to students at the end of the session; a pre-test based on the post-test was given at the beginning of the session. The average percent correct on the pre-test was a 45 and the post-test average was a 59, an impressive 14 percent gain.

### Students' Evaluations

Students were enthusiastic about this program, see Table 6 for detailed results. They enjoyed both the morning and afternoon sessions and 97 or more percent of students indicated that the instructors were engaging and responsive to questions. Students' comments indicate that the professors effectively and passionately communicated the ideas and made the sessions challenging and effective.

Eighty-four percent or more of students said the morning sessions were clear and 97 percent thought the morning instructors were responsive to the students. Ninety-one percent or more said the afternoon sessions were stimulating and 97 percent or more reported that the afternoon sessions provided clear content. Overall, 91 percent of the students in the program would recommend it to a friend and 88 percent report that their understanding was improved.

### Teachers' Evaluations

One hundred percent of teachers in both programs reported that the content was stimulating and that the instructors were responsive to questions and would recommend the program to a colleague and afternoon content was clear, and challenging. Additionally, 100 percent of teachers rated the overall program as exceptional or superb. This program was quite successful with teachers and in both programs all participants agreed or strongly agreed that on all six metrics of the program it was outstanding. Fifty-four percent of the teachers rated the accommodations as exceptional or superb. Overall 64 percent of the teachers suggested that the program changed their understanding quite a bit.

## Environment and the Economy

### Environment and the Economy

The *Environment and the Economy* program was offered in Ft. Lauderdale, FL this year and was quite enthusiastically received by teachers. This program received the highest across-the-board marks of any other teacher program. Of the twenty-one teacher participants 100 percent agreed that the program: stimulated their interest, provided clear and challenging content and would recommend the course to a colleague, and reported that the instructors were responsive to questions and discussion and agreed that their teaching would improve because of the course. They agreed that the program helped them understand salient issues that are of interest to their students. This program is increasingly relevant to the policy topics and concerns of the day and teachers reported in the feedback that they felt armed with the content necessary to discuss these issues in the classroom. The meeting space and food received high praise as well with 86 percent rating the meeting space and 90 percent rating the food as excellent or superb.

## One Day Programs

Eighteen, One Day programs were offered this year—*Fundamentals of Environmental Economics* (Table 10), *Rejuvenating the Economics Classroom* (Table 11), *Understanding Global Economic Issues* (Table 12), and *Issues of International Trade* (Table 13).

### Fundamentals of Environmental Economics

The *Fundamental of Environmental Economics* (Table 10) program was offered at six sites this year and it was enthusiastically received across ninety teacher participants. Across all categories, this program received very high marks and tapped into a desire of teachers to effectively bring these issues into their classrooms.

### Rejuvenating the Economics Classroom

The *Rejuvenating the Economics Classroom* (Table 11) program was offered in Birmingham, Alabama for nineteen participants this year. Eighty-nine percent of the teachers reported that the content was clear and challenging. Ninety-four percent reported that the instructors were responsive, and 83 percent would recommend the course to a colleague. The food and meeting space received high praise as well with 95 percent of respondents reporting the meeting space as exceptional or superb and 94 percent rating the food as exceptional or superb. The teachers in written feedback thought the instructors were engaging and responsive and some even suggesting wanting more time to cover the topics.

### Understanding Global Economic Issues

The *Understanding Global Economics Issues* (Table 12) program was held in six locations this year for 80 participants. The overall marks for this course were very good. One hundred percent reported that the content was clear, the instructors were responsive to feedback and questions and would recommend the course to a colleague. Ninety-six percent reported that it would improve their teaching in the classroom.

### Issues of International Trade

The *Issues of International Trade* (Table 13) program was offered in five locations with 115 participants. The overall scores were very high making this a successful program. One hundred percent of the teachers reported that the content was clear and challenging and that the instructors were responsive. Ninety-nine percent said they would recommend this course to a colleague. The teachers written feedback suggests that they thought the professors were engaging, informative and rigorous. They remarked that the content was relevant to today's policy issues and were grateful to have attended.

