SAN DIEGO MESA COLLEGE

Program Review

Summary and Reflections with Unit Goals, Action Plans, and Updates

Instructional Program - Economics (ECON)

Executive Summary

Describe the successes and challenges your unit has faced since the last comprehensive review.
Background:
Mesa economics program offered half courses online and half courses in-person for nearly a decade before the pandemic. In March 2020, all in-person courses have been converted to online format, which has been proved very successful. For most faculty, the transition has been smooth and seamless. We have not experienced major disruption and decrease in enrollment, actually, all online courses have been filled faster since then with a clear pattern of decreasing drop rates and increasing retention rates, as well as rapidly increasing success rates.

Evidence of success:
The strong performance of our program since the pandemic has been demonstrated by the following robust statistics. Our overall 81% success rate is well above Mesa College 70% success rate. Our program retention rate is over 93%: 25 percentage points higher than Mesa College retention rate 68%, a truly astonishing achievement.

The key to success:
We attribute our remarkable success to the following 4 factors: First, our faculty have worked extremely hard to help out our struggling students during the pandemic and many of us have been working 10/7 (at least myself). Second, our program has accumulated successful online teaching experiences over a decade and we have been well prepared for the sudden change. Third, our management team has implemented a well-functioning strategic planning and scheduled a student-centered online course structure. Finally, the most important factor we believe is, online education by nature is more diverse, more equitable, more inclusive, and more accessible. Our program's online courses have been carefully designed and tailored to better serve our diverse academic, socioeconomic, and ethnic students' population, especially those students who were frustrated and ill-prepared during the pandemic, as well as those highly-motivated students who enjoy academical challenge.

The Challenge:
The main challenge we have faced since the last comprehensive review is the back-to-campus in-person teaching mandate to meet the 67% threshold for each instructor rather than for each program or each school. The current Mesa data end in Fall 2021 and we don't have comprehensive statistics available to verify our concern now. However, based on our faculty's first-hand knowledge, we have seen a trend of decreasing students' enrollments, retention rates, success rates even for those well-scheduled in-person classes since fall 2022.

Program goal:
Meet students' needs. We strongly believe that, our class schedule should be evidence-based, program specific and students centered, with meeting the needs of our diverse academic, socioeconomic, and ethnic students population as our ultimate goal instead of putting political consideration or contractual obligation first. We are deeply concerned that the current one-model-fits-all mandate is inherently anti-diversity, anti-equity, anti-inclusion and anti-accessibility. The administrative-centered, anti-DEI 67% threshold for each instructor will decrease our program retention rates , success rates, and widen our program equity gaps. Eventually, it will adversely impact our program and defeat our hard-won success over a decade.

If applicable, describe any major curricular or service changes your unit has engaged in and the impact of those changes since the last comprehensive review.
We are currently scheduled to be one of the first disciplines to have Common Course Numbering. The impact of that on enrollment is unknown at this time. We have also seen an increase in enrollment across all of Economics offerings. We are above, at, or near capacity in both our online and in-person classes.

If applicable, describe the impact of any new resources (human, fiscal, etc) on the unit and/or action plan implementation.
The expected hire of a new contract Economics faculty in Spring 2025 should bring another set of ideas on how to continue to grow the program.

If you assess OUTCOMES, please confirm that the outcomes have been reviewed for accuracy. If you do not assess Outcomes, skip this question.
Reviewed & Accurate

Summary and Reflection

Related Documents for Charts and Graphs

Executive Summary Complete
Yes

Data Reflection

Trends observed in program/service area's data.
Previously, our program success rates, while strong when compared to the college as a whole, tended to have been lower in spring-fall than they had been in intersession-summer (when many 4-year college students take the classes at Mesa). This trend did not play out in the 2020-2021 academic year as we had an 86% success rate in fall 2020 and 83% success rate in spring 2021, which are equal to or very close to the winter intersession and summer success rates during the same academic year. Our overall 77% success rate is well above our school 71.3% success rate, as well as Mesa College 73.2% success rate. Our program retention rate is over 93%, with fall 2020 the highest 96%, spring 2021 the second highest 94%, both beating the intersession 2021 93% retention rate. We have successfully reversed the historic cycle. By excluding one outlier Econ 220, which had only 31% success rate and 38% retention rate in spring 2020, our program success rates and retention rates are even higher.

