

Faculty Learning Community Project

“Collaborative Learning Activities in Economics”

Mary Lou Basile  
May, 2002

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## **Collaborative Learning in the Economics Classroom**

**Mary Lou Basile**

My involvement in the Faculty Learning Community allowed me the opportunity to focus on developing activities that I could use in my lecture courses to get my students more involved with their own learning during class time. Typically, my lecture courses have been teacher directed with a good deal of discussion, but the discussion was lead by me. My goal in this project was to get students more involved with each other by providing them with opportunities to work together on specific activities during class time.

The course I used for this project was Economics 2, the second course of a two-quarter sequence required for students in the Accounting Technologies AAS program. All eight students enrolled in the course were third year students, close to graduation. This group has been taking courses together for the past two to three years so they were familiar with each other which proved to be a positive element, but also a negative element as some students were not willing to work with others. In addition, there were some communication differences between the students which limited my ability to group these students for activities.

The activities I developed were informed by research in brain-based learning and collaborative learning, two areas which I find to be extremely interesting. During the Lilly Conference in November of 2001, I attended several workshops led by Barbara Millis who has done extensive work on incorporating collaborative activities in the classroom. I have also done some study on brain-based learning which helped me to formulate my activities.

The student feedback on this project was very positive, more positive than I thought it would be. It took several weeks for the students to become comfortable with the classroom work. I believe this is due to the fact that students are not used to working together in class. The literature I read supported this notion. Once students became more practiced in working together, they were more comfortable with the activities.

I did not see appreciable gains in students grades, however, since this was my first attempt at incorporating this type of learning, it may be due to my skill in developing appropriate learning activities. I also noticed a shift downward in student motivation during the quarter compared to Winter quarter, which may have had some influence on their grades.

Having had the opportunity to try out collaborative learning activities in the classroom has motivated me to continue to develop this type of learning in my classes. I am very grateful for having the chance to be involved in the Faculty Learning Community. It was the highlight of my academic year.

**Economics 2**  
**Course Syllabus**  
**0801-232**

**Required Reading**

*Economics*, Fifth Edition  
William Boyes and Michael Melvin  
Houghton Mifflin, 2002

Additional readings will be distributed.

**Course Content:**

Fiscal Policy  
Economic Indicators  
Federal Budget

Money and Banking  
Federal Reserve System  
Monetary Policy

**Textbook Chapters:**

- Ch. 6 National Income Accounting
- Ch. 7 An Intro. to the Foreign Exchange Market and Balance of Payments
- Ch. 8 Unemployment and Inflation
- Ch. 9 Macroeconomic Equilibrium: Aggregate Demand and Supply
- Ch. 10 Aggregate Expenditures
- Ch. 11 Income and Expenditures Equilibrium
- Ch. 12 Fiscal Policy
- Ch. 13 Money and Banking
- Ch. 14 Monetary Policy
- Ch. 15 Macroeconomic Policy: Tradeoffs, Expectations, Credibility and Sources of Business Cycles
- Ch. 37 Exchange Rate Systems and Practices

**Class Policies:**

**Attendance:** You are expected to attend all classes. If you are absent, you are still responsible for all material covered in class.

**Assignments:** You are expected to do all assigned work before it is discussed in class to enable you to :

1. participate in classroom discussions and other activities
2. ask questions related to the material that you do not understand
3. check your understanding of the material
4. prepare yourself for quizzes and tests.

**FLC Teaching Project**  
**Mary Lou Basile**

**Spring Quarter: Economics 2**

**Problem:** Getting students more involved in classroom learning.

**Goal:** Less teacher talk time, more student centered activities.

At this point I am thinking of developing (or finding) class projects, perhaps group activities, that will lead student learning, putting more of a focus on the students rather than the teacher.

**Issues:**

The characteristics of the students I teach include weak reading skills. These students have a difficult time with college level texts and other reading material. This may make it difficult for students to find information required to do the projects.

