



# **Economics**

**Program Review - Comprehensive Review**

2022- 2023

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## Program Context

### 1. Mission

Share how your program contributes to the College or fits into the College's Mission. For example, what other academic programs and student/academic services does your program engage with? Examples of student/academic services include the Learning Center, Library, STEM Center, SparkPoint, Dream Center, etc. Another example, how does your program fit into any of the College's plans (such as Equity, Technology, Strategic Enrollment, etc.)? If your program has a mission statement, you may include it here.

It is the mission of this economics department to ensure that students from diverse backgrounds can achieve their educational goals by providing quality education in general education/core transfer material in economics. The discipline serves both the College's plan to transfer students (GE, Econ & Bus) to four-year universities as providing workforce students a pathway to obtain certification in certain areas of business.

**As a point of historical background:** Years ago, the college administration gave the smaller disciplines that shared a common ancestry (i.e., social sciences) the opportunity to elect to work collectively. The social sciences recognized both the natural connections of all social sciences as well as the reality that, at Canada College, the social sciences are made up of almost exclusively one full time discipline expert per discipline. The result of all this was that the Economics Department became a discipline within the greater Social Sciences program. The aggregation of the social sciences allows us to leverage our talents for the best possible student outcome. See the discussion of PLO outcomes in this program review as just one example of how we benefit from this aggregation.

As an active participant in the college's Honors Transfer Program (HTP) economics has helped to increase the opportunities to do scholarly research and has fostered increased student participation with the library. In addition to serving economics students, these research opportunities have led many STEM students to do economic/science research projects. The finished product of a student's research also creates opportunities for them to present their research at different conferences.

Lastly, the economics department actively invites students to be tutors with the Learning Center and mentor tutees.

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### 2. Articulation

**Are there changes in curriculum or degree requirements at high schools or 4-year institutions that may impact your program? If so, describe the changes and your efforts to accommodate them. If no changes have occurred, please write "no known changes."**

The economics professors have surveyed the area and are unaware of any changes in curriculum and degree requirements at high schools or four-year schools that would impact the discipline. Both CSUs and UCs continue to stress both competency in math for students majoring in economics. Moreover, greater amounts of math (i.e., calc. differential equations, linear algebra) statistics and computer science are also recommended for those pursuing masters/PhD in economics. To be clear, the evidence for these conclusions is largely anecdotal i.e., conversations with other economics professors, students who have transferred, informal internet searches, articles in the WSJ and The Economist, and reviews of BA/MA degree requirements.

As noted in a prior program review, we should continue to watch to see if more STEM students look at economics a career path. Additionally, since economics majors today are often effectively applied math majors, we should keep an eye on the growing field of math/economics (see UCLA program). Finally, cryptocurrency/blockchain technologies are effectively merging math, computer science with the subject of economics. The application of the blockchain technology is growing quickly. We should be open to see how this new field might alter the economics program. However, how we do this, given our scant resources is a puzzle.

### 3. Community & Labor Needs

**Are there changes in community needs, employment needs, technology, licensing, or accreditation that may affect your program? If so, describe these changes and your efforts to accommodate them. If no changes have occurred, please write "no known changes". CTE programs: identify the dates of your most recent advisory group meeting and describe your advisory group's recommendations for your program.**

The economics professors are unaware of changes in community needs, employment needs, technology, licensing, or accreditation that may affect this program, since the last program review. Prior observations of the growth in blockchain technologies do not support changes to the program. In general, the discipline of economics primarily draws on transfer students for its enrollments--though there are some workforce/CWA students enrolled as well. However, as noted in #2 (ARTICULATION) economics continues to become more mathematical and computer science oriented. Students can pursue a graduate degree in economics with a bachelor's degree in a few fields, including economics, business, and mathematics. A Ph.D. in economics may require several years of study after earning a bachelor's degree, including completion of research in a specialty field. Candidates with a bachelor's degree may qualify for some entry-level economist positions, including jobs with the federal government. A graduate degree is sometimes required for advancement to higher level positions.

As noted in the prior economics program review document, jobs for students with 2-year degrees in economics are effectively non-existent. Jobs for economics students with BA, MA however, are robust:

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<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/life-physical-and-social-science/economists.htm>. Median salaries for economists as of 2021 are about \$106K, which is about 30% higher than the average social scientist (sorry my colleagues) with those who go into finance at the high end (\$163K) while those in government are at the other end at \$82K.

Taking into consideration the evolving nature of the labor market for economics majors as well as the demographic nature of our student body (Fros/soph), it makes sense to treat the two-year economics degree and its coursework as primarily serving general education students as well as those majoring in business, economics, and environmental sciences. Indeed, that's what our "Ed goal" data says.

