

**PROGRAM REVIEW
SADDLEBACK COLLEGE
ECONOMICS PROGRAM
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SECTION I: PROGRAM OVERVIEW

A. Mission

The Saddleback College economics program is dedicated to promoting student success, fostering intellectual growth, and providing baccalaureate-level economics courses for students working toward transfer in economics, political science and various business majors. It also seeks to provide basic economic literacy to students in all majors.

B. Historical Background and Unique Characteristics

The economics program serves Saddleback students in business and economics majors by providing the lower-division macroeconomic and microeconomic theory courses required for all baccalaureate degrees in those fields. In 1990, the program had three full-time economics instructors; it currently has two "and a half" (since it shares a full-time faculty member with political science).

The Saddleback program is rare in having a mathematics pre-requisite to one of its courses. It was one of the first, if not the first, community college to institute one. The "first" course, macroeconomics, which studies economic aggregates such as GDP, unemployment, inflation, and growth, has no pre-requisite. Microeconomics, however, which studies individual decision making, requires Math 251 (Beginning Algebra). Most community colleges do not have such a pre-requisite because of the difficulties in establishing a one outside the field. Indeed, the program had to conduct a statistical study to justify the pre-requisite in the 1990s, and has had to continually review it since then.

C. Progress Since the Last Program Review

The program's most recent progress has been development of Student Learning Outcomes for all its courses. Both the macroeconomics and microeconomics courses (Econ 2 and 4) were updated in this year's curriculum cycle to facilitate meaningful SLO compliance.

D. Current Strengths, Opportunities and Challenges

Strength: Associate Faculty. One of the program's major strengths is its excellent complement of associate faculty in its face-to-face macroeconomics courses. These courses are usually the first – and sometimes the only – economics course students take, and quality teaching in this course is therefore crucial. The program has seen strong enrollment growth in these courses over recent years; this has been helped by the adoption of flexible scheduling, such as 8-week and hybrid courses, and the development by outside vendors of excellent software to support quality distance education courses in the field.

Strength: Breadth of Offerings. The program also offers electives in environmental economics and international political economy; however, limited staffing and recent facilities upheavals have made it impossible to offer those courses in recent years. Also among our offerings is a survey course for non-majors that previously ran via TV instruction. This course has become outdated, but again, because of staffing shortages, has not been updated as it should be.

Strength: Distance Education. The program has experienced extraordinary growth in distance education. Anecdotal evidence indicates that the program is serving not only traditional Saddleback (and Irvine Valley) students, but also individuals over a wide geographic area who are taking their economics classes over the internet in preparation for transfer to graduate business programs from non-business and non-economics baccalaureate programs.

Strength: Technological Literacy of the Faculty. Perhaps because of the quantitative nature of the field itself, economics faculty, both full-time and part-time, tend to be at ease with changes in technology and have adapted fairly easily to presentation software, the possibilities of spreadsheet use in the classroom, the huge increase in research and pedagogical resources on the internet, and distance education itself. Professor Alannah Rosenberg's 1998 sabbatical resulted in the development of a family of web pages giving students tutorials and practice in the mathematics needed for principles of economics. The level of sophistication of the internet, however, has greatly increased since then. Currently, Professor Ken Woodward is on sabbatical researching the potential benefits of Web 2.0 technologies in economics education. Associate faculty Bill O'Connor and Mike Javanmard have long maintained their own economics pages on the web.

Challenge: Articulation. The most recent, and most urgent, challenge to the department has been the new requirements for lower-division economics put forward by the California State University's Lower Division Transfer Protocol. The LDTP requirement, which at least CSU Long Beach will be adopting, is that students have completed Math 253 (Intermediate Algebra) before taking either macro- or microeconomics. This was not a change that community college economics faculty were seeking. The LDTP in economics is highly controversial, and many community colleges will have severe trouble complying with it. The story of its adoption brings to mind the opening of Poe's "The Monkey's Paw": "Be careful what you wish for, lest it come true."