Describe any equity gaps in the data. Are there differences and/or patterns observed by demographics (e.g.race/ethnicity, gender, age, etc.)
Race/ethnicity gaps:
Our program shows some equity gaps with low success rates of African American and Latinx students' populations, which is a typical pattern for economics major, although our program's equity gaps for these two cohorts are smaller than our school and college gaps. An increasing amount of literature in this active research area emerged in recent years, exploring its socioeconomic, cultural and historical roots and some possible solutions or remedies, such as hiring more minority faculty as a role model to match students' diverse population. However, our program's overall equity gap 75% is below Mesa College equity gap 72%, with Native American students doing the best 85%. Our Native American students even beat Asian students' 84%, the mystery remains to study. Closing our program equity gaps by slowing down our Native American students' success does not sound politically correct.

Does distance-learning reverse Gender gaps?
Our program's gender gap is 75%, well below Mesa College gender gap 71%. One surprise change of our program data is that the gender gap has been further reversed during the pandemic with female success rate 84% in fall 2021, defeating male success rate 77%. A possible reason for this reversal is that online education may better serve female students due to its built-in program flexibility, which effectively helps many working/studying from home moms better balance their career-family trade-off, alleviating the well-known "Motherhood Penalty and Fatherhood Premium". Although this unanticipated further reversal has increased our program gender gap, we consider this trend as a positive development of our program, hoping it won't be stopped with less online courses offered due to the 67% threshold.

Mystery of gender gap reversal:
Although economics is a social science, it is much more rigorous and quantitative than any other social science, even more rigorous and quantitative than some STEM subjects. There is a huge gender gap in economics learning nationwide, which has become a major challenge for the profession nowadays. Besides the online format built-in advantage for working/studying from home moms, we could not figure out any other underlying reason why our program has single handedly reversed gender gap. Ironically, our econ faculty are male dominated with 2 male contract faculty and 3:2 male-female adjunct ratio. A serious empirical study should be conducted to identify the reasons for this gender reversal, hopefully shedding some light for our future success.

Conjectures:
(i) Mesa has more liberal arts programs than STEM programs;
(ii) Mesa leadership team is female dominated, setting a role model for female students. Mesa data do show an overall gender gap reversal, but our program gender gap reversal is bigger and don't forget economics is a rigorous and male dominated field.

Related Documents for Charts and Graphs

Summary and Reflection

Describe the discussion(s) that took place about the unit's learning outcomes assessment data.
Broad and constant discussions:
Course-level and lesson-specific learning outcomes assessment , as well as program-level learning outcomes assessment leads to a better teaching-learning environment. Our department has constantly engaged in discussions about our learning outcomes assessment data. Over a decade, we have established a dynamic digital-interactive assessment mechanism by focusing on "What should students do to demonstrate that they have learned economics?" and, as such, leads instructors to ask, "What and how should we teach to help students achieve our CLOs and PLOs?" We expect that providing students with CLO statements in the syllabus provides direct guidance during course design, helping instructors to decide what and how to teach, as well as how to assess students. CLOs guide students to focus their study more effectively instead of having to guess what instructor wants them to learn. We advocate for a broad and rigorous discussion of CLOs in our department, both to promote wide adoption in economics courses across disciplines and to produce more research on how to maximize the efficacy of our teaching efforts.

Successful assessment of CLOs/PLOs:
Our well-designed framework of CLOs certainly helps our students understand and work toward what we expect of them to achieve by providing a learner-centered, effective and interactive teaching-learning environment, which prepare them to thrive and succeed in this rapidly changing world. Our economics program has successfully assessed all CLOs and PLOs in every assessment cycle and we are committed to do better by incorporating state of art artificial intelligence technology into our next assessment cycle.

Data Reflection Complete
Yes

Practice Reflection

Describe current practices your program/service area has engaged in that you believe impact the above data trends and equity gaps.
We are concerned that the current in-person teaching mandate to meet the 67% threshold for each instructor rather than for each program or each school may decrease our program's retention rates, success rates and widen our program equity gaps in the next program review cycle. Eventually, it may adversely impact our program and defeat our hard-won success over a decade. We don't have data available to verify our concern now. However, based on our faculty first-hand knowledge, we have seen an apparent trend of decreasing students' enrollments, retention rates, success rates even for those well-scheduled in-person classes since fall 2022.

What other factors (internal or external) might also impact the above data trends and equity gaps?
legislative and fiscal changes:
$3.4 million funding. Public attitudes and policies toward LGBTQ+ individuals and undocumented immigrants have improved substantially in recent decades. Economists are actively shaping the discourse around these policies and contributing to our understanding of the economic lives of LGBTQ and immigrants. The recent $3.4 million district funding for LGBTQ, Dreamers and undocumented students provides us an opportunity to further study LGBTQ, gender and immigration economics. As the lead-writer of our econ program, I post numerous influential research papers to my online course discussion board about LGBTQ economics, gender economics, as well as immigration economics. We propose to use the funding to conduct a school-wide most up-to-date estimates of the size, location, demographic characteristics, and family structures of LGBTQ, Dreamers and undocumented students at Mesa community College by focusing on enrollments, retention rates, success rates related to variation in sexual orientation, gender identity, as well as ethnic identity.