As for how the documented changes in employment trends affect my program and our offerings, I do not believe that they do. That view might change if you were to consider four year and other advance degrees in economics. However, the basic two-year degree coursework, which is all that we offer, has not changed due to employment changes.

Of course, stronger overall increase in the demand for labor in our service area does depress night enrollments (and day to a lesser extent). Moreover, the continuing uncertainty that surrounds COVID and its associated push to use greater amounts of technology in and out of the class warrants additional discussion. However, as I will note throughout this document, making dramatic changes with respect to both course offerings and the modality by which we distribute these courses is risky given we are still in an environment that is still largely unsettled.

### Looking Back

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#### 4. Curricular changes

List any significant changes that have occurred over the prior years in your program's curricular offerings, scheduling, or mode of delivery. For decisions made by your department, explain the rationale for these changes. If applicable, how have state policy changes affected your curricular offerings?

##### **Significant changes:**

AB705: While not fitting exactly into curricular offerings, scheduling, or mode of delivery the implementation of AB 705 during COVID, made it much less likely any given class would have a prerequisite. Without getting into the legislation's merits (or demerits), it is worth noting this change may result in seeing more students entering an economics class who are challenged by the level of math used and the frequency of its use. Couple this with the fact that students often see economics as a foreign "language" and the program should keep an eye out for evidence of these challenges and consider how support services may need to change. (See **Looking Ahead** section for comment)

**Curricular offerings:** With respect to curricular offerings, no significant changes have been made in the last year or since that last program review, nor do we anticipate many new offerings. This is due, in part, to the

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nature of the subject matter-it doesn't change quickly. It is also because the economics major is overwhelmingly taken by transfer students to satisfy a general education requirement or as a core class for the economics and or business major. Since most of our transfers go to the CSU system (greater) or the UC system (lesser) the economics department must ensure classes articulate to these two systems. As both the UC and CSU have not made any changes to either the economics major or the subject matter in their lower division courses there is no reason to change our offerings or the topics within a given class.

**Honors Transfer Program and offerings:** With respect to the economics program's offerings and the Honors Transfer Program (HTP), we have attempted to schedule more honors classes (ECON 230) as well as offer more contract opportunities. However, decreased enrollments due to COVID coupled with the fact that one on one student research opportunities in online/hybrid/hy-flex/asynchronous environments is often infinitely more difficult than in a face-to-face environment (F2F) has resulted in economics offering no honors classes during COVID and providing dramatically fewer honors contract opportunities. I do not see this improving unless we go back to more F2F classes. Personally, my decision to reduce my exposure to these activities lies in the fact that it is just too difficult and time consuming to coordinate and manage them in a virtual teaching world. Our choice to remain largely online has had real consequences in this area. The college should really think about that.

**COVID response and course modality:** Economics increased its online offerings during COVID. We offered both asynchronous and synchronous classes. As we have moved out of COVID, we have attempted to offer more F2F classes. However, our rollout of F2F classes came with serious restrictions with respect to returning to campus as well as marketing complications associated with getting the word out. The result was F2F enrollments that were weak.

**Important for making any future changes:** It is worth noting that any student who wished to return F2F could do so only after jumping over hurdles that were not there for the online students. Those hurdles included:

- distancing rules,
- vaccination rules,
- masking rules.
- Additionally, F2F arrived to find a campus often empty of
- the student services that they have come to expect.
- And other students that they traditionally found support from

Therefore, it's not surprising that F2F enrollments have been disappointing. What does this mean going forward? Well, if COVID continues to be viewed as a significant issue, then F2F students will continue to face a myriad of hurdles that simply do not exist for their online counterparts. Add to this the perception

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(reality?) that online classes are not as difficult as a F2F offering and we should not be surprised if F2F enrollments continue to be weak.

The real question, as I will note repeatedly in this document, is the following: Should the changes in modality that we made to address the dangers of COVID remain after those dangers ebb?

I welcome the inevitable discussion of how much of our campus curriculum should be offered via one modality as compared to another. However, without a real discussion of the merits of each modality (i.e., what each does or does not bring to the table in terms of preparing our students to transfer and compete at those 4 year institutions) I fear what will determine the modality of a given course will largely be the student answer to a question something like: "*Dear student which modality do you like more, "a" or "b"?*" Not exactly the most scholarly or thoughtful way to make these sorts of decisions or to ensure success at the next level (*my opinion*).

### **5A. Progress Report - IPC Feedback**

**Provide your responses to all recommendations received in your last program review cycle.**

1. Include academic program completion data, such as the econ associates degree completion. Elaborate on student-centered program strengths instead of just enrollment data. (Executive Summary)

**My Response: Done in this year's PR document.**

2. Faculty does not state need for changes. Mentions impact of TMCs with CSUs. Suggest including UCs in analysis.

**My Response: Included references to the UCs in this program review.**

3. As your department relies on adjunct faculty for online course delivery, be cognizant of the ramp-up time it takes to not only hire part-time faculty but also to have them certified to teach online.