It was due to the fact that economics faculty in other community colleges expressed at various discipline meetings an enthusiasm for such a pre-requisite, but lamented their inability to justify it to their respective curriculum committees' satisfaction, that community college LDTP representative for Southern California (Professor Alannah Rosenberg) asked the CSU representatives to state that such a level of mathematics was essential to microeconomics. This would, in the bureaucratic scheme of things, make it possible for community colleges to adopt the pre-requisite.

At first, the CSU people were reluctant, stating that all their students have mathematics beyond that as a condition for their admission. Further conversation, however,

considered the level of mathematics remediation many CSU freshmen need, and that it was perhaps in everyone's best interest to make the mathematical backbone of the discipline visible. At some point – where, exactly, no one has said – the basic algebra prerequisite for microeconomics classes has been transmogrified into an intermediate algebra prerequisite for all economics principles classes.

At this point, community college representatives, Professor Rosenberg included, tried to put the brakes on the pre-requisite, citing everything from undesirable consequences to dubious decision-making. The most obvious of the undesirable consequences are longer times to transfer or CSU graduation, lower diversity of economics students, and lower participation of non-majors in economics classes. The main, but not the only, charge of dubious decision-making comes from the fact that the statistical analysis compared the success of transfer vs. native students at “problem” classes such as econometrics rather than comparing transfer students who did complete intermediate algebra before economics vs. transfer students who did not.

CSU's adoption of the LDTP will obviate the need for further justification, but it does put a higher hurdle in front of our courses than pretty much everyone from the community college side of the discussion thought necessary. (And the meetings took up an inordinate amount of Professor Rosenberg's travel tolerance, e-mail inbox capacity, and telephone patience, since the controversy lasted well over the promised work horizon and required many more than the predicted number of meetings!)

The statistical analysis did not support any mathematics pre-requisite for macroeconomics, probably because the course included enough structural and institutional items that students could pass the course – although they could not do A-level work – without mastery of the mathematical models. For microeconomics, it would have been possible to justify any mathematics pre-requisite through Math 3A (calculus). The faculty, however, chose Math 251 as the only pre-requisite out of concern for the students' need to transfer in a timely manner, and also because the majority of students in economics classes are business majors headed for transfer to CSUs, and at many CSUs – including our main transfer partner, CSU Fullerton – the upper-division microeconomics courses do not demand mastery of calculus.

While the faculty would love to revel in the luxury of teaching a smaller group of more delicately filtered students, we risk betraying the larger student body in following the LDTP. Macroeconomics is often the only course in economics taken by social science majors, if any course is taken at all. Yet an epidemic of economic illiteracy threatens our well-being as a society and as individuals. Worse, those students most likely to suffer from such ignorance are those whose mathematics skills are poor. In making it more difficult to get into economics classes, we are not only cream-skimming our student population to make the CSU faculty's jobs easier, but also making basic economic literacy more difficult for the wider student body, from those who need it most not to be economists, not to be entrepreneurs, not even to be middle managers, but just to survive in an increasingly complex economy.

We do not wish to abandon our mission to these students, and this topic will be addressed in Section III: NEEDS ASSESSMENT, (B) Curriculum and Instruction.

Challenge: Distance Education. Impediments to transfer of distance education courses may arise. Recent rumblings, especially from UC Berkeley but also elsewhere, question whether we can tell that the students receiving credit for internet courses are actually the ones doing the work. However, it is too early in this controversy to tell what response the program will have to make to this challenge.

Challenge: Budget. Resources over the entire Social and Behavioral Sciences division have been stretched very thin because our enrollment has grown strongly over the past years. It is difficult to accomplish SLO assessment, evaluate associate faculty, and develop new curriculum with no reassigned time for chairs in which to accomplish all this work.

Supply funds are needed as well, since instructional media need to be updated frequently, especially in macroeconomics, and since most of the holdings in economics are not Section 508-compliant. This will be an increasingly difficult challenge to meet as more of our students are taught online.

