

TRECC: Teaching Resources For Economics at Community Colleges

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What is TRECC?

TRECC is an economics newsletter focused on teaching economics at the community college level. We seek to provide resources that will help instructors provide a dynamic and meaningful experience for their students. We also seek to unite instructors from across the country and open the lines of communication between us all.



Special Announcement: CTREE 2023!

May 31-June 2, 2023, Portland, OR: American Economic Association 12th Annual Conference on Teaching and Research in Economic Education <https://www.aeaweb.org/about-aea/committees/economic-education/ctree/2023>

Interview With Charity-Joy Acchiardo: Rethinking the Use of Slide Presentations to Engage Students



Charity-Joy Acchiardo is Faculty

Fellow of the Civitas Institute and Associate Professor of Instruction in the Department of Economics at the University of Texas at Austin. She is the faculty lead for UT's OnRamps microeconomics course for high school students and is director of the Financial Responsibility and Economic Education program, both joint projects of the Civitas Institute and the Department of Economics.

What inspired you to make your slides more visual? I have a background in art, and have always favored the artistic side of things. I often find that presentations are quite text-heavy and not engaging at all. The information should be presented in a way that resonates with the audience.

How long does the process

take? This depends on the individual. It is a lengthy but worthwhile thing to do. The advice I would give faculty is to purchase a professional template and work from there. (There are many affordable options.) In terms of using comparative advantage, it might be worth the time to contact someone to do freelance work for you.

What positive outcomes have you seen from this new approach? What I have noticed from student evaluations is that students tell me that I seem to care about the material. It allows me to create a social contract and develop social capital with them. It is all about perception in terms of how we teach our classes. You want to show from day one, that the material is engaging, you have

put time into preparing it, and that you care about what you are teaching.

Any negatives or pitfalls? One “negative” was getting students to transition to this new approach. Many were used to simply copying slides as a substitute for taking notes. When I began to use compelling pictures to help make key points “sticky” in the minds of students, they missed the text heavy slides! The following semester, I eliminated slides completely, and didn’t receive a single complaint. Since then, I only show slides periodically throughout the lecture rather than have a slideshow on for the entire time. I reserve their use for times when something is best shown visually.

Any particular approach that is effective on slides?

- It is important to have pacing for the whole lesson. Every time you switch to a new slide, attention is interrupted. You don’t want to be doing this every minute!
- Have a break between the slides. Mute your display.
- Make sure that transitions have a purpose.
- If you have a cartoon or quote, don’t feel like you have to read it to them.
- Remember the spotlight is not on the presentation, it is on the instructor!

Any font that you would suggest using and not using? Stay away from Sans-Serif fonts. Arial is a great font to use because it is compatible across platforms. You may painstakingly make a beautiful presentation at home only to find the formatting is completely askew when you show it on a computer that isn’t loaded with your fonts. Make sure that the font and the template complement each other. You shouldn’t be using more than 2 different fonts.

Why aren’t more faculty adopting this approach? I am not sure

how many faculty are not adopting this approach. If they are not, it might be due to the fact that switching costs exist, there is a lengthy transition process to create new presentations, and there is possibly a fear that this approach may be risky, especially when tenure is concerned.

Anything else you would like to share? From experience, if you happen to be presenting somewhere off campus, make sure to send the PowerPoints (and any special fonts) ahead of time, so they can be loaded onto the institution’s system. Also, if you use a PDF, you lose the ability to use any animations that may be in your presentation. joyofecon@gmail.com

Readers may also be interested in a journal article on using visual cues in economics classrooms: Vazquez, J. J., & Chiang, E. P. (2014). A picture is worth a thousand words (at least): The effective use of visuals in the economics classroom. *International Review of Economics Education*, 17, 109-119. doi.org/10.1016/j.iree.2014.08.006

Getting to Know James Peyton

by SUNITA KUMARI



A February, 2022, [article in The Chronicle of Higher Education](#) reports on the importance of community college educators to national disciplinary

organizations, including the American Economics Association. In light of this recent discussion, TRECC is republishing an interview on this important topic.

James Peyton teaches economics at Highline Community College in Seattle, WA since 1999. He earned his Ph.D. in Agricultural and Resource Economics from the University of California, Davis, in 2001 with a research focus on environmental economics. James interest in economics education piqued when he attended the American Economic Association (AEA) Teaching Innovations Program (TIP) in 2006. Consequently, the following year, he presented a paper on a simple macroeconomics simulation as part of a TIP panel at the Western Economics Association annual meeting. And now, he is the Community College Representative on the AEA’s Committee on Economic Education (AEACEE)! Sunita Kumari reached out to him with questions about how economics faculty at community colleges can get involved in supporting AEA and receiving support from AEA in strengthening and promoting economic literacy at their respective institutions.

What is the role of AEA in supporting economics faculty at community colleges? The AEA is the primary professional organization for economists in the U.S. Many economics faculty may already see the AEA as a way to stay current in the latest research in economics. What they may not know is that the AEA website has research highlights, podcasts, and featured charts that provide some different ways to get that information. They cover a wide variety of current topics, including inequality, climate change, deportation policies, and healthcare.

One recent research highlight discussed with Bradley Shapiro the [costs and benefits of direct advertising of prescription drugs to consumers](#). Contrary to a lot of popular opinion, the research showed net positive societal benefits of antidepressant advertising. Using examples like that one in class can help us communicate the breadth of economic research.