Many of my students have little experience with economic issues. There is little or no "incidental learning" occurring due to their hearing loss, which puts them at a disadvantage compared to their hearing counterparts.

Another strong characteristic of deaf learners is dependence, rather than independence, which may lead to some uncomfortable feelings for them as I try to initiate this process.

**Opportunities:**

If I can structure this class the way I would like to, the results will be more "ownership" of the learning process by my students. This should give them more confidence in themselves as learners both in classroom and work settings.

Nov, 2001

### Several Examples of Class Activities

Students were required to accomplish these tasks in groups of two. Results were shared with the class. A time limit was given (5-8 minutes).

#1

1. Draw and label a circular flow model diagram.

Answer the following questions:

- a. What are the 4 sectors of the economy?
- b. What is the equation for Net Exports

#2

What is the definition of:

- Net
- Gross
- Revenue
- Expenses
- Profit

#3

Fill in the following table:

Economic Sector	Spending is called:	Abbreviation

#4

What is a price index? Explain the concept to each other.

Why do we need a price index?

Review homework problems on price index and compare your answers.

RIT Faculty Learning Community 2001-2002

Mary Lou Basile, NTID Business Careers Department

Project: Collaborative Learning Activities in Economics

Faculty Colleague: Allen M. Ford

Student Colleague: Felia Aldridge

In this project I attempted to incorporate collaborative learning activities in a macroeconomics class for applied accounting students. My goal was to actively engage the students in discussion of content by utilizing at least one strategy in each class period.

My findings included the following observations:

- Grouping of students was critical to success
- Students were not accustomed to working together and were sometimes unprepared to do so
- Some students enjoyed the activities more than others
- Some students gained confidence in their knowledge of economics
- I enjoyed the classes more!

April, 2002

**Faculty Learning Community Project Evaluation  
Collaborative Learning  
Economics II- 20013**

**Please answer these questions about the group activities we have done in class this quarter.**

**The group activities that I am talking about include:**

**Working together to fill out charts and tables  
Working together on study guide questions  
Working together on questions I give you to review material in the book or from lectures**

**1. Did you like working with another person in class to answer questions?**

Yes 6 Why?

- Because it made me feel like I wasn't the only one with misunderstanding of a problem.
- It helps me when I work with others because if I have wrong answers, others will explain more clearly
- Because another person may know the answer and he/she can help the other.
- It always helps to answer questions first. If you don't understand something right the person you are working with may understand.
- Gives me motivation to do well on the homework
- Because it sometimes helps me to understand better when working with students.

No 1 Why?

- Just depends on the person, he would have done his homework or he has his idea about the chapter covered.

**2. Do you think that working together helped you understand the material better?**

- Kinda, I prefer teaching. Just depends on who the people are in the classroom. Working together in groups may be helpful or not.
- Yes
- Yes
- Sometimes
- Yes
- Yes, because sometimes the teacher might not explain the material so that the students understand.
- Sometimes

**3. Do you think that working together was a good use of time in class?**

- Yes (5)
- Kinda
- Somtimes

**4. Do you think that working together helped you get better grades?**

- Yes (3)
- No
- It always helps
- Don't know
- I don't think so. I got better grades directly from the professor

**5. Did you work with anyone outside of class when you studied for quizzes, tests or did homework assignments?**

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ Why?

- Much easier for me to study. I can ask the other person questions.
- I studied with my friend sometimes to prepare for quizzes, tests and any homework assignments. It was helpful.

No \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_ Why?

- Because they never asked me to do together outside of class and maybe it is because I live off campus which is not fit in their schedule
- Because I don't have time
- Because I never ask

**6. At the beginning of most chapters, I gave you several bonus point questions about the next chapter.**

**Did these bonus point quizzes encourage you to read the chapter?**

- Very much and always motivated with mood.
- Yes (4)
- No
- Yes, it did. Plus, I like to collect bonus points toward my quiz to make up the loss of points.