Challenge: Hiring. A strong demand exists for microeconomics delivered by distance education, but only one full-time instructor (Professor Rosenberg) has that as a specialty. Although Professor Howard Gensler has stepped up to supplement these offerings, he also has commitments to the political science program and to the large number of macroeconomics classes the economics program offers.

It would be ideal to have another individual to support these offerings, but hiring associate faculty specifically for distance education is a risky undertaking. Evaluation of distance education classes is a new and problematic endeavor, especially of an instructor with no track record of face-to-face interaction at Saddleback. Moreover, associate faculty teaching distance education do so at several campuses, and therefore tend to have personal websites and other instructional support that disappear if and when the instructor does. It is difficult to maintain consistency and react to emergencies in such an environment.

SECTION II: REVIEW REPORT

A. Economics Faculty and Staff

Full-Time Faculty

Howard Gensler, J.D., Ph.D. (joint appointment with political science)

Alannah Orrison Rosenberg, Ph.D.

Kenneth G. Woodward, Ph.D.

Associate Faculty

Bob Fey

Carolyn Gordon

Ferdinando Guerra

Mike Javanmard

Bill O'Connor

Jennifer Atherton Pakula

Dezzie Prewitt

The FT/PT ratio is highly volatile because Professor Gensler's schedule is moved from being economics-heavy to being political science-heavy as the situation requires. But on average, 60% of economics course offerings are taught by full-time faculty. It has been higher during the previous year, when Professor Woodward was amenable to taking on a very high overload through expansion of online offerings to accommodate excess demand for macroeconomics. From now on, that will not be possible for him, and the scheduled FT/PT ratio for this year is 45/55. Also, Professor Woodward is on sabbatical in the Spring semester. A further difficulty, at least for the next couple of years, comes from the fact that Professor Rosenberg, who had taken on co-chairing the Honors Program in response to an emergency personnel situation in 2007, will now at least temporarily have to chair the program alone due to Professor Carolyn Kuykendall's appointment as full-time Honors Director at Mt. San Antonio College.

This schedule is subject, however, to the department's ability to find associate faculty able to teach during the day. Economics is one of the fields in which it is likely that someone with the minimum teaching qualifications is employed full-time during the day.

Even before Professor Rosenberg's commitment to the Honors Program, this department needed an additional faculty member. The department had three faculty members in 1990, with much lower enrollment. Also, in 1990 there was much less need for expertise in international economics and certainly no need for expertise in distance education.

Without additional full-time faculty, especially with this, a quality schedule cannot be maintained, let alone grow, and the changes that will be needed in response to the LDTP and distance educations mentioned above will not be well handled.

B. Curriculum and Instruction

The economics program fits into Saddleback College's mission by contributing to its ability to pursue three of its main objectives:

- (1) provide educational programs leading to the Associate in Arts and Associate in Science degrees;
- (2) provide a comprehensive, broad range of high-quality courses and programs to enable students to pursue their educational objectives and career goals;
- (3) provide a meaningful general education program including baccalaureate-level transfer and occupational criteria.

General Education. The economics program supports the Associate in Arts degree in economics. That is, however, its smaller focus. Economics majors are a minority in the classes, which make up part of the business administration and political science majors. Economics is also a recommended elective for history as well as to the degree and certificate programs within accounting, computer information management, and real estate. By far the majority of students in economics classes seek to transfer to business programs.

The program is relatively restricted in its offerings. It contains no basic skills component, and lower-division courses in economics are extremely limited. The program's survey course, environmental economics course, and international political economy course exhaust the available IGETC-certifiable courses.

Revival of Economics 20 will address the main weakness of the program: service of the general education needs of students outside the majors outside the traditional business and policy-oriented majors. Economics 20 was usually offered by televised means of instruction. It had to be suspended because the Division Budget did not make licensing of an up-to-date series possible, and face-to-face classes did not generate sufficient enrollment to justify continuing.

However, the new LDTP pre-requisite will make Economics 20 essential not only for non-majors but also to help give background to business and economics majors before they take what will be the higher-level "principles" courses. This will greatly expand our ability to increase the economic literacy of students outside the traditional economics-related majors, especially those who lack the mathematical sophistication necessary for the principles courses.

