



Fullerton College

Self-study for Economics Program

2025

Section 1: Introduction

1. Briefly describe your program, make sure to include how your program helps the College achieve its mission.

The Economics Department is dedicated to students learning the principles of both microeconomics and macroeconomics. It offers four courses in total: Two for the Principles of Microeconomics, one of which is an honors version of the standard course, and two for the Principles of Macroeconomics, again one of which is an honors version of the standard course. Students can earn an AA or and ADT in the discipline.

Per the College's website, the mission statement of Fullerton College is as follows:

Fullerton College advances student learning and achievement by developing flexible pathways for students from our diverse communities who seek educational and career growth, certificates, associate degrees, and transfer. We foster a supportive and inclusive environment for students to be successful learners, responsible leaders, and engaged community members.

The Department's courses are offered in a variety of modalities, and in every term of the academic year (Fall, Winter, Spring, and Summer.) A wide array of students benefits from taking its courses, ranging from economics and business majors with transfer goals, to those taking a single class just for interest or with the objective of making better personal finance decisions. Courses are taught with the appropriate rigor to ensure students are well prepared for transfer. In addition, they are conveyed showing real-world applicability to demonstrate the importance of the discipline to personal financial decisions. Through participation in its program, students develop critical thinking skills. In addition, they receive exposure to models, tools, mathematical techniques, and methods of data analysis that lay the foundation for a lifetime of continued learning that help them become more successful learners, more responsible leaders, and more engaged community members.

Section 2: Students

2.1 Student Demographics and Enrollment Trends

1. Using the data provided by the OIE, describe the student population your department serves. Which demographic groups have the most enrollments in your program? Which student groups are underrepresented in your program? Has the demographic profile of your program changed over the last four years?

The Economics Department serves a vast array of students. Some notable observations about them are mentioned in this section. Averages of the enrollments for the subject period were calculated based on race/ethnicity/ancestry. The composition of students in the Economics program is similar to other programs with the following exceptions: slightly less for Black/African American (2.0% vs 3.0%), Latina/o/x/e (52.6% vs. 59.2%), and White (12.8% vs. 15.4%), and substantially more for Asian (21.8% vs. 12.0%.) Regarding enrollments by gender, the pattern in the Economics Department differs significantly from all other programs. Specifically, males account for significantly more (58% vs. 42.4%) and females account for significantly less (38% vs. 51.4%.)

The demographic profiles based on ethnicity and gender changed very little over the subject time period. There was at most a two-percentage point change in any single category over the entire time. In addition, the averages in all categories in this program review cycle are very close to those from the previous cycle.

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2. Briefly describe course-level enrollment trends in your program over the past five years. Have the enrollment trends in your program changed over the last five years? To what do you attribute any changes or lack of changes?

Enrollment decreased in the years ended 2022 (down 21.33%) and 2023 (down 4.52%), increased in 2024 (up 5.79%), and slightly decreased in 2025 (down 1.56%.) Some of these changes reflect the changes in the enrollment at the College overall. The initial steep decline was attributable to the pandemic. The subsequent changes indicate that enrollment in Economics has not rebounded to the degree that it has overall for the College. However, this outcome is consistent with the finding of Siegfried (2025) who observes that in nationwide in the field of Economics, “from 2018 to 2024, the number of bachelor’s degrees awarded declined annually, losing 15 percent over the period.” The reason for the decline overall is debated. Part of it is the natural ebb and flow of interest in a discipline over time. In addition, those inclined to major in Economics may generally have high employment prospects. During the relatively good economic times post-pandemic, enrollment may not have fully rebounded as potential students have sought employment in a good labor market.

Siegfried, J. J. (2025). Trends in undergraduate economics degrees, 2001–24. *The Journal of Economic Education*, 56(4), 356–360. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220485.2025.2511746>

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3. How do you monitor and modify course offerings, including time and modality, to ensure that students’ needs are being met?
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2.2 Student Achievement

1. Using data provided by the OIE, describe overall student achievement counts, rates, and trends in your program over the past five years, these include: course success rates, degrees/certificates completion counts, transfer counts, licensing, job placement, wage improvements (not all of these measures apply to every program).