## Online Programs

FTE Online courses delivered this year that are included in this evaluation are the following:

- Economics, Entrepreneurship and Environmentalism Online (EEEE) (Table 13)
- Economics of Disasters Online (EODO) (Table 14)
- Economics Online for Teachers, Part 1 and Part 2 (Table 15)
- Economic History Online for Teachers (Table 16)
- Economic Demise of the Soviet Union Online (EDSUO) (Table 17)

Participants completed evaluations at the end of the course on various aspects of the course including lectures, materials, discussion boards, texts, and instructors.

### Economics, Entrepreneurship and Environmentalism Online

This course, launched as a pilot this year, had nineteen teacher participants and overall the respondents gave the class high marks. One hundred percent of participants agreed that the instructors were responsive and that the content was stimulating. Ninety-five percent agreed that the content was clear and that the course would improve their teaching. One hundred percent agreed that the professor was exceptional or superb.

### Economics of Disasters Online

The teachers enjoyed the program and praised it for stimulating interest and responsive instructors. One hundred percent of teachers said the content stimulated their interest, the content was challenging, and that this course would improve their teaching. Eighty-seven percent reported that they would recommend the course to a peer. Ninety-three percent agreed or strongly agreed that the content was clear, and 100 percent said that the overall instruction was excellent or superb. Where the teachers reported lower scores for this program were in the activities, assignments and discussion boards. Sixty-seven percent reported that the assignments and lectures were exceptional or superb. Fifty-three percent reported that the discussion boards were exceptional or superb.

### Economic History Online for Teachers

There were eleven participants in the course this year. One hundred percent of teachers reported that the instructors returned the material in a timely manner and that they were responsive. Ninety-one percent reported that the content was clear, challenging and stimulated interest and that it would improve their teaching. Ninety-one percent rated the overall instruction as exceptional or superb. Some written feedback suggested that the textbook was expensive and not used often enough in the course to warrant its purchase.

### Economics Online for Teachers

*Economics Online for Teachers* was delivered once in the fall, once in the winter. Teachers rated both Part 1 and Part 2 extremely positively. In Part 1, 100 percent said the course stimulated their interest and that the content was clear, the instructors were challenging and responsive and that they would recommend the course to a peer and that it would improve their teaching. In the winter session of Part 2, 100 percent also reported that the content was challenging and that the instructors were responsive and that the assignments were returned in a timely manner. Some written feedback suggested that the course load was intense for a two-credit course and that made it difficult to know where to focus their attention.

### Economic Demise of the Soviet Union Online

*Economic Demise of the Soviet Union Online* was delivered once in an online capacity this year with seventeen participants. The content was well-received and praised by teacher participants across the board. One hundred percent agreed that the content was clear, challenging and that instructors were responsive and timely in the return of assignments. One hundred percent would recommend it to their colleagues, making this quite a popular and successful program. Overall, 94 percent agreed that the instructors were exceptional or superb and 71 percent agreed that the materials were helpful for their

learning and classrooms. Seventy-six percent reported that the discussion boards were exceptional or superb and 71 percent reported that the materials were useful. The written feedback suggested that the professor was engaging and related his real-world experiences in the Soviet economy which made the course relevant and personal. Many felt that it would help them in their classrooms.

## FTE 2018 Program Follow-Up Teacher Questionnaire

This year a follow-up questionnaire was sent to 561 teachers who participated in FTE programs in 2018. Eighty-three responded, the results of which are detailed in Table 18. The results of these surveys are promising and reinforce that the teachers have taken what they learned in FTE programs and incorporated them into the classroom. The programs have also created renewed energy and enthusiasm among teacher participants. Sixty-nine percent said the program increased their enthusiasm for teaching very much and 71 percent said their confidence in teaching economics increased very much.

An overwhelming 88 percent used FTE materials in their classroom (a 4 percent increase over last year), and of those who will teach economics in the future, 100 percent plan to use FTE materials. Ninety-nine percent have already recommended an FTE program or the materials to other teachers (an 8 percent increase over last year) and 91 percent report that their students have a much better or better understanding of the economic way of thinking because of the FTE programs. FTE is filling a critical void in effective teaching methodology for economics in the classroom.