In Fall 2008, curriculum was updated to help a transition to the type of offerings the LDTP will soon mandate; we need to have the survey courses up and running as the new pre-requisites come in.

Another curricular challenge we face is a counseling challenge as well, and one for which we have no input: UC and CSU programs are very different in their mathematics

requirements. This means that our courses are made up of students who, even if they are majors, are following very different tracks and have very different needs for the course.

The CSU courses are directed more towards individuals who will probably not go beyond a master's degree and almost surely not seek to complete a Ph.D. They are business-oriented rather than theory-oriented. Practically speaking, this means their mathematical rigor is lower. The UC courses invariably require multivariate calculus.

Students planning to transfer as economics majors, therefore, must plan in advance whether to follow the Math 3 (UC) or Math 11 (CSU) sequences for calculus. And economics instructors trying to teach both groups of students must prepare the UC-bound individuals while not losing the others.

One approach is to work with the Saddleback College Honors Program, since it attracts many students seeking UC transfer in the economics major (or business UC Riverside, UC Berkeley, and now at UC Irvine). This is due to the fact that competition for transfer to UC schools in this major is so high. (Last year, even a 4.0 with Honors was not enough to guarantee admission to UCLA.) Competition is high at almost all UC schools in this major because of spillover from UC Berkeley, UCLA, and UC San Diego, all of which are regularly listed among the top ten economics departments nationwide.

The program has previously developed honors principles courses; an honors section of microeconomics is being offered in Spring 2009. However, we are currently looking into ways to enhance the honors economics curriculum further, perhaps through creation of a new course, because we are seeking a ways to signal that students who complete our honors economics courses will have the background – which means mainly the skills in mathematical model building – they will need for success in upper-division work.

C. Student Success

Data Limitations. We do not have any information available to us about the demographic characteristics of business or economics majors, as opposed to individuals enrolled in the classes. We don't even have information about how many majors there are, or who they are.

Since we are a transfer-oriented program, our ability to evaluate our own success is fatally compromised. We cannot speak of student success on anything but the most trivial level of course completion and student learning outcomes. SLOs are supposed to provide us with information about how "successful" our students are at learning what we hope they will learn, but without data on our transfers' success, we have no way of evaluating the appropriateness of those SLOs.

Also, we have no data on enrollment or success in our distance education courses vs. our face-to-face courses. We are feeling our way in the dark here, relying on anecdotal

evidence, with the special complication that anecdotal evidence is harder to accumulate from online students.

We can, however, talk about the population we are serving overall, so we will proceed by discussing what data we do have.

Gender, Geography, Age and Ethnicity. The economics program data was generated for program review by the Office of Instruction; college-wide statistics were taken from the almanac information available at <http://www.socccd.cc.ca.us/ref/almanac/demographics/studentindex.asp>.

First, men outnumber women in economics classes by about the same proportion that women outnumber men on campus overall. While female/male ratio for the entire student body over the past several years has averaged about 61%/39% (1.56 to 1), in economics classes the ratio has been 38%/62% (0.62 to 1). This, however, fairly consistent with national trends: while approximately 50 percent of business majors nationwide are women, only 30 to 32 percent of economics majors are women (briefly early in this decade the percentage hit a high of 35).¹ Given the large number of business majors in our classes, 38% would be about right. That information, however, doesn't indicate student success. We have no information on female vs. male completion rates in economics courses, or how many enrollments represent repetition of courses, and by whom. What we have, essentially, is information on who shows up.

As is usual for most classes, the economics program serves mainly students in the "Saddleback" ZIP codes: 87%. However, the percentage of Saddleback ZIPs is decidedly lower for the Summer, and has fallen drastically with the increase in summer internet offerings. Currently about 20% of our Summer session students come from outside our area.