**My response: Noted**

4. Include more direct quantitative evidence from current data packets. Include CWA night enrollment in your packet (Enrollment Trends)

**My response: Made this response more robust in this year's program review**

5. Cite specific quantitative evidence from data packets to describe the extent of the gaps. For example, how big is the equity gap for women? ()

**My response: Done that in this year's program review**

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*6. Identified objectives for both social science and economics. We encourage you to describe how as econ faculty, you utilize the SS hub space for individual disciplines. (Looking Ahead)*

**My response: Done**

### **5B. Progress Report - Prior Program Goals**

**Provide a summary of the progress you have made on the program goals identified in your last program review.**

#### **Prior Planning Objectives Economics and their progress**

**Economics Training** Update: Have attempted to remain current in my discipline. However, COVID and the political environment make this increasingly difficult. With respect to COVID, all F2F conferences were sidelined. While some conferences moved to a virtual setting, the idea of sitting in front of the computer for yet another hour is less than appealing. As COVID ends I assume many of these conferences will return to a F2F format. Then the question becomes will the college fund faculty attend these sorts of conferences. Politically, California is increasingly placing states on its “no fly” zone rule. While I understand the point (however flawed it might be) of the policy, the effect of the no-fly rule has been to prohibit faculty members from attending very valuable conferences. This has already happened to me.

**Economic/business literacy** Update: Economics, Business and the Library worked to get our students access to the both the Wall Street Journal and the New York Times for free—just as their CSM and Skyline peers had at the writing of the last program review—mission accomplished!

**Support honors transfer program (HTP)** Update: Continued to offer honors courses and contracts in support of the HTP. However, as noted in another part of this document, the reduction in F2F classes due to COVID has seriously limited this one-person department’s ability to offer honors classes and contract opportunities.

**Student Presentations** Update: Within the limits of COVID and few F2F classes we continue to push honors students to present at local honor symposiums. However, the numbers were lower than in the past.

**Attend conferences on honors** Update: Again, COVID radially reduced these sorts of opportunities. We made no headway on attending the National Collegiate Honors Conference (NCHC). Also, the “no fly” rule mentioned above applies with equal force to student participation in these sorts of conferences.

#### **Planning Objectives Social Sciences and their progress:**

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**A space in the library for social science students to gather.** Update: While this space does exist the extensive building on campus has often led to this space being used by others than social scientists.

**Coordination time for the social sciences.** Update: We currently have funding.

**Marketing of the SS disciplines** has been less than successful. Update: We currently work with the marketing department.

**Facilities, perhaps the SS hub should become a smart room.** Update: This has not happened.

### **6A. Impact of Resource Applications**

**Describe the impact to date of previously requested new resources (assignment, equipment, facilities, research, funding) including both resource requests that were approved and not approved. What impact have these resources had on your program and measures of student success? What have you been unable to accomplish due to resource requests that were not approved?**

Smartboards (neat boards). Whatever they are called, I find them extremely valuable in my classes.

Interestingly I don't find them particularly useful for what I think was there intended purpose, i.e., to teach in a Hy-flex mode. Rather, the boards allow me and my students to quickly draw up graphs that are clean, organized and easily for all to follow. We need more of them. No messy or dried up dry markers.

Wonderful.

Beyond the smartboard observation, there have been no material requests made for new resources by the economics staff. Thus, the impact to-date that new resources (equipment, facilities, research) would have on the program is nil.

However, I would (again) appreciate it if the college, in the context of resource allocation, took notice of the following piece that calls into question the efficacy and value of SLO's--the time spent by me (and others) doing this work is a "resource" that this study suggests is largely a wasted effort. If these resources of time were released back to me, I might have more to say in this section. An Insider's Take on Assessment: It May Be Worse Than You Thought <https://www.chronicle.com/article/An-Insiders-Take-on/242235>

### **6B. Impact of Staffing Changes**

**Describe the impact on your program of any changes within the last program review cycle in staffing levels (for example, the addition, loss or reassignment of faculty/staff). If no changes have occurred please write "not applicable."**

With respect to current faculty member staffing in economics we have one full time faculty member and sometimes two part-timers (often however, just one). One part-time person teaches all the online courses. While we have added or subtracted an occasional part time faculty member from semester to semester since the last program review, nothing else of significance has occurred in staffing. Absent any unexpected retirements, quits, or huge, sudden, shifts in technology we don't expect much to happen in the near term.



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Enrollments to a large degree dictate hiring. Enrollments in economics (and the college) have fallen significantly since the last program review. Much of this fall coincides with the advent of COVID. Much of how my department (and the college) looks at future hiring will be a function how quickly (or slowly) enrollments bounce back from these Covid effects.

