

TEACHING RESOURCES FOR ECONOMICS AT COMMUNITY COLLEGES

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Edited by Brian Lynch and Meena Beri

2026 ASSA
Annual Meeting
January 3-5, 2026
Philadelphia, PA

Foundation of
Teaching Economics
Workshops Virtual and In person
(stipends) (January
and February)

NAEE Professional
Development
Conference
March 4-6, 2026
Kansas City, MO

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.

Teach Economics Podcast Series

The Teach Economics podcast series, created by the Economic Education team is a great resource for educators. Check out the recent episodes:

Patrice Bain: Teaching with "Power Tools" and David Autor "The Human Side of AI"



TEACHING RESOURCES

Midwest Economics
Association
March 20-22, 2026
Chicago, IL

Conference on
Teaching and
Research in Economic
Education
May 27-29, 2026
Las Vegas, NV

Journal of Economics
Teaching Symposium
2026
West Lafayette, IN
July 29-31, 2026,

ECONIFUL

Check Econiful webpage for
high quality, nonpartisan,
ready to use resources in
classroom.

FEDERAL RESERVE EDUCATION (FRE) TEACHING RESOURCES

- FRE website is your one-stop shop for all
federal reserve teaching resources
- Active Learning
- Modules
- FRED Graphs
- Infographics
- Audio and Video Q&A

ECONOMICS IN CONTEXT INITIATIVE UPDATES IN 2025

The Economics of Global Climate Change [Updated 2025]
Energy Economics and Policy [Updated 2025]
Trade and the Environment [Updated 2025]
Water: Economics and Policy [Updated 2025]
Population and the Environment [New in 2025]
Alternatives to GrowthCentric Development [Updated
2025]

INTERVIEW WITH A MASTER TEACHER

Please note: This interview was edited for length.

Avi J. Cohen is Adjunct Professor of Economics at the University of Toronto, and University Professor Emeritus at York University.
(With scott wolla) *Microeconomics for Life: Smart Choices for You and Macroeconomics for Life: Smart Choices for All?* — published in the U.S. by Pearson in 2026



Targeting Economic Literacy: What Should Go into the Only Economics Course Students Will Ever Take?

INTERVIEW WITH AVI COHEN

INTERVIEWER: BRIAN LYNCH AND MEENA BERI

Meena: Avi, do you have any insights for community college professors about how to teach the core concepts that students can apply in their life?

Avi: That's a very big question. I think there are three key principles to the literacy-targeted (LT) approach. One is you need to exclude some content that students will never use.

The second is with time saved, increase the number of applications of those core concepts so it really sinks in. Less is indeed more! What the students do get, they'll hopefully be able to better retain and use later in their lives. So those two things go hand in hand.

The third principle that I think is common to all of using this approach is the use of narratives and storytelling. You really have to engage students and storytelling is the most universal form of human communication.

I began teaching this way 15 years ago and have had to constantly defend myself against the criticism that

“oh this is dumbed down. Storytelling is not math.”

Meena: These are very valid points and that's the reason I guess why our field suffered and we do not see that many economics majors because our own peers in economics criticize these approaches often.

Avi: I rely a lot on data that Wendy Stock collected. Three really astounding statistics come out of her work. 75% of students in either community colleges or universities never take any economics course. **Economics is such a useful thing to learn, and yet 75% never, never get there because they are not interested or they've heard bad things about the course..**

The second statistic is that of those who take principles, 80% never take another economics course. There must be a way to improve this situation. Most courses are taught as though the majors are the important people and you have to give them all these technical tools for upper-level courses. However most of those students are not going to go on and major in economics. The third statistic is that of the people who take principles classes, only 2% go on to major in economics

Meena: This is the time when economists should wake up and start promoting economics courses. One of the ways to do this is if we teach our courses in a way that have real life applications - as you said.

Avi: But we also have to do a better job of describing what the course does in a way that will appeal to students. One of the things that finally led me to a breakthrough was when I started working on these textbooks about 15 years ago.

I always started with the table of contents of a typical principles course and then tried to simplify it. When you think about the typical chapter titles – elasticity, externalities, public goods, monopolistic competition – these are meaningless jargon to students.

Brian: When it comes to grading written student papers, what is the perfect balance between application versus perfect grammar, and sentence structure?

Avi: First and foremost, you want them to develop an argument. That's what good writing is all about. The assignments I used to use were based on this principle. But in the last two years, because of AI, I've had to abandon these assignments. There several assignments that my students do. One of them is to write a 500 word op-ed, one in micro, one in macro

We want them communicating with fellow citizens about their opinion about some economic event. I allow first-year students to pick an article or a news story and then use that as a basis for writing up their position on it. They loved those assignments because they finally got to have a voice in terms of what I do think about this and can they make a good argument about that?

Meena: And what would be your advice for online courses?

Avi: I know it's a tough one right now. Just to put it into context, I've been teaching online for 10 or 15 years, pre-COVID. The academic dishonesty experience is just so overwhelming. During COVID, and this was even before AI, we found out that students could take a multiple choice test and within 15 seconds they could find the answer. To counter this we collaborated and literally made up new multiple choice questions for every test. They only had to be slight variations on existing ones, rearrange the answers or change a few words, but that would be enough to stymie searches.

A lot of things that we do to mitigate dishonesty are not conducive to really good learning. The problem with online is that you just can't trust who's doing it. There was an old New Yorker cartoon, with a couple of dogs in front of computer screens, and one of the dogs says "On the internet, no one knows you're a dog." You don't know who's behind that screen!

Meena: I just want to say thank you for talking to us - it's been a lot of fun.

Avi: Thank you so much for the opportunity.

TRECC NEWSLETTER

SUGGESTIONS

We love to hear from you. If you have any suggestions or content that you would like to share with us, please reach out to the editors:

Brian Lynch and Meena Beri