In terms of age, our population distribution is fairly constant, but tightly distributed and very young. About 70% of our students fall in the 18-to-21 age group, as opposed to 30 to 35 percent district-wide. Our next largest group is the 22 to 25 age group, which contributes another 17% to our classes. This, plus the "Below 17" group, means that almost 90% of our students are under 26. In the District overall, only about 72% of the population is under 29.² This does provide a range of experiences for class discussion that is smaller than it would be with a wider age spread. We hope that when the American Economy survey class is revived more women will be in the classes and the age distribution will be wider as well.

Over the past ten years the ethnic profile of the student population at Saddleback has been changing. In the Saddleback feeder districts Native American, African-American Asian, and Filipino populations have remained constant and small; the white non-Hispanic population has fallen approximately 6.45 percentage points, and the Hispanic

¹ Siegfried, John J. and Judith S. Ricks, "The Gender Mix of Undergraduate Economics Majors," Newsletter of the Committee on the Status of Women in the Economics Profession, Fall 2006. This information combines institutions; no separate information for two-year schools seems to be available.

² The District age breakdown is by decade, so the next group after 18-to-21 for that data is 22-to-29.

population has risen slightly over two percentage points. The 2007 figures for the District, its feeder K-12 districts (Saddleback Valley and Capistrano), and the economics course enrollments collected in 2007 are below:³

Ethnicity	Feeder K-12s	SOCCCD	Economics
African-American	1.66%	1.49%	1.99%
Asian / Pacific Islander	6.45%	9.02%	14.56%
Hispanic	19.51%	12.16%	12.37%
White (non-Hispanic)	67.40%	64.57%	61.95%

The only difference that is clear between the SOCCCD population overall and the economics class population is in the Asian / Pacific Islander group, which has a large representation in economics classes. It would be helpful to know how well we are serving these groups, however, and to start that inquiry it would be helpful to know course completion rates by ethnicity. This may be especially important for the Hispanic community, which is clearly underserved by Saddleback College overall.

Students' Educational Goals. Fifty-six percent of the students in economics classes plan to transfer, 41% with the AA/AS degree and 15% without it. The only other group that large is the vocational certificate: 16%. Anecdotal evidence within classes indicates they are preponderantly Business Science Division certificates. The "Undecided" student population in our classes averages 11%.

It may be significant that the Fall 2006 data show a great rise in "Undecideds" along with a fall in transfer seekers. Fall 2006 saw also a more than tenfold jump (from an average of 4.8 to 53) in the number of individuals giving "HS or GED" as a goal. It's not known whether these students are attending high school and college concurrently, but that is the likely population. On the other hand, the Fall 2006 data is so bizarre (more instances will be discussed below) that it could simply be error or an outlier.

Course Enrollment. Enrollment and course completion data is heavily corrupted, so what we can learn from the available information is limited. The data problems seem to stem largely from the more flexible calendar that "College On Your Time" has created, and the fact that data collection programs have not managed to reflect those changes.⁴

³ It is not possible to directly compare all groups over the K12-to-CC range. Ethnicity is broken down by the K12 and the college in slightly different groups. Specifically, the K12 system has categories for "Multiple" and Filipino, which we do not.

We, on the other hand, have a category of "Other" and also an "Unknown." Our students' option to decline to state ethnicity is of significance because our "Unknown" category is large and rising, and is currently over 10 percent of the Saddleback population.

⁴ Since the student demography and educational goal information is drawn from the same data set, it too must be corrupted. However, there is no reason to assume – although of course it may be true – that the population

This hits the Social and Behavioral Sciences Division, and the economics program in particular, very hard. SBS has been a pioneer in alternative scheduling, with late-start, 12-week, hybrid and eight-week courses. The eight-week sessions in economics are particularly popular and have been increased every semester, especially online.

As our overall online courses have increased, the proportion of economics courses with nontraditional start times has increased. The C1 collection and reporting procedure, however, has not kept up with this. For example, if C1 data would indicate that our enrollment in Fall 2006 was 1,295 students; however, end-of-term enrollment is reported as 2,011. While we strive for good student retention, we really don't believe that over the semester our course sections actually gained 716 students.