Finally, if The District remains in "basic aid," the urge to grow the student body must be looked at in a different light than if we were a district that needed to chase students for dollars.

### Current State of the Program

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#### 7A. Enrollment Trends

Use the data provided by PRIE to examine your enrollments by department or courses. Describe trends in headcount, FTES, and load. If applicable, describe any other enrollment data that is relevant to your program.

#### **Trends in headcount, FTES and LOAD pre COVID (2017 -19)**

During the pre-COVID period economics saw drops in both enrollments (12.5%) and Load (10.6%). During this same period the college saw only a headcount drop of 5.5. However, upon a deeper look the following additional data is relevant to the economics program

- The groups of students that economics traditionally relies on for its enrollments fell by more than the 5.5% average. For example, **returning transfers** saw a headcount drop of 10.5%.
- Based on absolute numbers, Canada has predominantly a Hispanic/White **transfer** population. Any changes in the absolute numbers of these large groups should impact **transfer** programs that rely on them to fill seats. In these two groups we see decreases in enrollments
- Economics is one of the few programs on campus that has a **higher ratio of males to females**. However, given our male population is much smaller than our female population (roughly 35% to 65%) any fall in the male population should affect economics more dramatically than other, less male dependent, departments. We find that during this time male enrollments did fall.
- **California unemployment rate fell by** almost 20% (from about 5% to 4.1%). During times of falling unemployment enrollments in the college tend to decline as well. Students, especially night students and part time students, are most vulnerable to this sort of employment pull.

#### **Enrollments/productivity Post Covid (2020-22):**

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During this period economics saw overall drops in both enrollments (40%) and Load (33%). During this same period the college saw only an overall headcount drop of 16%. However, upon a deeper look the following additional data is relevant to the economics program.

- Economics courses are often offered during the day. During COVID daytime economics enrollments fell by 78% while day headcount fell by 40%. As grim as these percentages are, economics fared better in some respects than the college during COVID. Collegewide daytime enrollments fell by 79% while day headcount fell by 62%. Given this context, the story of economics in the day appears to mirror the story of the college overall in the day.
- Night classes are fewer in number. Not surprisingly, during COVID night economics enrollments fell by 80% while headcount fell by 79%. However, collegewide night enrollments fell by 83% over this time, while headcount fell by almost 92%. Again, by comparison, the economics department was less awful than the college.
- Online enrollments were not immune to the effects of COVID. Enrollments fell by 22% while headcount was down by 19 %. Interestingly, these declines contrasted with the college wide increases in online enrollments (22%) and headcount (12%). This is a puzzle. Perhaps explainable by the fact that economics is extremely visual and in general, challenging to master. However, if one looks at the smaller, more recent time frame of 2021-22, one sees negative rate changes (declines in) to college wide enrollment and headcount as well.
- Lastly, during this period, the California **unemployment rate rose by almost 148%** (from about 4.1% to 10.2%). Normally (historically) this would have caused an uptick in enrollments. However, this time I suspect it did not for following reasons:
  - o Covid and the associated lockdowns made everyone wary of doing anything—online or F2F.
  - o In addition to unemployment benefits, the government issued additional financial help (savings rates during COVID shot up dramatically!) as well. Thus, for many, layoffs did not trigger the usual response (i.e., to go back to school and get retrained) that would have normally led to increased college enrollments.
  - o The rate of unemployment fell by 59% ---to 4.2% as of 07.01.2022. Thus, the lure of greater employment opportunities, along with the higher wages in the service sectors (to compensate those for increased COVID risks), made it hard for colleges to maintain enrollments, let alone

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increase them. Keep in mind many of students worked in the various sectors (services) that saw the greatest increases in wages during and after COVID.

### 7B. Significant Changes in Your Program

**Have there been any significant changes in enrollment trends or course offerings? For example, has there been a significant increase or drop in FTES or Load? If applicable, consider trends in class cancellation rates and how it might have affected your course offerings. If needed, consider how the pattern of course offerings (times/days/duration/delivery mode/number of sections) affected your enrollment?**

Yes, the declines in enrollment headcount correlate with a **pre Covid reduction in sections from 21 to 18**. While this served the purpose of keeping LOAD numbers up, it has the additional potential to impact both enrollments and headcount in a negative manner since a reduction in section offerings often encourage students to look elsewhere for classes

During COVID (20-22) the declines in enrollment and LOAD accelerated. In large part this was due to COVID. These declines correlate with a **post Covid further reduction in sections from 18 to 16**. Again, fewer choices for students at some point often result in the student enrolling elsewhere.