Staying current can include other aspects of our faculty work, too. The AEA Committee on Economic Education (AEACEE) website has a page of resources for community college economics faculty. We put together those resources to provide annotated links to useful web pages including information on different teaching strategies and ways to stay connected to other community college economics faculty. One way that full-time faculty can support adjunct faculty is by sharing the links to these resources.

While many of the resources I'm talking about are useful to economics instructors at different levels, the AEACEE sees that it can help support community college economics faculty by specifically identifying us as a group and maintaining the web page focused on our needs. That way we have some visibility within the AEACEE efforts to strengthen economic education.

What other current AEA initiatives are relevant to economics faculty at community colleges? One initiative is the Task Force on Outreach to High School and Undergraduate Students in Economics. The stated goal of the task force work is "attracting more women and underrepresented minorities into economics." The Task Force has been working with the K-12 focused National Association of Economic Educators and the FED education offices. As this work evolves, it has been good to see that this AEA group has recognized community colleges as a place

where many students start their economics journey.

In a [committee spotlight on the AEA website](#), the Chair of the Task Force, Sam Allgood, states that they have been looking at where community colleges fit in this work and notes that reaching community college economics faculty has been particularly challenging. Faculty in small departments and with little connection to the discipline often do not answer emails from people they do not know. That is one of the reasons why this TRECC newsletter is critical!

Thank you for the shoutout to TRECC! Are there any AEA initiatives related to equity and inclusion that might interest economics faculty at community colleges? The [AEA initiative Best Practices for Economists: Building a More Diverse, Inclusive, and Productive Profession](#) is impressive. We all know that we need to find ways to effectively communicate the relevance of economics to students, and to provide better support to our students and colleagues from nontraditional backgrounds.

The Best Practices group has put together some great resources – some of the best that I have seen. I especially like the [Working with Students](#) page as it has a list of steps that focus on our work with students, and it includes links to a lot of supporting research.

A related student-facing effort is the [Economists Change the World](#) web page. The videos section of that

page makes a point of highlighting the work of economists from nontraditional backgrounds.

What are some ways that economics faculty at community colleges can get more involved? Attending regional economics conferences in our areas is an effective way to start building stronger connections with other economists. The [AEA Conference on Teaching and Research in Economic Education](#) (CTREE) is a great one to attend (Portland, May 31-June 2, 2023 is the next one) as the AEA keeps the registration fee around \$ 225 and it usually attracts a good group of economics faculty from community colleges.

Hosting a mini conference in your area might be an option. A day-long event focused on lower-division classes with a guest speaker from government and a few semi-structured discussions can be a low-cost way to bring faculty together from area colleges and promote some great conversations.

I have some experience with mini-conferences, and I am always happy to share ideas and templates. I know that there is a group in West Texas considering something like that. We are also looking for some faculty who are interested in participating in a common assessment project. So, here is an invitation to all TRECC readers to contact me at jpeyton@highline.edu with any questions or interests. Thanks!

Miscellaneous Resources for Teaching Economics

This issue of TRECC highlights resources for economics educators on the *Substack* platform:



- *Choice: Economics Materials for Success* by Stefani Milovanska-Farrington, University of Tampa: <https://econstefani.substack.com>
- *Monday Morning Economist* by Jadrian Wooten, Virginia Tech University: <https://jadrian.substack.com>



Upcoming Conferences, Meetings, and Workshops

- Midwest Economics Association 87th Annual Meeting, March 31-April 2, 2023, Cleveland, OH <https://mea.sites.grinnell.edu/>
- National Association for Business Economic Policy Conference, March 28-30, 2023, Washington, DC <https://www.nabe.com/pc2023>
- Online Learning Innovation Conference, online April 4-6, 2023, in-person April 18-21, 2023, Nashville, TN <https://onlinelearningconsortium.org/attend-2023/innovate/>
- American Economic Association 12th Annual Conference on Teaching and Research in Economic Education, May 31-June 2, 2023, Portland, OR <https://www.aeaweb.org/about-aea/committees/economic-education/ctree/2023>
- TeachECONference Fourth Annual Virtual Conference, online video-poster session June 19-23, 2023, live presentations June 28-30, 2023 <https://ctale.org/teacheconference2023/>
- 22nd International Conference on Cultural Economics, June 27-30, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN https://culturalaffairs.indiana.edu/programs/conferences/ACEI_conference/index.html
- Agriculture and Applied Economics Association Annual Meeting, July 23- 25, 2023, Washington, DC <https://www.aaea.org/meetings/2023-aea-annual-meeting>
- Journal of Economics Teaching Symposium on Economics Teaching, August 4-6, 2023, Newport, KY <https://journalofeconomicsteaching.org/symposium/>
- 62nd Financial Literacy and Economic Education Conference, September 22-23, 2023, Fort Lauderdale, FL <https://www.councilforeconed.org/events/cee-educator-conference/>
- EDUCAUSE Annual Conference, in-person October 9-12, 2023, Chicago, IL, online October 18-19, 2023 <https://events.educause.edu/annual-conference>
- 21st Annual St. Louis Fed Professors Conference: Active Learning in the College Classroom, November 2-3, 2023 <https://events.stlouisfed.org/event/8282afea-2c7f-4692-a736-6bf802775a69/summary>
- SEA 93rd Annual Meeting, November 18-20, 2023, New Orleans, LA <https://www.southerneconomic.org>
- American Economic Association Annual Meeting, January 5-7, 2024, San Antonio, TX <https://www.aeaweb.org/conference/about>
- 35th Annual Teaching Economics Conference, TBA 2024, Robert Morris University, Pittsburgh