

EVALUATION REPORT

**Foundation for Teaching Economics
2018 Programs in Economics Education**

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September 15, 2018**

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Overview

This independent evaluation of the Foundation for Teaching Economics' 2018 programs for teachers and students includes the following programs conducted from fall 2017 through summer 2018:

- Economics for Leaders (13)
- Economic History for Leaders (2)
- Economic Issues for Teachers (1)
- Environment and the Economy (1)
- Fundamentals of Environmental Economics (11)
- Rejuvenating the Economics Classroom (7)
- Understanding Global Economic Issues (5)
- Innovation and Entrepreneurship (4)
- World of Economics (3)
- Online courses (9):
 - (4) Economics Online for Teachers, (1) Economics of Disasters Online, (1) Economic History Online for Teachers, (1) Economic Demise of the Soviet Union
 - Teacher Economics: (1) The Federal Reserve System, (1) World Development

The evaluation is based on feedback from more than 1,600 individuals (approximately 874 high school students and 771 teachers) served by FTE programs this past year, up from 1,300 individuals who participated the previous 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 things.

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 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 evaluation which provides more robust data. All program locations were able to implement the online data survey collection methodology this year.

The purpose of FTE programs is to bring accessible economic thinking and the necessary pedagogical tools to teachers, as well as to introduce students to the economic way of thinking. 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. Time after time, participants praised the passion and quality of the instruction and the materials to provide a new framework for classroom instruction and declared that they were given new insights and a fresh analytical perspective not previously known to them.

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

- FTE instructors for their passion, responsiveness and clarity and ability to stimulate interest of the participants;
- FTE content for its accessibility and adaptability into the classroom;
- FTE programs for enhancing the participants’ understanding of the importance of the economic way of thinking for domestic and global policy issues

Across FTE programs, participants gave outstanding reviews of the course content and especially the course instructors. Students in the *Economics for Leaders* program gave exceptional ratings for the clear and challenging content, instructors and teaching quality, and for the program staff. An overwhelming majority said they would recommend the program to a peer and that it improved their understanding of how free markets allocated goods and services in the US economy.

Teachers were also impressed with the *Economics for Leaders* program—90% said that the content was stimulating and clear and would assist their teaching in the classroom and 91% said they would recommend the program to their colleagues. Teachers overwhelmingly benefited from the program and indicated that they gained specific tools for teaching the economic way of thinking.

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 scored an average of 80% for their post-test, a gain of 8% over the average pre-test score and a one-percent overall score increase from last year. In some cases, the gain was as large as 13% (Berkeley Program).

Students in the *Economic History for Leaders* program also reported significant knowledge gains and clarity in the teaching. In one program, 100% of the students reported that the content was clear and 97% reported that the instructors were responsive and engaging. Across programs, 83 percent reported an improved understanding of the ideas and material. In both programs post-test scores indicate a 13% gain.

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 the 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 (EFL)* 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.¹¹ Economics content experts selected, from among released NAEP questions, 30 that are aligned with the tools of economic reasoning and the five

¹¹ See <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/economics/> for more information about the NAEP economics assessment.

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 80, an eight percentage-point increase from the pre-test (Table 1) and a one percentage improvement over the FTE 2017 average. Performance on the end-of-course test ranged from 69 percent correct in the Oberlin program to 88 percent in the Ann Arbor, MI program. The overall percent correct on the post-test was 27 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.

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, 463 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, 86 to 93 percent of students agreed or strongly agreed that the morning economics sessions stimulated their interest, the content was clear, and the instructors were responsive. In three of the sites—Los Angeles, Oberlin and Ann Arbor, 100 percent of the students rated the instructors as responsive to questions and feedback, an impressive result. 100 percent of students at the Oberlin and Los Angeles program would recommend the program to a friend.

Most respondents suggested that the instructors effectively made difficult material easy to digest and understand. Overall 82 percent of students reported that the program improved their understanding of how free markets allocate goods and services in the US economy. Amazingly, 88% of students would recommend the program to their friends.