As far as how this might affect the pattern of course offerings, both as it relates to the number and their modalities (F2F vs online), if our rules around COVID change and loosen up then we could expect F2F offerings to grow. However, this will take time. We didn't get here overnight. Moreover, if the economy does enter a recession, as many predict, we could see our demand for night classes rise. It is worth noting that our CWA numbers (which affect economics classes) are down from pre covid highs of close to 400 to post covid lows much nearer to 100. We should expect those numbers to rise if a recession materializes and economics will likely see a benefit from that situation.

As noted, to try and discern a reason for these enrollment declines or how these declines will impact my discipline (or ANY discipline) is at best a guess. Are we in a new COVID normal?? One where we are largely going to be online? Or do we return to the classroom? Is something bigger (longer term) than COVID happening?

I know I am not smart enough to know the answer to the above questions. However, the corollary to my admission of ignorance is that no one else knows the answer to these questions either! Anyone who does claim to have definitive answers is just demonstrating what economist F.A Hayek called, "the mere pretense of knowledge."

### 7C. Planning for Your Program

**What changes could be implemented, including changes to course scheduling (times/days/duration/delivery mode/number of sections), curriculum, marketing, and articulation of pathways that might improve these trends? If applicable, include plans for faculty recruitment and faculty training. NOTE: If other sources of data are used, please upload these documents or provide URLs.**

Answering this question in a normal year is difficult. Answering it after two plus years of COVID and with most if not all the barriers to attending F2F still in place makes answering this question at best and exercise in, "what if."

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For example, what if COVID goes away, the restrictions on F2F classes end and the college offers more courses and services F2F. If that is what happens then I would argue for a small increase in F2F sections at night and in the day. At worst I would advocate for not cutting anymore sections. The night offerings are already as low as they can go without breaching our promise to night students (and CWA students) to get them through the 100, 102 sequence within a calendar year. As mentioned before, at some point having too few economics offerings in the day and evening just sends students to other colleges for their courses.

Conversely, what if COVID is perceived as a big enough threat to in person education that we elect to remain mostly online, then clearly the offerings need to skew in such a way as to reflect that reality.

The bigger, longer run question relates to any changes that need to be made in terms of how we deliver the content of the economics program. Is the program in need of changing its delivery system (i.e., the modalities)? Here I can only offer some best guesses. First, I would assume that we are going to continue to offer both 100 and 102 online. Placing both of these courses online has served (and will continue to serve) the student who cannot meet at regularly scheduled times.

However, I think the bigger question as we move forward is whether we continue to offer a robust set of F2F offerings (like we did pre COVID) or move to a more limited set of F2F offerings supplemented with “hy-flex offerings”—however we define them.

As mentioned before, before any tinkering is made with respect to modality changes, I think the college needs to engage in a real conversation about what being F2F brings to the student’s educational experience. Moreover, to what degree, if at all, do we say to students, “We know you like being online, but we feel it is in your best interest to be on campus in a F2F setting?” That’s the question that needs an answer before we start changing modalities.

In this regard, it is worth noting the following

- While you will find almost no articles that say the online experience during COVID was superior to or even equal to F2F learning, you can find a plethora of articles that document the opposite. And the harm is not limited to K-12, the evidence is present with respect to college students as well.
- You will find few, if any, high schools or 4-year schools that have elected to stay with the COVID mix of classes offerings once the COVID protocols were lifted. This suggests that the COVID model may have been necessary but is not preferred.

### **8A. Access & Completion**

**Describe the student completion and success rate in your courses and/or program using the data provided by PRIE. Look at your course offerings, in the last program review cycle was it possible for a student to complete your**

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**certificates or degrees while only completing courses at Cañada College? How can the college help you improve student completion and success? What changes could be made?**

*Student completion and student success:*

Student completion rate (SCR) and student success rates (SSR) have improved over the time frame 2017-22. Respectively, the SCR for economics rose from about 60% to about 63%, while SSR improved from about 80% to 85%. Both these rates, however, lag the overall college wide rates for 2022 (SCR 72%) and SSR (86%) for transfer classes. Trying to explain either the program's 2017 – 2022's improvement, or the program's lag as compared to the college's overall average in these areas is not going to come from examining the PRIE data more closely. Any answer I give will be at best speculative. With that in mind...

With respect to the improvement in the economic SCR and SSR, I would guess they both improved largely because COVID caused classes to be somewhat easier smaller. Smaller classes can often allow for more one-on-one timely intervention. Easier classes have a higher probability of passing. Additionally, there was a policy in place for much of COVID that made it easier for a student to avoid a grade of D or F. Additionally, there was some feeling among the faculty members that we should avoid awarding grades of D and F grades during COVID. These would both tend to result in higher SSR and SCR rates, *ceteris paribus*.