Retention practice:
The pandemic-triggered absenteeism plagued in-person learning and teaching environment. As an individual program, we are not capable to eliminate the negative impact of current one-model-fits-all mandate. However, we believe we could mitigate some adverse impact by helping students to choose a class format which better meets their needs. As a lead writer, I have successfully convinced many of my in-person class students switch to online classes if their family and or career obligations prevent them from making a genuine commitment to in-person learning. This retention practice has significantly improved both in-person and online learning outcomes for the following obvious reason.
In-person teaching and learning involve intensive real-time classroom interactions and missing more than 4 classes will surely result in a failure for a student and it would be too late to switch to online course after 4 absences. Helping those students switch to online format during the first day of class does not reduce our program retention and success rates. Actually, we

consider this as a retention practice because it increases our program overall retention rates and success rates by literally retaining those switched students through preventing them from late dropping, therefore, missing the add deadlines to join online class later. This of course, decreases the enrollments of my in-person classes, but their retention rates after the first day class are 100% so far and the attendance rates are over 90% even without attendance check. I am so glad to see that everyone is actively engaged in classroom discussion now and I expect a higher success rate this semester. Based on this successful experiment, We propose a pilot project: "Online or In-Person : Students' Choice" for our economics program during the next review cycle when new Mesa data become available.

Impact of Populism and Identity Politics:
Economic research of populism has incorporated contributions of political science, sociology and cognitive phycology by introducing socio-cultural, beliefs, value and education variables into their models, which is a remarkable breakthrough of classical paradigm. Exploring the social foundation of populism as well as its theoretical origins by focusing on the deepening sociocultural and class conflicts exposed in our society's identity crisis, seeking to interpret the reasons and impact of political polarization and social cleavages on our students' population is an imperative endeavor now. The goal of this research proposal is to help our students understand the political polarization and social cleavages in our society and better prepare them to survive and succeed in this increasing complex world.

Related Documents for Charts and Graphs

Practice Reflection Complete
Yes

Mid-Cycle Updates

YEAR 2 Updates (2023 - 2024)
Provide any edits or updates to the prompts originally documented in the Executive Summary section for Year 2.

Provide any edits or updates to the prompts originally documented in the Data Reflection section for Year 2.

Review Outcomes Report. Review the unit's outcomes assessment process for 2022 - 2023. Discuss connections to unit goals/action plans/resource requests.

Provide any edits or updates to the prompts originally documented in the Practice Reflection section for Year 2.

YEAR 3 Updates (2024 - 2025)
Provide any edits or updates to the prompts originally documented in the Executive Summary section for Year 3.
We have seen an increase in enrollment for our in-person classes over the last two semesters. While the demand for our online classes remains very strong, the increased interest in our in-person offerings has been great to see. We continue to have higher success and retention rates than the college as a whole.

Provide any edits or updates to the prompts originally documented in the Data Reflection section for Year 3.
The overall gender breakdown for Mesa Econ courses is currently about 60/40 in terms of male vs female students. With our Latinx students it is about 58/42 in favor of male students. With our African American students the gap is a little larger at 68/32 in favor of male students. The sucess rate for Econ 120 in the 2023-24 AY was a robust 82% and the success rate for Econ 121 was 80%. Both of these are well above the overall success rate of 74% at Mesa College. The retention rate for Econ 120 in the 2023-24 AY was a robust 94% and the success rate for Econ 121 was 91%. Both of these are above the overall retention rate of 87% at Mesa College during the 2023-24 AY.

Review Outcomes Report. Review the unit's outcomes assessment process for 2023 - 2024. Discuss connections to unit goals/action plans/resource requests.
The Economics department plans to access all three of the Econ 120 (Principles of Macroeconomics) CLO's in Spring 2025. At this time, the goal is to all have Econ 120 sections in Spring 2025 report their data (excluding intersession classes). This means we will be gathering data from 16-week, 8-week 1, and 8-week 2 online and on-campus classes taught by both full-time, pro-rata, and adjunct faculty members. Therefore there should be a good variety of data providing a detailed report on the Econ 120 student population.