**If I did not give bonus points, would you still read the chapter for the quiz?**

- Yes, I have to read these chapter anyway to get better understanding go the material and to prepare for quiz anyway
- Yes (4)
- No (2)

**Do you think these quizzes helped you understand the material better?**

- Yes, of course, a big time. It helped me to get better grades on the tests. And also helpful to study and learn from mistakes.
- Yes (5)
- Very well and clearly. Quizzes lead to understand the subtopics and all the related points.

**7. If you were to give me advice about next year's economics class, would you tell me to:**

Continue giving bonus points quizzes Yes 7 No \_\_\_\_\_

Continue having group activities Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

**What other comments would you like to make about the group activities?**

-Class activities are good. I think group activities outside of class would be helpful. Everyone just needs motivation from this course to gain better understanding about economics and to know what is going on in America today.

-I would suggest you give students some assignment for lecture relate to book.

-N/A

-Encourage the students to read and do the material.

-Each groups write the answer on the board and compare the answer and explain why.

-The class are more attentive when we have group activities instead of sitting 2 hours straight to listen to lecture.

-To achieve a higher successful, try to encourage them to meet once a week.

**What grade do you think you will get in this class?**

A (1)

A or B (1)

B (1)

C (2)

No clue, hopefully a B

Not so good, but hopefully D or C

9/02

M.L. Basile

-10-

**Exhibit 2.2. Teaching Goals Inventory, Self-Scoring Worksheet.**

- In all, how many of the fifty-two goals did you rate as "essential"? \_\_\_\_\_
- How many "essential" goals did you have in each of the six clusters listed below?

Cluster Number and Name	Goals Included in Cluster	Total Number of "Essential" Goals in Each Cluster	Clusters Ranked— from 1st to 6th— by Number of "Essential" Goals
I Higher-Order Thinking Skills	1-8	<u>2</u>	_____
II Basic Academic Success Skills	9-17	<u>—</u>	_____
III Discipline-Specific Knowledge and Skills	18-25	<u>2</u>	_____
IV Liberal Arts and Academic Values	26-35	<u>2</u>	_____
V Work and Career Preparation	36-43	<u>—</u>	_____
VI Personal Development	44-52	<u>—</u>	_____

- Compute your cluster scores (average item ratings by cluster) using the following worksheet.

A	B	C	D	E
Cluster Number and Name	Goals Included	Sum of Ratings Given to Goals in That Cluster	Divide C by This Number	Your Cluster Scores
I Higher-Order Thinking Skills	1-8	<u>32</u>	8	<u>4</u>
II Basic Academic Success Skills	9-17	<u>22</u>	9	<u>2.4</u>
III Discipline-Specific Knowledge and Skills	18-25	<u>26</u>	8	<u>3.25</u>
IV Liberal Arts and Academic Values	26-35	<u>28</u>	10	<u>2.8</u>
V Work and Career Preparation	36-43	<u>19</u>	8	<u>2.4</u>
VI Personal Development	44-52	<u>28</u>	0	<u>3.1</u>

Source: *Classroom Assessment Techniques*, by Thomas A. Angelo and K. Pat Cross. Copyright © 1993. Permission to reproduce is hereby granted.

If you are just beginning to experiment with Classroom Assessment is not necessarily or productive, to worry too much about linking goals assessment tools. Many faculty start out by trying a few simple Classroom



## Course Objectives

1. **In at least five timed writing situations, the student will keyboard by touch at a minimum rate of 20 gross words per minute from straight copy for a period of 3 minutes with 3 or fewer errors.**
2. **In a computer lab, the student will demonstrate appropriate operating commands to use keyboarding software with and without the use of references.**
3. **Given a draft of a document and formatting instructions, the student, without assistance, will produce an acceptable copy on the computer.**
4. **In both production and testing solutions, the student will apply effective proofreading techniques and use basic proofreader's marks.**
5. **Using Microsoft Word software, students will complete basic functions to learn word processing techniques.**

4. Indicate your reasons for wanting to participate in this community.

- **The opportunity to work with faculty from other colleges of RIT**
- **The opportunity to focus on teaching and learning**

5. Describe particularly innovative teaching activities in which you have been involved (e.g. efforts to improve teaching, development of curricular materials, etc.).