When asked about their favorite sessions, students' comments indicated across the board that they enjoyed the activities and the teaching. "Magic of Markets," "In the Chips," and "The Job Jungle" were economic simulations frequently cited by students as fun but effective learning activities. Students reported that they appreciated several of the leadership activities that brought them together as a team and enhanced their learning experience. Students' comments indicate that these activities help to solidify the economic concepts which they will carry with them into the future.

Students' ratings of and comments about the economics and leadership staff were positive (Table 3). Eighty-three percent of the students rated the economics teams exceptional or superb and 80 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 Ann Arbor and Yale 2 programs were rated at exceptional or superb by 100 percent of students. Los Angeles

received the lower than average scores for the economics team. Comments suggested that the professor was helpful and knowledgeable but could have included more interactive games and better discussion in the classroom.

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, and this year was no different. Forty-nine percent rated the residence halls exceptional or superb and 37 percent rated the food as excellent or superb. The residence halls at Yale University received particularly low ratings relative to the other programs due to the reported lack of air conditioning.

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 69 teachers across four sites is presented in Tables 4 and 5.

Teachers were pleased with the *Economics for Leaders* sessions and gave high scores across sessions. Overall, 90 percent or more strongly agreed or agreed that the morning and afternoon sessions stimulated their interest, the content was clear and challenging, the materials were helpful, and the instructors were responsive. Ninety-six 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 three programs, 100 percent of teachers report that the content was stimulating.

The instructional staff received very high scores and ratings as well (Table 5). Eighty-eight percent of the teachers rated the professors as exceptional or superb and 91 percent extended that rating to mentor teachers. Teachers gave high marks for the program components including activities and overall benefits. Los Angeles 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, 78 percent of the teachers rated the lectures and 87 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 provided them with practical ways to implement the economic lessons. Some comments indicated that the program could be longer for greater opportunities for learning. 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 38 percent of teachers gave the residence halls an exceptional or superb rating and 46 percent rated the food as exceptional or superb. Most of the comments centered around thin sheets, uncomfortable mattresses and in some cases, shared bathrooms among men and women. There were no other major issues with the food or housing.

When asked about whether the program had changed their understanding of economics and their ability to import that understanding into the classroom, 62 percent reported that their understanding had changed quite a bit.

Economic History for Leaders

Economic History for Leaders (EHFL) combines the history and economic content of FTE's former *Economic Forces in American History* program with the student-teacher format of the *Economics for Leaders* program. It was offered twice this year in St. Louis, MO (Washington University) and Medford, MA (Tufts University).

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 50 and the post-test average was a 63, a 13 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 81 or more percent of students in both sessions 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.

Sixty-five percent or more said the afternoon sessions were stimulating and 77 percent or more reported that the afternoon sessions provided clear content. Overall, 82 percent of the students in the program would recommend it to a friend and 82 percent report that their understanding of how free markets have contributed to the economic growth of the United States.

Teachers' Evaluations

Teachers clearly value the EHFL program. 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. Ninety-six percent said that the morning content was clear and 96 percent reported that the afternoon content was challenging. One-hundred percent of teachers rated the overall program as exceptional or superb. Teachers rated the accommodations much higher than the previous year with 54 percent rating them as exceptional or superb. Overall 65 percent of the teachers suggested that the program changed their understanding quite a bit.

Economic Issues for Teachers

One *Economic Issues for Teachers (EI)* program was offered this year in Atlanta, GA. There were thirty-two teacher participants. The topics covered included: "Demise of the Soviet Union," "Issues of International Trade," "Is Capitalism Good for the Poor?" and "Economics of Water Use and the Environment." This program was rated quite strongly with 100 percent of teacher participants agreeing or strongly agreeing that the program was stimulating, the content was challenging, instructors were responsive, the program would improve their teaching and that they would recommend the program to a colleague. This feedback is impressive making this program one of the most successful teacher programs held this year. Relative to other programs the food and accommodation space was ranked high at 78 percent and 74 percent, respectively. These higher ratings probably reflect the location: this program was held in conference hotel instead on a college campus. Teacher participants loved the

clarity, and passion that the professor brought. One suggestion made was to bring guided notes because they couldn't keep up with all the good content.

