

FOREWORD

The purpose of the Teaching Innovations Program (TIP) is to improve the quality of economics instruction in America's colleges and universities, thereby enhancing the understanding of economics by the nation's college students and graduates. Financial support for TIP was kindly provided by the National Science Foundation from 2004 through 2010.

The Teaching Innovations Program is one of the more recent efforts in a half century of American Economic Association Committee on Economic Education sponsored projects aimed at improving the teaching and learning of economics. TIP was enthusiastically supported by the officers and Executive Committee of the Association in 2000, when the Executive Committee appropriated a modest \$25,000 grant to provide seed money for five economics education projects. Four of those projects were eventually funded: TIP by the National Science Foundation; a project studying the production of Ph.D. economists by the Ford and Spencer Foundations; a project studying the use of new technologies in economic education by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; and a project studying the long-term effects of learning economics by the Calvin K. Kazanjian Economics Foundation, Inc. Together the four projects attracted over \$1.3 million dollars of support.

TIP comprises three main components: workshops, online instruction, and opportunities for scholarship in the area of economics education. This volume represents some of the scholarship produced by the Program.

From 2005 through 2009, TIP conducted ten workshops that provided more than 335 college and university economics instructors with knowledge about interactive teaching strategies. The interactive teaching strategies were demonstrated to the participants, and they were helped to decide which of the strategies would fit best with their unique teaching circumstances. The workshops also provided an opportunity for the participants to share their knowledge of teaching with new colleagues, and to develop a community of teaching scholars that will last into the future. Almost all of the participants reported that the workshops were at least as good a use of their time as their next best alternative.

A set of seven online instructional modules were created to provide interactive instruction to the participants at the point in time when the participants planned to implement a particular strategy. The modules include: assessment, case analysis, cooperative learning, context-rich problem solving, interpretive questioning and discussion, classroom experiments, and interactive methods for large-enrollment courses. The experts who developed the modules mentored participants at the time they chose to adapt the interactive teaching strategies. The close proximity of training and

implementation enhanced participant understanding and increased the likelihood of success.

The Teaching Innovations Program provided participants opportunities to engage in the scholarship of teaching by presenting interactive teaching strategies to instructors who did not participate in the Program. One way of accomplishing this was by organizing sessions at annual meetings of economics associations, at which participants presented papers describing their teaching innovations. Participants also developed original teaching materials, wrote papers on teaching, served as discussants of papers on teaching, and participated in other teacher education programs.

TIP concluded with a January 2010 academic conference. A group of 21 TIP participants was selected and grouped into seven teams based on the TIP online teaching modules they completed. Teams were joined by their respective module expert from the TIP staff. Each team then wrote a paper describing the teaching strategy and its innovative classroom use. The papers were presented at the conference, along with four others describing the purpose of TIP and overall outcomes of the project. The papers were subsequently revised in light of comments received at the conference, and now appear as the chapters in this volume, which is published in hope of sharing the benefits of the TIP workshops with a broader population of college and university economics instructors.

This volume and the six years of hard work constructing its foundation represent one among several ongoing projects of the American Economic Association's Committee on Economic Education, all aimed at improving the knowledge and understanding of economics by the nation's residents. For more information about the Committee's programs see its website at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/AEA/AEACEE/index.htm>.

*John J. Siegfried
Secretary-Treasurer,
American Economic Association, and
Professor of Economics, Emeritus,
Vanderbilt University*