**I served as a teaching improvement specialist in my college from 1981-86 as part of the Office of Faculty Development. During that time I was involved in teaching activities including experiential learning, team teaching and active learning.**

6. Indicate two or three of your most pressing needs regarding teaching.

**The ability to encourage students to "own" their learning.  
The ability to encourage students to be less dependent on the teacher.**

7. Part of this program is an individual teaching project pursued by each participant. At this time, what area of interest do you wish to pursue? (Some suggestions are listed below. You may change directions as you learn more about the Program.)

**I have several: Reading Skills**

**Teaching critical thinking**

**Developing independent or life long learning skills**

8. Part of this program involves working with a faculty member of your choice. Although you need not have a particular person in mind at this time, in what ways would you take advantage of this opportunity and how do you see this aspect of the program as being helpful to you?

**Collaboration has always proved to be a positive experience for me. Just working with another faculty member to share ideas about learning has always been advantageous.**

9. Part of this program involves working with a student consultant of your choice. Although you need not have a particular person in mind at this time, in what ways would you take advantage of this opportunity and how do you see this aspect of the program as being helpful to you?

**A student perspective is invaluable. It is sometimes difficult for us to put ourselves in their place, so having a student to work with would be very beneficial, especially with a deaf student population.**

10. What do you think you can contribute to the program (for example, certain teaching knowledge or experiences)?

**My background in teaching development and research on teaching and learning styles.**

11. Briefly state your philosophy of teaching (or append it to this document).

The teaching process has always been a dynamic one for me. It is a two way street where every contact with students is an opportunity for both my students and for me to learn from each other. I enjoy learning new things. My primary goal as a teacher is to instill an enjoyment of learning in my students. I hope I have taught them to be responsible for their learning and that to be successful in a career they need to be accountable for improving their skills and knowledge in a rapidly changing world.

12. Please indicate anything else you wish regarding your involvement in this program.

Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Faculty Learning Community Mid-year Survey for Participants

Please return this survey to Susan Donovan by December 21, 2001

A. Estimate the impact of the Faculty Learning Community on you with respect to each of the following program components. Circle the number on the scale below which reflects your judgment. "1" indicates a very weak impact, and "10" a very strong impact. Also, if you have brief comments to make about any of the items, use the space provided.

1. Orientation luncheon

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   **9**   10  
weak   strong  
impact   impact

2. FLC meetings/discussions

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   **9**   10  
weak   strong  
impact   impact

3. Lilly Conference

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   **10**  
weak   strong  
impact   impact

4. Your teaching project

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10  
weak   strong  
impact   impact

*not far enough along*

5. The collegiality and learning from the other FLC members

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
weak strong  
impact impact

6. Student associate

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 *not far enough along*  
weak strong  
impact impact

7. Faculty associate

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 *not far enough along.*  
weak strong  
impact impact

8. TGI (Teaching Goals Inventory)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
weak strong  
impact impact

9. Books (*Classroom Assessment Techniques, Teaching Tips*)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
weak strong  
impact impact

10. Supplemental readings

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
weak strong  
impact impact

B. In a similar manner, estimate the impact of the Faculty Learning Community on you with respect to each of the following outcomes.