The end-of-term enrollment data is much more reliable than the C1 data, because many more courses end at the same time than start at the same time. Still, we therefore cannot trust the course completion data. The section count is also unreliable, as it also does not seem to count late-start classes: Fall 2006 is listed as having only three microeconomics sections, which is clearly inaccurate.

Course Completion and Success. Retention and success are as follows:

	Macroeconomics (Econ 2)		Microeconomics (Econ 4)	
	Success	Retention	Success	Retention
Spring	71.1%	88.4%	86.8%	94.2%
Summer	80.5%	92.6%	78.0%	88.2%
Fall	72.1%	89.4%	70.6%	84.2%
Overall (Weighted)	72.5%	89.5%	78.5%	85.6%

This was calculated using different figures from those used in the data set provided by the Office of Instruction because of the way we treated "XX" grades. The "XX" category includes a number of different items, but means in general that the grade is "unknown." It should be a small number. Nevertheless, in many of the economics classes, and in macroeconomics in particular, it was often a significantly high number, and twice was more than 20% of the grades given in the class!

The success and retention rates given by the Office of Instruction include the XX grades in the denominator. It should have a negligible effect, since it should represent only a few errors. No one could explain the exceptionally high number of "XX" grades, but a clue might be found in the fact that there are so many more in Econ 2 than in Econ 4, and Econ 2 was offered online – and therefore by alternate calendar – more often and earlier than Econ 4. It could be that the same factors that led to dubious enrollment

in the missed courses is significantly different in traits and goals from the population in the courses that have been captured for presentation.

data created “missing” grades here. Therefore, believing the “XX” category to be erroneously huge, and probably representing entire classes, we calculated the success and retention rates were calculated without it.

The overall retention and success scores above were weighted by the enrollment in the various semesters. This means the Summer session counted for much less than the Fall and Spring semesters. Summer enrollment is approximately 16% of enrollments in macroeconomics and only 7.6% of enrollment in microeconomics (although enrollment in Summer microeconomics is growing because of expanded online offerings during the summer).

While the success rate is fairly straightforward, one major factor interferes with our ability to draw any inferences from the retention rate. Different instructors have different practices with respect to students who stop attending but do not drop (and some instructors are not consistent from semester to semester). This changes the retention – although not the success – rate because the same event may be classified as either a “W” or an “F,” depending on whether the instructor dropped the student.

The grade distributions within the data set, however, do show some interesting patterns:

- er* As and Bs are each more numerous than Cs every semester. Are our students really that good? Or are our courses really that easy? Or are we very forgiving? We seem to be facing either grade inflation or the need to re-evaluate our performance expectations in both principles classes.
- er* Ds are significantly less frequent than Fs. This is a college-wide pattern, and indicates some of the extent to which the F acts in lieu of W.
- er* The very low CR/NC values, especially in Econ 4, are consistent with the transfer goals of most of the students, since transfer institutions almost invariably insist on graded economics principles classes for people in business and economics majors.
- er* Withdrawal rates are very similar for the two classes, which is encouraging in indicating the appropriateness of the Math 251 pre-requisite for Econ 4. Although we don't have data going back that far, prior to imposition of the pre-requisite, drop rates in Econ 4 were substantially higher.

Course	A	B	C	CR	D	F	NC	W	I
Econ 2	24.6%	22.2%	18.6%	0.3%	6.8%	16.3%	0.1%	10.5%	0.5%
Econ 4	29.5%	25.3%	19.0%	0.2%	5.6%	8.2%	0.0%	10.8%	1.4%
Overall (Weighted)	26.1%	23.1%	18.7%	0.3%	6.4%	14.0%	0.1%	10.6%	0.8%

Division Growth Patterns. The Division of Social and Behavioral Sciences is one of the largest and fastest growing divisions in the District. It offers a complexity of diverse classes, including full-term, first-8-week, second-8-week, general hybrid, face-to-face, and online classes. While this diversity of course offerings provides students with the necessary flexibility in a declining economy plagued with work schedule challenges, family demands, and high costs in such areas as gas, textbooks, childcare, etc., it creates a huge strain on the division and department chairpersons to manage the complexity of scheduling classes, hiring, mentoring, and evaluating full-time and part-time faculty members, addressing the eclectic learning needs of our students, and providing leadership in college governance.