For Economics 101 (Microeconomics) the success rate started at 65% but increased over the five years (one year recorded no change), reaching 81% in the last year. For Economics 102 (Macroeconomics), the success rate started at 78% and increased in all years except one, but ended the time range at 86%. This means that both classes have a success rate that is above the stretch goal for the college of 80%. The higher success rates for Economics 102 match observations in previous program review cycles. There are several reasons for this. First is that Economics 101 is a prerequisite for Economics 102. This means that students must have already demonstrated a level of math proficiency and analytical prowess before they can enroll in Economics 102. Second, students that take Economics 102 often major in economics or business. This creates a self-selection bias that skews the results favorably since enrollees tend to possess the necessary skills to excel in these disciplines.

It is important to note that the success rates for the honors versions of the two courses are higher than for their non-honors equivalents. For Economics 101, while the course was offered in three of the five years, the completion rate started at 86% and increased to 100%. These data suggest that the honors student population is better prepared than the students that enroll in the non-honors versions of these courses.

The number of degrees awarded started at 29 at the beginning of the period, then increased, decreased, increased, and decreased in each subsequent year, with the most recent year's count at 36. The variability in the number mimics what has been observed in previous program review cycles. The number of degrees in the most recent year placed the Department in the 15th position college-wide for degrees awarded.

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2. Are there student groups whose success rates are below the institution-set standard or whose success rates are below other student groups? What factors can explain this?

Overall, all ethnicities are above the institution-set standards, with Black or African American at 66%, and all others being at least 71%. Of note is that Asians had a success rate of 83% which is above the stretch goal of the College. When viewed by gender and ethnicity, Black or African American females are a little under the institution-set standards. However, Asians again exceed the stretch goal with 84%, and American Indian or Alaskan Native also exceed it at 100%. In contrast to their female counterparts, Black or African American males exceed the standards at 62%, but American Indian or Alaskan Native males do not at 50%. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander males meet the stretch goal at 80%, and Asian males again exceed the stretch goal with 83%.

It must be noted that some of the demographic groups have small numbers. For example, over the five years, only two students were in the American Indian/Alaskan Native category, five were in the Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander category, and 85 in the Black or African American category. While the Department acknowledges the importance of each student individually, the generalizability of this outcome to a larger observation is compromised by such small sample sizes.

Using the Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander category as an example, assuming an average of just one student in this group each year, it is the case that the failure of that one student would take the success rate down to 0%. Therefore, it is not surprising that variations in the outcomes fall within such a large range. Even with large numbers within a demographic category, variations are to be expected. It is impossible to ascertain the causes of the variations in the completion rates in the various categories since this so dependent on multiple factors.

3. In terms of your degree and certificate completers, are there any groups who are underrepresented in your completion data compared to the overall enrollment in your program?

Over the entire time span, the percentages of degrees awarded by ethnicity were as follows: Asian: 37.14%; Latina/o/x/e: 41.71%; Race/Ethnicity Unknown: 1.14%; Two or More Races: 8%; and Whites: 12%. Based on these numbers, Asians earn more than their enrollment share of 21.8%, Latina/o/x/e earn less than their enrollment percentage of 52.6%, and Black or African American earned below their enrollment share of 2%. The Two or More Races and White category closely matched their enrollments of 8.2% and 12.8%, respectively.

4. Are your students completing your degree and certificate program requirements in the expected time frame? Are there certain groups whose rates are below other student groups? Discuss any efforts to improve time to completion.

Over the entire time span, the average years to graduate for all categories was 3.89 years. It is important to note, however, that there has been an improvement of this statistic over time. In the 2020-21 year, 26% of students completed the degree in 1-2 years, 43% in 3-5 years, and 30% in 6+ years. In the 2024-25 year, the comparable statistics were 44%, 31%, and 25%, respectively.

Reviewing the statistics by race/ethnicity, the overall statistic for Asians was 2.98 years, for Latina/o/x/e was 4.52 years, Two or more races was 3.14 years, and for White was 4.29 years. It is important to note that some entries for some years have very small numbers, so the statistics must be viewed with caution.

One of the factors that can slow a student's time to completion is a math deficiency. Proficiency in Algebra is a pre-req for Economics 101, and Economics 101 is a pre-req for Economics 102. Meetings have been held between the coordinator of the Economics department and members of the counseling division to advise students on the ideal pathway to complete the degree in two years.