1. Your technical skill as a teacher

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
weak strong  
impact impact

*technical skills? or teaching techniques?*

2. Your total effectiveness as a teacher

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
weak strong  
impact impact

3. Your interest in the teaching process

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
weak strong  
impact impact

4. Your view of teaching as an intellectual pursuit

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
weak strong  
impact impact

5. Your understanding of and interest in the scholarship of teaching

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
weak strong  
impact impact

6. Your awareness of ways to integrate the teaching/research experience

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
weak strong  
impact impact

7. Your understanding of the role of a faculty member at RIT

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
weak strong  
impact impact

8. Your perspective of teaching, learning, and other aspects of higher education beyond the perspectives of your discipline

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
weak strong  
impact impact

C. What have you valued most from your participation in the Faculty Learning Community?

*Getting to know colleagues  
in other colleges + their perspectives  
on teaching*

D. Describe how your teaching and your perception of yourself as a teacher have changed (if they have) as a result of your involvement in the Faculty Learning Community.

*- about the same, - I've had this  
focus in past assignments  
as a Faculty Dev. Specialist*

E. What first-quarter aspects of the Faculty Learning Community program could be changed to make it more valuable for future FLC members? What changes would you recommend for the rest of the year?

*I wish the Lilly conference had been 1/2 way thru full quarter instead of at the end!*

*Don't know -*

*I think we've done well so far this year*

*I think that our schedules have been a problem - longer than one hour meetings would have helped. Although the Lilly*

F. Please report on the progress of your teaching project.

1. What course will be the focus course for your project?

*Economics*

2. Briefly, summarize the goals of your project.

*Incorporating collaborative learning*

3. Briefly summarize how you will implement your project.

*By incorporating more collaborative learning into class periods ~~less~~*

4. What is the timeline for your project?

*Spring Quarter*

5. How will you assess the success of your project?

Student associate feedback  
Current student feedback

6. How do you plan to involve your faculty colleague in your project?

Reviewing activities with him

7. How do you plan to involve your student colleague in your project?

+ asking for feedback through observations

G. Additional comments?

Our schedules, as I mentioned are a problem. I don't like it when we cannot all meet - I've missed the 1st meeting of the gtr. due to scheduling & I already feel "out of the loop"!

Participant's Signature Maury Lou Basile  
Department/College NTID  
Date 12/17/01



- 5. The collegiality and learning from the other FLC members  
1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10  
weak    strong  
impact    impact
  
- 6. Student associate  
1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10  
weak    strong  
impact    impact
  
- 7. Faculty associate  
1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10  
weak    strong  
impact    impact
  
- 8. TGI (Teaching Goals Inventory)  
1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10  
weak    strong  
impact    impact
  
- 9. Books (*Classroom Assessment Techniques, Teaching Tips*)  
1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10  
weak    strong  
impact    impact
  
- 10. Supplemental readings  
1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10  
weak    strong  
impact    impact

B. In a similar manner, estimate the impact of the Faculty Learning Community on you with respect to each of the following outcomes.

1. Your technical skill as a teacher

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10  
weak    strong  
impact    impact

2. Your total effectiveness as a teacher

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10  
weak    strong  
impact    impact

3. Your interest in the teaching process

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10  
weak    strong  
impact    impact

4. Your view of teaching as an intellectual pursuit

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10  
weak    strong  
impact    impact

5. Your understanding of and interest in the scholarship of teaching

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10  
weak    strong  
impact    impact



E. What aspects of the Faculty Learning Community program could be changed to make it more valuable for future FLC members?

The new group for next yr will probably have put more thought into this ~~to~~ before the academic year than we did - I think this will help give them focus earlier in the <sup>academic</sup> year.

F. Please comment on the panel presentation to the RIT community. In what ways was it successful? In what ways could it be improved?

Having an interpreter for the entire time!

G. Would you be willing to be involved in some way with next year's Faculty Learning Community? Yes  
What ideas do you have about how "FLC alumni" could contribute to future groups?

Meeting with the new group to help them focus on projects.

H. Additional comments?

Participant's Signature

Mary Lou Basile

Department/College

NTD / Business Careers

Date

5/20/02