Environment and the Economy

The *Environment and the Economy* program was offered in Hollywood Beach, FL this year and, like the EI program, was quite enthusiastically received by teachers. Of the thirty-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. Ninety-seven percent 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.

One Day Programs

Seventeen, One Day programs were offered this year. Twelve, One Day teacher programs were offered this year—*Environment and the Economy* (Table 9), *Fundamentals of Environmental Economics* (Table 10), *Teacher Economics: Rejuvenating the Economics Classroom* (Table 11), *Teacher Economics: Understanding Global Economic Issues* (Table 12). Five, One Day student programs were held—*World of Economics* (Table 19), *Innovation and Entrepreneurship* (Table 20).

Teacher Programs

Fundamentals of Environmental Economics

The *Fundamentals of Environmental Economics* program was offered at eleven sites this year and it was enthusiastically received across two-hundred and twenty-two 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.

Ninety-five percent of teachers said the content was stimulating and 99 percent reported that the content was clear and would be valuable to their teaching. Ninety-five percent reported that they would recommend the program to a colleague and said this program will improve their teaching. The comments were universally positive about the relevant and powerful content that these programs provided and praised the instructors for their passion, clarity and depth of knowledge.

Rejuvenating the Economics Classroom

There were seven One Day programs for *Rejuvenating the Economics Classroom* with one-hundred twenty participants. Ninety-eight percent of teachers across all programs indicated that the instructors were responsive to feedback and questions. Ninety-three percent agreed that the content was stimulating, and 97 percent reported that the content was clear and valuable for their classrooms.

Overall, 89 percent of teachers agreed that the instructors were exceptional or superb and 92 percent would recommend the program to a fellow teacher, an increase of almost 20 percent from last year.

Understanding Global Economic Issues

Seventy teacher participants gave high praise for *Understanding Global Economic Issues*. One hundred percent agreed that the content was clear, and would recommend the course to a colleague. Ninety-nine percent strongly agreed or agreed that the content was challenging, stimulated their interest and that the instructors were responsive. Ninety-nine percent reported that this would improve their teaching and 100 percent of participants reported that the instruction was exceptional or superb.

Teachers were praised in the comments for their passion, ability to communicate complex ideas in an understandable way, and overall delivery. Comments indicated consistently that the instructors and professors had passion, humor and effective teaching methods that will be taken into the future.

Student Programs

World of Economics

There were three *World of Economics* One Day programs held for 189 students this year. Overall, 83 percent reported that the content was stimulating and 95 percent said the content was clear (a three-percent increase over last year). Where this program lacked in rankings relative to other programs was the challenging nature of the content, with only 50 percent reporting agreeing that the content challenged them and 70 percent reporting that the program improved their understanding. Student comments indicated they all enjoyed the trading activity and other simulations that were used in the program. Some students wanted more advanced material presented.

The instructors received warm praise for their style and delivery with 80 percent rating the instructors as exceptional or superb and this was supported in the comments from the students as well. They enjoyed the teachers' delivery and style and presentation skills.

Innovation and Entrepreneurship

Four *Innovation and Entrepreneurship* One Day student programs were held last year with 159 participants. Overall, 58 percent agreed or strongly agreed that the program stimulated their interest and 57 percent reported that the instructors were responsive. This one-day program had significantly lower scores than other student programs. The highest marks were given for content clarity, with 82 percent agreeing that the content was clear. Only 53 percent of students reported that they would recommend the program to a peer and 58 percent agreed that their understanding was improved after the course.