As for why the SCR and SSR of economics lag the college rates for these same two metrics, I would hazard a guess that it is because economics is for many students one of the more challenging classes that he or she takes as an undergrad. Its mixture of math, graphs and dense reading material probably explains much of the lag. As I noted in the last program review, some of the other areas of study on campus appear to award more grades of A and B, as compared to economics. That observation may help to explain the difference between the college wide average measures for SCR and SSR and the economic departments own rates. Given the "harder grading curve" that students in economics appear to face, lower rates of success/retention might be a natural by-product.

*When I look at the course offerings since in the last program review cycle was it possible for a student to complete your certificates or degrees while only completing courses at Cañada College?*

Yes, it is possible for a student to complete my certificates or degrees while only completing courses at Cañada College-but it is getting more difficult. We are offering fewer sections in total (down to 16) than we were at the start of this program review cycle (21). That's a 24% drop in section offerings. This decline in sections make it increasingly difficult to offer both ECON 100 and 102 (the core courses) to fit student needs. Additionally, for a night student the drop in offerings is often the difference between one and zero sections! Of course, if a student wants to take something online there is that option. However, that is increasingly the ONLY option. For students who want F2F—that is becoming more and more difficult to do while remaining only at Canada's campus.

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What can the college do to help with completion and success?

1. I think the single **best thing the college can do is get students back on campus**. Not just for classes but for F2F tutoring and F2F counseling. Getting large numbers of students back F2F will help to re-create that sense of campus community that, for the last 30 years, has been what every administrator, faculty member and staff person has said is one of the most important variables for student success. Students succeed when they are around each other in real time, not virtually.

2. The next thing the college can do is **radically change and or dump the current “early alert system.”** Designed with the best of intentions, it is neither early, nor is it much of an alert. The series of steps one must currently go through (e.g., filling out a form, sending to an “intervention specialist” waiting for them to meet and design a response, finding out the result of the meeting) takes far too long and involves too many people with too many steps to conclusion.

**One example:** I filed several early alerts on three students in the spring of 22. I heard back (i.e., a resolution) via email AFTER the end of the semester. Yes, after?! Please tell me how any intervention AFTER the conclusion of the semester serves anyone-- other than those employed to run it?

**What is my proposal?** Glad you asked! Go back to the way we did it before. First, keep the range of reportable issues narrow and related to class performance (e.g., exams assignments). Second, instead of all these specialists that take forever to sort things out, have the professor identify the students who are struggling and fill out a more limited form that goes directly to the student’s counselor (or if the student is in a special program e.g., EOPS, Athletics to them). The counselor (or the person in EOPS) then quickly calls the student in for a meeting and clears the air. This should take no longer than 2 weeks—hopefully less.

### **8B. Student Equity**

**One of the goals of the College’s Student Equity plan is to close the performance gaps for disproportionately impacted students. Use the data provided by PRIE that indicates which groups are experiencing a disproportionate impact in your program. Which gaps are most important for improving outcomes in your program? How can the college help you address these gaps? What changes could be made?**

I will respond to all material variances that I noted when reviewing the data. However, as noted in my prior program review document, I wish to point out the assumptions behind the “variances” to me, appear dubious-- at best.

To assume enrollments (or any other outcome) should, ex ante, reflect some pre-determined vision of parity is not well grounded in either science or logic. For example: Did you get the same grade as every other student got in every class you ever took in school? Were all your classes equally easy or difficult? Didn’t some students often find some classes easier to earn a good grade than others did? Weren’t some classes more boring than others? Might not those sorts of differences in effort, ability, interest, etc....result

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in outcomes that do not appear to mirror parity? Similarly, why should any given program expect to see parity in who it serves? For example, should fashion design programs or apprentice electrician programs expect to see some sort of parity in enrollments across various demographic groups?

Using “parity” (and any deviation from parity) as a metric to judge a program’s success or failure ignores how students discern what to major in or how students prepare for their coursework. It isn’t simple. It’s a rich, complicated, and often a difficult process. One that, as faculty members, is often hard to comprehend. Is it possible that parity across multiple different variables could be an outcome that we observe? Sure. However, is the absence of parity proof of some systemic problem? Maybe but probably not. Without more information, speculating on the reason for any variance from some measure of parity in outcomes, or attempting to change that observed variance, in my opinion, is risky.

With that as my caveat to this topic, here are my comments on any equity variances (-) in the economics program.