Summary and Reflection

Provide any edits or updates to the prompts originally documented in the Practice Reflection section for Year 3.
While there definitely is still a strong trend for online classes in Economics at Mesa College, we have noticed an increased level of interest for on-campus courses as well. The on-campus classes for both Econ 120 and 121 were at 100% of enrollment the first day of fall, with a few of those classes still currently enrolled at 122% and 120% of capacity. These numbers signify a good trend for the program. At the time of this writing the 20 sections of Economics offered in Fall 2024 had a 101% fill rate, which is excellent. The online sections have a fill rate of 98% while the on-campus sections are at 111% of capacity.

YEAR 4 Updates (2025 - 2026)

Provide any edits or updates to the prompts originally documented in the Executive Summary section for Year 4.
We have continued to see an increase in enrollment for our in-person classes over the last two semesters. We had a 2.8% increase in enrollment from Spring 2024 to Spring 2025 in our on-campus courses. The growth rate was even better from Fall 2024 to Fall 2025. We had an 11.8% increase in enrollment from on-campus classes during those two semesters. The increase in enrollment was not limited to our on-campus offerings. The enrollment growth was also strong for our online offerings. We had a 11.3% increase in enrollment from Spring 2024 to Spring 2025 in our online courses. The gain from Fall 2024 to Fall 2025 was much smaller at .3% but overall we should enrollment growth. We continue to have higher success and retention rates than the college as a whole.

Provide any edits or updates to the prompts originally documented in the Data Reflection section for Year 4.
Looking at the data that was evaluated in the previous update allows us to see how things have changed year to year. The overall gender breakdown for Mesa Econ courses from is currently about 59/40 in terms of male vs female students over the past two semesters. The gender breakdown at Mesa as a whole among the student population is 44/54. Therefore, Economics courses at Mesa college have about a 34% larger percentage of male students enrolling in them compared to a generic class made up of the typical Mesa College student body. This gap is even larger in our in-person classes in which 67% of the students identified as male. This gender gap tends to fall in line with Economics majors as a whole across the country at two and four year colleges. The Economics discipline tends to be much more male dominated as a whole. The success rate for Econ 120 in the 2024-25 AY was a robust 81.2% and the success rate for Econ 121 was 82%. Both of these are well above the overall success rate of 76% at Mesa College. The success rates of our African American economics students was lower at about 71.5, as was the success rates of our Latine economics students, which was 77%. The completion rate for Econ 120 in the 2024-25 AY was a robust 95% and the success rate for Econ 121 was 94%. Both of these are above the overall completion rate of 90% at Mesa College during the 2024-25 AY. The completion rate of our African American economics students was about 92%, while the completion rate of our Latine economics students was about 94%. Therefore, while those students are completing the class at a rather comparable rate to the students as a whole, their success rates are lower than economics students as a whole and is something to monitor.

Review Outcomes Report. Review the unit's outcomes assessment process for 2024 - 2025. Discuss connections to unit goals/action plans/resource requests.
In Spring 2025, the Economics department completed an evaluation of the three CLO's for all Econ 120 (Principles of Macroeconomics) classes. The goal was to have at least 70% of the students achieve a C or better on the assessments that covered each CLO. The results were as follows: 260/290 (89.7%) of the students were able to meet the benchmark for CLO #1, 266/330 (80.6%) of the students were able to meet the benchmark for CLO #2, and 259/291 (89%) of the students were able to meet the benchmark for CLO #3. Therefore, this evaluation was a tremendous success. The department is currently conducting an evaluation of the three CLO's for all Econ 121 (Principles of Microeconomics) classes offered in Fall 2025.

Provide any edits or updates to the prompts originally documented in the Practice Reflection section for Year 4.
Following up on the data from last year, the department wanted to see if there were any statistically significant changes this year. The strong demand for online economics courses continues to occur, there is data showing that the demand for on-campus economics classes is growing. The data showed about a 7.3% enrollment growth in on-campus economics courses over the last two semesters. The on-campus classes for both Econ 120 and 121 in Fall 2025 have a 124% fill rate at the time of this writing, which is excellent. This followed a fill rate of 111% for the on-campus economics classes in Spring 2024. These numbers signify a good trend for the program. The online sections fill rates are a strong 98%, meaning that the 21 sections of Economics offered in Fall 2025 have a 104% fill rate overall.

YEAR 5 Updates (2026 - 2027)

Provide any edits or updates to the prompts originally documented in the Executive Summary section for Year 5.

Provide any edits or updates to the prompts originally documented in the Data Reflection section for Year 5.

Summary and Reflection

Review Outcomes Report. Review the unit's outcomes assessment process for 2025 - 2026. Discuss connections to unit goals/action plans/resource requests.

Provide any edits or updates to the prompts originally documented in the Practice Reflection section for Year 5.