Online Programs

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

- Economics of Disasters Online (Table 13)
- Teacher Economics: The Federal Reserve System (Table 14)
- Teacher Economics: World Development (Table 15)
- Economics Online for Teachers, Part 1 and Part 2 (Table 16)
- Economic History Online for Teachers (Table 17)
- Economic Demise of the Soviet Union (Table 18)

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

Economics of Disasters Online

There was one *Economics of Disasters* program held this year. 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 the return of assignments was timely. Ninety percent reported that they would recommend the course to a peer and that the program would improve their teaching. Ninety-one 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 was in the activities, assignments and discussion boards. Seventy-three percent reported that the assignments and activities were exceptional or superb. Sixty-four percent reported that the discussion boards were exceptional or superb.

Teacher Economics: The Federal Reserve System

Teacher Economics: The Federal Reserve was delivered once in the winter of 2018. The course included lectures, activities and videos, assignments, materials and discussion boards. The content and instruction in this course were appreciated and applauded by the teachers. Ninety-three percent said the content was challenging, stimulated interest, was challenging and clear. Eighty-six percent agreed that the course would improve their teaching and would recommend it to a colleague.

Several comments suggested that the material was quite scholarly and challenging and dense to follow but even so, they appreciated learning more and commented that this material should be brought into US history courses as much as possible.

Teacher Economics: World Development

There were ten participants in *Teacher Economics: World Development*. One hundred percent agreed or strongly agreed that the content was clear, stimulated interest and agreed that the return of assignments was timely. Ninety percent agreed or strongly agreed that the content was challenging and that the instructors were responsive. Ninety percent rated the overall instruction as exceptional or superb and 80 percent rating the assignments as exceptional or superb. Lower marks were given to lectures and activities with 50 percent ranking the lectures and 60 percent rating the activities as exceptional or superb. Teachers comments suggest that they felt overwhelmed by the busy work of the discussion boards and felt that could be altered in the future.

Economics Online for Teachers

Economics Online for Teachers was delivered twice in the fall, once in the winter and once in the summer. Teachers rated both Part 1 and Part 2 extremely positively. In Part 1, 94 to 100 percent said the course stimulated their interest and that the content was clear. In the winter session of Part 1, 100 percent also reported that the content was challenging and that the instructors were responsive.

Instructors received high praise for their lectures, activities and relevant assignments. Most teachers said the materials and discussion boards were useful. The discussion board had more variability in their scores with between 50 percent and 75 percent of teachers reporting that they were helpful. There is no

data for Part 1, for the Fall 2017 session of *Economics Online for Teachers* due to some data transfer issues from Canvas for that program.

Economic History Online for Teachers

Economic History Online for Teachers was delivered once this year in the summer of 2018 with ten teacher participants. One hundred percent of teachers reported that the content was challenging and that the materials were returned in a timely manner. Ninety percent reported that the program was stimulating and that the content was clear. Ninety percent said they would recommend the course to a colleague. Overall the teachers appreciated the instructors with a 90 percent overall approval rating. Seventy percent said the materials were useful and found the activities to be either exceptional or superb.

Economic Demise of the Soviet Union Online

Economic Demise of the Soviet Union Online was delivered once this year and was well-received and praised by the teacher participants. 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, 100 percent agreed that the instructors were exceptional or superb and 92 percent agreed that the materials were helpful for their learning and classrooms. Eighty-five percent reported that the discussion boards were exceptional or superb and 92 percent reported that the materials were useful.

FTE 2017 Program Follow-Up Teacher Questionnaire

This year a follow-up questionnaire was sent to the teachers who participated in FTE programs in 2017. Eighty-one responded, the results of which are detailed in Table 22. The results of these surveys reinforce that 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-seven percent said the program increased their enthusiasm for teaching very much and 58 percent said their confidence in teaching economics increased significantly.

An overwhelming 88 percent reported using FTE materials in their classroom, and of those who will teach economics in the future, 100 percent plan to use FTE materials. Ninety-two percent have already recommended an FTE program or the materials to other teachers and 51 percent report that their students have a better understanding of the economic way of thinking because of the FTE programs. FTE is clearly filling a void in effective teaching methodology for economics in the classroom.