- **Age:** Economics under performs in success rates for the 29-39 and the 40-49 age groups (while over performing in the >18). Looking at the absolute values one notes that the numbers of students these categories is often quite small (e.g., 16) as a result a small change in any absolute value will often cause a dramatic change in a percentage. One cannot conclude much in this sort of situation.
- **First Gen:** No material negative variances in either success or access.
- **Low Income:** No material negative variances in either success or access.
- **Race:** Except for Filipino, there are no material negative variances in either success or access (in fact it’s often quite the opposite, the rates are better than the college averages). We note that the absolute value in the Filipino category is 11 students not much can be deduced from any movement in a number this small.
- **Vets:** None reported in this department.
- **Disability:** No material negative variances in either success or access.
- **Gender:** There is a material access variance of -9.7%. Interestingly variance this does NOT translate into any negative variance in either success or withdraws. Thus, the women that do take economics classes succeed at rates like their male counterparts

**What to make of gender access issue?** As noted earlier, expecting parity in every situation is problematic. I can, however, speculate. One observation of mine is that female students are often the first students to form study groups. They are also often the first to work with tutors. Given that observation keep in mind that COVID decimated the tutorial center. Tutors were harder to find and keep. The little tutoring that did happen almost always happened online, as opposed to



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F2F. Online tutoring, from what my students who sought out tutoring said (and what I observed), was that it was not very useful. COVID also made forming F2F study groups much harder. Fewer F2F students on campus = fewer chances to create study groups. No “community” = no leveraging of community assets and skills. Faced with these two facts, it is reasonable to conclude that perhaps female students thought twice about enrolling in economics. The ones that did enroll were probably the ones most confident about their skill set entering the class. In this sort of environment access rates could fall while success rates might not.

However, it is worth noting that economics has historically, both at Canada and at schools across the country, tended to have a smaller proportion of females. This trend pre-dates Covid. I am not going to through the list of possible explanations (you can look at my past program review if you are super curious) for this historical trend. Suffice it to say that it’s interesting but complicated. Also, it’s worth noting that the variance across the country is narrowing, not widening, as time passes.

### **8C. Completion – Success Online**

**The college has a goal of improving success in online courses. Using the data provided by PRIE, what significant gaps do you see in success between online/hybrid and non-online courses? What changes could be made to reduce these gaps? If your program does not offer online/hybrid courses, please write “not applicable”.**

- 1) F2F: As mentioned in other places, F2F success in economics ranged from 60-62% over the program review period. Retention ranged from 80-85%
- 2) Online: Online success in economics ranged from 60-62% while retention ranged from 76-81%
- 3) Hybrid (COVID period) success ranged from 61-63% while retention ranged from 77 to 85.6%

Let’s deal with the outlier first. **Hybrid.** This move was a response to COVID. Consequently, I would view the results here as largely an outlier. A lot of “unusual” things happened in these semesters with respect to assignments and grades. Not much can be gleaned from these rates—other than economics didn’t completely screw up the emergency move to Hybrid teaching due to COVID

**Online vs F2F.** As to any differences in rates of success and retention between online classes and F2F classes seem rather slight. One would expect that rates of success and retention would be lower in online classes (as compared to F2F) given we have little in the way of vetting who is or is not a good fit for that type of environment. Not surprisingly, when we look at these rates in the economics online classes, they are both slightly lower than in F2F classes. Beyond this observation, it is not worth spending time on either the cause of, or a response to, these immaterial differences.



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### 9A. SLO Assessment - Compliance

**Are all active courses being systematically assessed over a three-year cycle? Refer to the Program's /Department's Three-Year Assessment Plan and describe how the plan is completed across sections and over time.**

Yes, all active courses being systematically assessed over a three-year cycle. As noted in my prior program review, the coordination of this task is difficult and time-consuming effort. Especially given that economics is a one-person department and there is virtually no way to compel part timers to turn in SLO results in a timely manner.

Given these constraints, here is what we try to do in the economics department:

- Part timers are made aware at the start of the semester which SLO is to be measured. As we cannot compel participation, each part timer is invited to participate and share his or her results. Both the deployment of the measurement tool as well as the tool's form is determined by each faculty member. Those who participate share their results with the full-time person. Any necessary aggregation is done in a qualitative manner. Econ's SLO's are consistently measured within the 3-year mandated time frame. Generally, the students almost always perform at or above the expected level of success. However, trends in student SLO mastery can only be studied over time so it is the belief of the economics faculty that, rather than change the existing SLO's, we should continue to measure existing SLO's to see if any patterns worth studying emerge. Additionally, COVID often caused measurements to be done differently than in the past and with a much smaller data set (smaller classes). The COVID data, relative to past non COVID data, may not be very comparable to prior year results.