Enrollment Patterns for Fall 2008. In Fall 2008, the Division of Social and Behavioral Sciences experienced a growth of 12.85% in WSCH/FTES and a 2.57% increase in productivity.

All Division Classes:

Number of students: 14,501 (census day)

Number of sections: 326

Productivity: 599

Second-8-Week Classes:

Number of students: 4,159 (census day)

Number of sections: 89

Productivity: 604

Patti – What about First-8-Week classes?

Distance Education Classes:

Number of students: 5,176 (census day)

Number of sections: 122

Productivity: 573

Economics Classes:

Number of students: **Patti – Help!** (census day)

Number of sections: 28 (Econ 2 = 19; Econ 4 = 9)

Productivity: **Patti – Help!**

Specific to the current enrollment patterns, there is a critical need to assess the impact of Division growth on the workload for the administrative staff and Department chairpersons.

D. Facilities, Technical Infrastructure, and Resources

Information technology provided by the College and District has enabled us to survive our move as well as bring our course offerings to new people in new ways.

The rehabilitation of the Business and General Studies building has made large-lecture classrooms once again more available, modernized the information technology resources of classrooms and offices, restored lost full-time faculty office space, and increased facilities available to associate faculty. We all hope that the discomforts, illnesses, and recurrent property damage caused by the building's prior condition will not recur.

In particular, the increased number of more quiet, although only semi-private, workspaces for associate faculty has been of great help to the program because of its heavy reliance on those individuals.

SECTION III: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

A. Economics Faculty and Staff

The full-time complement of faculty in the department is too low. The average fraction of full-time load has fluctuated greatly over recent years because of the unusual assignments of all full-time economics faculty: Professor Woodward's work in the Faculty Association, Professor Rosenberg's work in the Honors Program, and Professor Gensler's work teaching political science classes. Nevertheless, the average over the past three years has been only 38%. Over the same period, weekly student contact hours per full-time equivalent faculty member (WSCH/FTE) has averaged 650.

B. Curriculum and Instruction

We face two main challenges in this area: First, increased competitiveness for upper-division acceptance of business and economics majors, especially economics majors at UC institutions, is challenging us to find ways to signal our strong students' ability to succeed in those environments. Second, the heightened math requirement from the CSU LDTP is challenging us to create curriculum that will maintain and even develop our ability to contribute to the general economic literacy of the non-major.

These two issues unfortunately contribute to solving each other; the UCs are not in the least of the opinion that survey "literacy" courses add to their students' success or signal any sort of quality, and the higher mathematics requirement of the CSU LDTP is a few course levels below the A-level performance they want our students to demonstrate in Math 3.

C. Student Success

One of our biggest challenges is in doing program review itself and evaluating the program's success in fulfilling its mission.

"Fostering intellectual growth" is of course essential, and needs to be a goal, whether measurable or not. We have no way of knowing, for example, whether students engage in a higher level of critical thinking when making choices or deciding their positions on political issues involving economic policy.

But more concretely, the economics program is designed to promote student success and serve the needs of transfer students both generally and in the business and economics majors. However, none of the data available to us helps us evaluate at all how successful we are at our mission.

Specifically, the following information is unavailable to us:

- § Transfer rates of students who complete the class, as opposed to those who don't;
- § Number of economics majors overall and in economics classes;
- § Number of students who state their major as economics but change it later (and after what history);
- § Number of students who do *not* state their major, but become economics majors after classes at Saddleback or transfer as economics majors;
- § Transfer rates of economics majors;
- § Transfer rates of economics majors to their preferred schools;
- § Baccalaureate (or higher) degree completion of economics majors.