2.3 Student Learning Outcomes

1. Describe your program's processes and practices for defining, assessing, and analyzing student learning outcomes at the course (CSLO) and program (PSLO) level. Include a discussion of how your program uses the results of CSLO/PSLO data to inform course and program improvement efforts.

Since the last program review cycle, the Department has continued to use the same questions embedded in final exams to assess student learning outcomes at the course level. The questions cover content deemed essential in the mastery of the material covered in the two courses. The questions have remained the same so that meaningful comparisons can be made over time. If the

questions were to change, then there would be no way of knowing if changes in student performance were the result of changes in the questions or changes in actual student performance.

Every course has been assessed since the last cycle. There is no set schedule to conduct the assessments but this could change in the future if there is a perceived need.

Program-level assessments align with the Institutional Learning Outcomes of Critical Thinking and Information Competency. In successfully meeting the PSLOs, students have to synthesize and analyze disparate information, formulate solutions, and present their answers in narrative form, supported with calculations and/or graphs. The PSLOs enable the Department to assess student learning upon the completion of both courses. Microeconomics is a pre-requisite course to macroeconomics. Therefore, any student taking macroeconomics will have taken microeconomics. Since macroeconomics is the last course students will take in the Department, the assessments occur in this class. The assessments occur on the final exam since this provides students with the best opportunity to demonstrate a mastery of the economics curriculum.

At the completion of each assessment at both the course and program levels, all Department members have been shown the results. Discussions have occurred on how to best present material, prepare, and evaluate students. These discussions have led to different methods of instruction being adopted by several faculty members. The Department views the process as one of a continual work in progress as members strive for superior outcomes.

2. (OPTIONAL/NOT REQUIRED) Using the data provided by OIE, describe the most salient results of CSLO or PSLO mastery rates. Did you find significant differences by race, ethnicity, gender, and other categories?

Data not available.

Section 3: Other Areas of Program Effectiveness

1. Document any substantial changes to your program curriculum since the last review and discuss what prompted these changes. Looking forward, what changes to the curriculum do you plan based on the emerging needs of your discipline, industry, student population, etc.

As noted in a previous section, there have been no new courses developed by the Department due to the constraints students would face in trying to transfer these classes. Any courses beyond those currently offered would provide no advancement to students in the pursuit of their degrees. The only benefit students may have is increased familiarity with the material upon transfer, but they would be required to take the course again. In addition, some of the courses that could be offered by the Department such as personal finance and business economics, would duplicate the offerings of the Business Division.

Changes have occurred with regard to scheduling and the modality of its existing courses. These will be changed based on any changes in enrollment trends or student needs.

2. Please briefly describe opportunities your students have to apply and deepen knowledge and skills through projects, apprenticeship, internships, co-ops, clinical placements, group projects outside of class, service learning, study abroad, and other experiential learning activities that you intentionally embed in coursework or elsewhere in your program.

Students have an array of opportunities to make learning active and applied. In some classes, students work on group projects and present their findings to the class. In other cases, they may work individually on a more intense study and present their conclusions to the class or faculty member in a special one-on-one setting. It is also important to note that Economics is frequently taught as part of the Study Abroad Program. When this is done, comparisons and contrasts are drawn between economic realities of the U.S. and those of the visited country.

3. Describe any laws, regulations, trends, policies, procedures, or other influences that have an impact on your program. These can include things like Vision 2030, CALGETC, Common Course Numbering, etc.

Many students take economics based purely on interest. The effects of the pandemic on the world economy unquestionably played a role in this. The overall level of interest in a topic is heightened when its relevance to one's own life becomes more pronounced.

A solid foundation in economics is perceived as a desirable quality among a large swath of employers. The decision-making tools and computational abilities of well-trained students in the discipline make them valuable additions to an employer's pool of talent. As discussed in *The Wall Street Journal*, graduates with a degree in economics tend to have among the highest earnings of new graduates and highest lifetime career earnings (online.wsj.com/public/resources/documents/info-Degrees_that_Pay_you_Back-sort.html). These findings are reinforced by a study of the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond which find economics to be one of the most lucrative majors (https://www.richmondfed.org/publications/research/econ_focus/2022/q3_profession).

In addition, economics majors enjoy superior employment prospects and earnings that are among the highest of all majors (https://study.com/articles/Salary_of_an_Economics_Major_How_Much_Do_Graduates_Earn.html).