### 9B. SLO Assessment - Impact

**Summarize the dialogue that has resulted from these course SLO assessments. What specific strategies have you implemented, or plan to implement, based upon the results of your SLO assessment?**

As noted in the prior program review, the conclusions drawn from SLO assessment are weak for the following reasons:

- 1) The variety of methods employed to collect the data do not allow for statistically valid aggregation.
- 2) The assessment methods are different from instructor to instructor. Requiring the same method of data collection would raise serious questions around academic freedom.
- 3) The numbers are often too small to draw much confidence from.
- 4) Finally, this study, while from 2018, has yet to be refuted and calls into question if all these efforts are not worth the investment of time. <https://www.chronicle.com/article/An-Insider-s-Take-on/242235>

Given all that, the dialog that happens between my part-time faculty members and myself as well as among all the social scientists can be described as follows:

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As between the participating part-timers and me, we discuss how our “rates” of success compare. We note where there are significant differences (either + or -) and see what we can learn from one another’s approach to assessing the SLO in question. Where trends are discernable, we discuss them. When events like COVID make comparisons difficult we note of that.

Among all the social scientists we occasionally discuss our SLO’s at our monthly meetings. Here the discussion is more along the lines of what types of methods someone might use to measure a given SLO as compared to differences in rates of success. By having this dialog, we often learn of different (and better) ways to collect SLO data.

Based on these discussions the department considers adding/subtracting an SLO. Additionally, these discussions might also serve as a vehicle for changing the method (e.g., from an essay to a multiple-choice question or from pre assessment to a pre and post assessment) of assessing an existing SLO to get (hopefully) a more accurate measure of the student’s competence with respect to a given SLO. With respect to one example of a specific strategy that I have implemented, I now try to measure SLO’s with a post assessment assignment, completed shortly after we have discussed the material in question.

### 10 PLO Assessment

**Describe your program's Program Learning Outcomes assessment plan using your Program/Department's <b>Three Year Assessment Plan</b> Summarize the major findings of your PLO assessments. What are some improvements that have been, or can be, implemented as a result of PLO assessment?**

The Social Sciences consists of ten departments: anthropology, communication studies, economics, ethnic studies (newly added since the last program review) geography, history, philosophy, political science, psychology, and sociology, and has three PLOs. Mostly these are one full-time person departments. In order to assess the PLOs efficiently, the Social Science faculty have created a general analytic rubric to be used across the departments to directly measure student writing assignments as a program (note: an analytic rubric is a rubric that provides descriptive feedback along several dimensions or parts, and a general rubric is one that can be used across assignments and/or disciplines). Each department brought 5 ungraded student writing samples selected by lot from one assignment administered during the semester to create a pool of assignments to draw from (the writing prompt was also attached to each of the samples). The rubric was then used to score a random sample of student writing assignments from the program as a whole. All faculty scored student writing assignments outside of their disciplines. Rubric scoring. The rubric was organized into three rows, one row for each PLO, and into three columns that included descriptive feedback for each level of competency: “Incomplete”, “Acceptable”, and “Accomplished.” During the 2019-2022 assessment period, the Social Science faculty examined the following PLOs: “Evaluate diverse viewpoints related to the human experience,” “Analyze Social Science concepts and theories,” and “Produce evidence-based arguments.” When evaluating the student writing assignments, the faculty selected one of the five scoring options (0, 0.5, 1, 1.5, or 2) to indicate the students’ level of competency (“incomplete” was represented by the scores 0 and 0.5, “acceptable” by 1 or 1.5, and accomplished by a 2). An average score of 1.0 (“acceptable”) was desired.

During the 3 assessment periods, between 2019-2022, 125 papers and exams were assessed. 94% (118/125) of the papers/exams received at least a 1 “acceptable” score. The average score for the PLO “Evaluate diverse viewpoints related to the human experience” was 1.52 which is slightly higher than the previous assessment period. The criterion was met. The average score for the PLO “Analyze Social Science concepts and theories” was 1.46 which is

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slightly higher than the previous assessment period. The criterion was met. And finally, the average score for the PLO “Produce evidence-based arguments” was 1.62 which is an increase from the previous program review assessment period. The criterion was met.

During the previous assessment period concern was noted that there was some difficulty in the assessment of analyzing social science concepts and theories as some assignments had limited ability to adequately assess this goal, which may have altered the results. During this program review period faculty noted a continued improvement in the selection of student work that fit with the PLOs assessed which assists in accurately assessing the PLOs. However, as the group would like to continue improving the selection of appropriate student writing samples, more detailed tracking of the types of student assignments previously used was proposed. Discussion of the overlap in topics within the disciplines, though from different perspectives, support the continued assessment of PLOs as a group. Also, faculty discussed a benefit to using the rubric as a way to improve instruction. The general analytic rubric was viewed as a tool to share and learn from each other, which was viewed as refreshing given the diversity of the social sciences program.

### Looking Ahead

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**Next Step: After completing the fields above, click on STEP 2: Goals & Resource Requests, in the Main Menu, enter your goals (Required) and resource requests (If Applicable).**

### Supporting Information

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#### Tables & Graphs

N/A