Other items of interest exist, of course, but the above list highlights our present inability – pervasive in community colleges – to measure our final success in pursuing our mission.

D. Facilities, Technical Infrastructure, and Resources

Increased facilities support is needed in several areas:

First, the campus has no testing center. This is a special hardship in two areas on which Saddleback relies heavily: courses taught by associate faculty, and online courses.

When makeup exams are needed, it is difficult for any faculty member, but especially an associate faculty member, to have a student take such an exam in a secure environment. Students end up taking exams unsupervised in the hallways. With associate faculty, who have no private offices and do not spend the hours on campuses full-time faculty do, students often end up taking the exams not only unsupervised but also during a subsequent class, which puts that student even further behind. (While it is true that associate faculty now have workspace within BGS, the space isn't one in which exams can be taken. It's not only not suitable for exam-taking, it's not secure. It is also the space into which faculty write and send confidential documents for printing.)

With online courses, where technical trouble as well as personal issues cause face-to-face make-ups to be sometimes needed, students who are *remote* from Saddleback frequently have better opportunities to take exams than our native students do. There is currently discussion of UC Berkeley's requiring proof that all distance education grades are assigned to the person actually doing the work, and one option is to have an exam to be taken in person. There are many testing centers nationwide that can accommodate this, but we have no facilities for our own students.

A second issue is the dearth of support for students after 7pm. Services for evening students are virtually nonexistent for most of the year, and yet these students represent a third of our enrollment. Secure study space, computer lab availability, access to associate faculty workspace, library hours, etc., make our campus uncollegial, even forbidding, at night.

Third, the move of the Library is expected to create some difficulty for both students and faculty, and we are aware that the Library is seeking to minimize any negative impact. Their increased reliance on electronic media, such as their recent purchase of JSTOR access to scholarly journals, is a great help. The economics program is not alone in greeting a generation of students who believe Wikipedia and Encarta are scholarly sources, have no tools for evaluating the quality or pedigree of a website, and can't identify plagiarism even when they have no intention of committing it. The wealth of resources available on the Internet promotes an epidemic of garbage research. The program desperately needs increased resources available for classroom faculty to use both in face-to-face and online courses in order to provide students with the information literacy necessary for the economic literacy necessary to survive in a modern post-industrial society.

Fourth, Blackboard statistics indicate that most online students do the bulk of their work on weekends or very late at night. Saddleback has no support for these people when they need it. A college that seeks to serve its community by energetic expansion of distance education must have a help desk available all 7 days, for all 24 hours of those days, at least during the first and last two weeks of classes (including exams), including eight-week classes.

Fifth, it is not acceptable to have Blackboard "down" or to lose any information in the event of crisis. Backups should be numerous and frequent. Also, enough redundancy needs to be built into the system to make sure that there is no break in service except in the case of catastrophic events, *not regularly scheduled ones*. It is no surprise that there will continue to be upgrades, maintenance needs, etc.; when we have events that we know will happen, we need to make sure they are completely transparent to our students.

Finally, in terms of face-to-face classes, our wireless campus has greatly increased the opportunities for academic dishonesty among students and may even be hampering their learning in the classroom.

§ In addition to cell-phone communication, students have laptops available. In most disciplines, faculty grapple with issues of the proper use of laptops in the classroom. Some do not allow laptops for note-taking, which is a pity because many students can type much faster (and more neatly!) than they can print. In economics especially, students can benefit greatly from having spreadsheets available to them. But the wireless environment is just too tempting. A ripping examination of the intersection of the marginal and average cost curve is no competition for the latest five-star comic video on YouTube.

§ During exams, the ability of students to communicate with each other or even download textbook resources has greatly increased. There is insufficient training regarding high-tech cheating.

We need the ability to “cold spot” a classroom should an instructor wish to shut down access for an exam or other activity.

SECTION IV: CONCLUSION

The economics program is a highly productive, understaffed, but essential part of Saddleback College that would put increased technical assistance, data availability, personnel resources, and physical resources to excellent use in promoting our students' transfer success and intellectual growth.

