

Applied Economic Research: Integration of the Academia and the Real World

A partnership between
American Institute for Economic Research (AIER)
University of Sioux Falls (USF)
Missouri University of Science and Technology (MST)

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Introduction

- * This Fall we have a three-partners collaboration in the field of Applied Economic Research
- * AIER + University of Sioux Falls + Missouri University of Science and Technology
- * Total 20 students
- * Students are divided in teams of 5
- * Topic “Employment Trends in Various Sectors”
- * Practitioners at AIER are giving feedback
- * Professors manage the day-to-day activities in the classroom

The Value of Practical Experience

- * **Moore (2013)**, the three pillars of the experiential learning approach are :
 1. ***Learning from Experience*** introduced by Dewey (1938). Moore particularly cited Dewey's focus on the importance of the interaction between the learner and the socially-constructed environment.
 2. ***Communities of Practice*** introduced by Lave and Wenger (1991). This idea postulates that learning is a function of active participation in the changing environment of the workplace.
 3. ***Workplace Learning*** described by Billet (2001), Fenwick (2003), Raelin (2008). This pillar suggests that the constraints intrinsic to work organization impact student's knowledge acquisition.
- * Guiding students through the reflection exercise at the end of the course. The goal is to help them formulate and articulate the skills and competencies they acquired during this experience.

Getting started: Challenges of a New Collaborative Class

1. Approval process

- ✓ Department
- ✓ Curriculum Committee
- ✓ Faculty Senate

2. Scheduling and other administrative post-approval aspects

- ✓ Approval process needs to be complete before classes are scheduled for the Fall 2017 semester
- ✓ Promoting the class: university catalog, advisers, teaching and learning centers, current and former students
- ✓ Classroom software: deadlines for purchases and installation requests
- ✓ Class availability (same day and time)

3. Structure and Content:

- ✓ Syllabus
- ✓ Project only or Exams and project?
- ✓ Textbook or not?
- ✓ Balancing expectations

Class Management

- * Creating Student Teams
 - * Division of Labor
- * Support from Practitioners
 - * Resources
 - * Methodology
 - * Professional paper construction
- * Coordination and feedback
- * Challenges:
 - * Staff Changes at AIER
 - * Dysfunctional teams

Content Management

- * Topic Selection
- * Progress Monitoring
 - * Written Feedback
 - * WebEx discussions
- * Management of Practitioner Feedback

Results: Learning Objectives

Source: **2014** Reaction Papers and Final Presentations

Advanced Excel Skills/Graphing	85.71%
Working in Groups	85.71%
Understanding of Health Insurance (topic)	42.86%
APA/Citations/Professional Writing	28.57%
Attention to Detail	42.86%
Learning to Analyze Data	57.14%
Researching Data Sets	57.14%
Organizing Data/Maintaining Spreadsheets	42.86%

Working in Groups

- * Learning From Each Other
- * Scheduling Issues
- * Internal Conflict
 - * Different Standards
 - * Expectations

Students' Challenges

Source: **2014** Reaction Papers and Final Presentations

Finding Data	85.71%
Time Management/Scheduling	71.43%
Too Much Data	57.14%
Unused Information/Data	42.86%
Literature Review	14.29%
Freedom/Limited Structure	14.29%

Students' Feedback: Literature Review

- * *“I had never done a literature review and was very unfamiliar with the content & format.”*
- * *“We felt like deer in the headlights!”*
- * *“I was what one could call clueless...”*

Students' Feedback: Data

- * Organizing Data
- * Re-gather certain data
- * Eliminating Occupations
- * Time loss/misuse
- * Quarterly vs. Monthly
- * Analyzing Data
- * Incomplete Data Set

Students' Feedback: Analysis and Write-Up

- * Compiling four voices into one project
- * Verbal Precision
- * Attention to detail
- * Importance of always citing work
- * Delegation of tasks
- * Communicating effectively in a group setting
- * Experience of putting this project together-better prepared for real world situations

Off-Campus / On-Site Extension

- * Students who arrived to Great Barrington were ready to dive in
- * Complete integration of the class syllabus and the think tank research agenda.
- * In addition to hard skills of economic analysis, students were dealing with “presenting an idea to the supervisor”, “navigating the nuances of a professional office”, “managing their time and independence”, as well as understanding the notion of “business casual” dress code, and adapting to the unfamiliar environment in an unfamiliar place.
- * Students also extended their framework of tasks. They did not just perform isolated tasks unrelated to one another. Through time on campus they developed understanding about the ways their effort contributes to the output of the team, and the ways the experienced economists organize their work and resources.

Closing Remarks

- * Innovative approach:
 - * we are integrating the academy and the workplace,
 - * broadening the pool of potential employees,
 - * striving to advance economic research capabilities throughout the country.

Closing Remarks

- * Fall 2017 / Interim 2018
 - * Contact us if you want to be part of the innovation!

- * Questions?