Aside from the attractive employment and earnings prospects, economics is a popular major at four-year institutions because it relates to every aspect of life from decisions made as individuals to the outcomes produced by firms and governments. The economic way of thinking can help one to make better choices in multiple arenas. It is anticipated that the demand for courses in the Department will remain at a high level for the foreseeable future.

The common course numbering had no impact on the Department other than changes in course numbers. The curriculum was unaffected. Similarly, the CALGETC adoption had no impact on course curriculum as the Department's offering were already aligned with the general education criteria.

4.1 Population and Demographics

1. Using the data provided by OIE, describe your program's staff (full-time/part-time faculty, nonfaculty, classified). How reflective of your program's student population is your staff?

The Economics Department is currently staffed by one full-time faculty member and two adjuncts. One of the adjuncts has been with the Department for 26 years and the other for 16 years.

The full-time faculty member is a white male. One of the adjuncts is an Asian female, and the other is a white male.

The limited number of faculty members makes it impossible to reflect the student population based on ethnicity. However, the breakdown on gender lines closely approximates the composition of the students in the program.

2. Describe your program's staffing changes since fall 2021. How have these changes impacted your program's ability to achieve its strategic action plans?

Over the review period, the Department had one full-time faculty member throughout. At the beginning of the period there were five adjuncts, and this declined to two by the end of the cycle. Part of this reduction was the result of declining enrollment, and part was due to the remaining adjuncts teaching more sections. The changes did not have any impact on the program's ability to achieve its goals. Note: although outside of the timeline for this review, the Department recently hired one additional adjunct who is an Asian male.

4.2 Staff Support and Professional Development

1. Describe the regular discussions your program faculty are having about equitable grading, attendance, late work, extra credit policies, and other strategies to support equitable student success.

Department members regularly meet to discuss pedagogical and content-related strategies. The policies and procedures followed by Department members are extremely uniform. In all cases, they are modeled on comparable courses at the transfers institutions, particularly Cal State Fullerton and UC Irvine. The motivation is that the best preparation for students at the university level is for them to become accustomed to the policies and procedures they will face upon transferring. Department members maintain the highest standards to provide students with the best preparation for advanced study.

2. How have these conversations shaped practices or policies in your program? What action has arisen from these discussions? If no action has been taken, why not?

As noted in previous program review cycles, the lack of sufficient math skills sometimes hinders student progress in program. Due to the noted decline in math skills coming out of the pandemic, all faculty members devote a class period to polishing the skills needed. In addition, students that are struggling are encouraged to meet with faculty members during their office hours. In addition, information on free tutoring in the skills center is shared with all students.

In the last program review cycle, the request was made to have funding for dedicated economics tutors. The request was granted, and the presence of these tutors likely helped some students succeed that otherwise would have likely not. A similar request will be made in this cycle.

3. What additional areas of professional development could help your faculty and staff engage in this work?
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Section 5: Program Planning

5.1 Progress on Previous Strategic Action Plans

1. Please discuss the goals (Strategic Action Plans, SAPs) from your last self-study. Assess and explain your progress on each of the SAP.

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2. If additional funds were NOT allocated to you in the last review cycle, how did the LACK of funds have an impact on your program?

No response is needed to this question since the requested funds were obtained as noted above.

SAPs

Economics Tutor

Short Description:

A dedicated tutor for the Economics department will be hired for 12 hours per week. The tutor will help address math deficiencies in some students and provide extra support in the Discipline.

Measurable Outcomes:

The Economics Department will improve its SLOA scores for all course offerings to a 90% success rate through the use of increased tutoring services.

College Goals:

2.4 Increase access to academic support in course with DI

SAPPhase:

New

Resource Requests

Economics Tutor

Enhancement:

The tutor will help address math deficiencies in some students and provide extra support in the Discipline.

Personnel-Related:

Some students are in need of intensive help to overcome inadequate training/comprehension in math. A dedicated tutor to the discipline will assist these students to succeed in their Economics classes. One tutor to work 12 hours/week at \$17.50/hour = \$3,360.

Resource Category:

Non-Faculty Personnel

Quantity:

1

Unit Cost:

\$3,360.00

Total Cost:

\$3,360.00