Unit Goals, Action Plans, and Updates

Goal 1: Develop a Plan to Address Any Equity Gaps in Economics Courses

Unit Goal: Goal 1: Develop a Plan to Address Any Equity Gaps in Economics Courses

Goal Status: Active

Beginning Year: 2024 - 2025

Projected Completion Year: 2025 - 2026

Mapping
Mesa College Strategic Plan: Roadmap to Mesa2030:

- **Completion - Objective 3:** Design and promote programs and services that intentionally target a reduction in equity gaps in completion outcomes (✓)
- **Scholarship - Objective 1:** Expand and prioritize professional learning experiences for all employees that create parity in outcomes across racial/ethnic groups and all disproportionately impacted groups (✓)
- **Scholarship - Objective 2:** Evaluate and improve Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion practice in classroom environments, campus activities, departments, schools, and administrative units (✓)
- **Scholarship - Objective 4:** Expand the use of innovative and high-quality teaching, learning, and support practices that achieve equitable outcomes and increase student success (✓)
- **Scholarship - Objective 5:** Reduce costs associated with instructional materials to support the elimination of equity gaps (✓)

Action Plans	Updates
Action Plan Status: Active **Action Plan:** Analyze equity gap data and meet with discipline faculty to address ways in which any gaps can be minimized. **Action Plan Cycle:** 2025 - 2026, 2024 - 2025	**Submission Date**: 10/17/2024 **Action Plan Update**: As this is a new goal, the program is in the beginning phases of analyzing the data. Once a new contract faculty is hired, the program expects to ramp up the analysis. **Update Year**: 2024 - 2025 **Action Plan Progress**: On Track

Goal 2: Pilot: Online or In-Person : Students Choice

Unit Goal: Goal 2: Pilot: Online or In-Person : Students Choice

Unit Goals, Action Plans, and Updates

Goal Status: Active

Beginning Year: 2022 - 2023

Projected Completion Year: 2025 - 2026

Mapping
Mesa College Strategic Plan: Roadmap to Mesa2030:

- **Completion - Objective 3:** Design and promote programs and services that intentionally target a reduction in equity gaps in completion outcomes (✓)
- **Completion - Objective 4:** Support students' access to resources to mitigate the impact caused by technological and basic needs insecurity (✓)
- **Stewardship - Objective 3:** Increase student access and schedule efficiency by coordinating schedules among departments/disciplines (✓)

Action Plans	Updates
Action Plan Status: Active **Action Plan:** We are currently in the process of tracking data regarding the demand for our online versus in-person classes to better understanding the best way to meet students needs. **Action Plan Cycle:** 2025 - 2026, 2024 - 2025, 2023 - 2024, 2022 - 2023	**Submission Date**: 10/17/2024 **Action Plan Update**: We continue to track student enrollment data as well as conduct some surveys regarding why students chose specific modalities for their Economics courses. **Update Year**: 2025 - 2026 **Action Plan Progress**: On Track

Goal 3: Research: Mesa College Economics Transfers

Unit Goal: Goal 3: Gather data on Mesa College Economics transfers and analyze how they fared in upper division Economics classes. Potentially question these students to determine how well the Mesa College Economics program prepared them for future Economics courses.

Goal Status: Active

Beginning Year: 2024 - 2025

Projected Completion Year: 2026 - 2027

Mapping
Mesa College Strategic Plan: Roadmap to Mesa2030:

- **Completion - Objective 1:** Develop pathways that provide students with clarity about degree, certificate, and transfer requirements. (✓)
- **Completion - Objective 4:** Support students' access to resources to mitigate the impact caused by technological and basic needs insecurity (✓)

Unit Goals, Action Plans, and Updates

Action Plans	Updates
Action Plan Status: Active **Action Plan:** Research proposal: Obtain data on Mesa College Economics Associate Degree Transfers **Action Plan Cycle:** 2025 - 2026, 2024 - 2025	**Submission Date**: 01/26/2026 **Action Plan Update**: As the only Econ contract faculty member, this has been a slow process. Now that we have hired a second contract faculty member we can discuss the best approach to gather this data and how to go about it. **Update Year**: 2025 - 2026 **Action Plan Progress**: Barriers Encountered **Submission Date**: 10/17/2024 **Action Plan Update**: We are in the process of determining how best to obtain the necessary data, although the process might be quite lengthy now that there is only one contract faculty member in Economics at Mesa College. A few years ago we had three contract faculty, allowing us to share the responsibility of gathering this data. **Update Year**: 2024 - 2025 **Action Plan Progress**: Barriers Encountered