



**UMass Amherst's Educational Effectiveness Plan (EEP) provides departments with an ongoing structure for conducting systematic inquiry into the effectiveness of their efforts to support student success. Departments initially developed and submitted their EEP inquiry plans and evidence gathering strategies in spring 2018 and are asked to provide updates on their progress on a regular basis. EEP activity is also incorporated into the University's strategic planning process – with departments including their EEP progress and findings into their 2021 Strategic Planning Refresh. What follows is the department's most current reporting, as synthesized by the Office of Academic Planning and Assessment (OAPA).**

## **Resource Economics**

**Identify the evidence you currently use (beyond GPA) to determine that your undergraduates have achieved the objectives you have for them.**

Currently, our department looks at:

- Class research papers (SLOs # 2, 4, 5, 6, 7).
- Class projects. Some are done by students individually, while others require group participation (SLOs # 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8).
- Class oral presentations (SLOs # 5, 8).
- Classroom experiments (SLOs # 2, 3, 5, 7).
- Case studies (SLOs # 2, 3).
- Internships (SLOs # 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9).
- Honors and non-Honors independent studies (SLO # 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7). The end product of an independent study may be a research paper or literature review.
- Honors thesis (SLO # 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9). The Honors thesis enables students to engage in a year-long process of discovery. Some students develop survey protocols, collect data (requesting IRB approval, as appropriate), and analyze data. Others analyze secondary data or conduct a literature review.
- Undergraduate research assistantships (SLOs # 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9). This is an opportunity for students to work with faculty on research projects

**Please describe the focus of your inquiry and explain why this inquiry is important to your department right now.**

Line of Inquiry 2018: The department will pursue two initial lines of inquiry: 1) Curriculum mapping: Because the process of aligning with department learning objectives and experiential goals has been decentralized, the initial step will be to complete a curriculum mapping. This will allow us to understand whether or not we are currently meeting our objectives as well as suggest areas to improve, both in alignment with the goals and in communication with the students. 2) Alumni survey and internal senior survey: The department will undertake an

alumni survey as well as a senior survey to determine whether our current goals align with student needs after graduation and suggest areas for improvement.

**Progress your department has made toward addressing your line of inquiry, and the types of evidence that you have collected to inform your inquiry.**

Our lines of inquiry, per our 2018 EEP submission, are 1. Curriculum Mapping and 2. Alumni and internal Senior surveys. Our progress for each line of inquiry is detailed below.

1. Curriculum Mapping: A curriculum mapping exercise was completed in Fall 2018. Results of this exercise was reviewed by the Undergraduate Studies Committee and by all faculty at the Department meeting of October 25, 2019. Following this meeting, the curriculum mapping was revised for some courses.

2. Alumni and internal Senior Surveys: At our meeting with OAPA in September 2019, we learned that obtaining alumni contact information and a good response rate would be challenging. We agreed that it would be best to run some pilot surveys with alumni and students before launching into a bigger effort. Thus, we have devoted the 2019-2020 academic year to write, run and analyze those surveys, together with other efforts that will benefit our Educational Effectiveness Plan. The alumni pilot survey was administered in Fall 2019, and the survey of current students will be administered this spring 2020.

**What are your department's next steps regarding your continuing and/or upcoming EEP line of inquiry?**

Next steps are as follows:

- Alumni Pilot Survey: The Undergraduate Studies Committee will analyze the results and present them to faculty at a Department meeting during the Spring 2020 semester to get feedback.
- Internal Undergraduate Student Pilot Survey: Finalize the survey, present to all faculty for feedback, administer the survey.
- Analyze the information collected from the Alumni and Student surveys, together with results from the annual senior survey to assess our next steps, i.e., either conduct larger alumni and student surveys, or revise our learning objectives given the information collected, and develop a communication plan for the learning objectives.
- Next lines of inquiry: In addition to the lines of inquiry from the 2018 EEP submission, we are also gathering information about students' participation in some of our experiential learning goals (e.g., internships, co-curricular involvement). This a line of inquiry we are continuing to investigate. In addition, our Advising & Student Success Team has implemented a transfer-student program. Data pre- and post-program are collected to determine the viability and effectiveness of the program in helping students transition to the University and in bolstering transfer student success and retention. This is a line of inquiry that is just starting and will be evaluated this semester for continuation into the next academic year. We are not ready to move to a new line of inquiry apart from what

we are currently working on, however the current Undergraduate Studies Committee suggests that our Department work on developing a common understanding of, and ultimately promote, the linkages across courses and the manner in which each course contributes to the learning objectives and experiential goals. Such understanding, which is currently lacking, would help determine whether certain curriculum changes are necessary to enhance students' learning outcomes and experience in our program. This potential next line of inquiry has not been discussed with the Department.

#### Spring 2020 Steps:

- Analyze the results of the Alumni pilot survey and present them at the Department meeting of February 21st to discuss with all faculty. The results will be sent via email prior to the meeting to give a chance to everyone to review and comment.
- Finalize the Student pilot survey, present it to faculty at the Department meeting of February 21st to obtain feedback. The survey will be sent via email prior to the meeting to give a chance to everyone to review and comment.
- Administer the Student survey in RES-ECON 394LI and RES-ECON 428 in the first or second week of March. RES-ECON 394LI has a majority of students in their junior year, whereas RES-ECON 428 has a majority of students in their senior year.
- The Undergraduate Studies Committee will summarize and analyze the results of the student survey. If there is time, we plan to present the results to all faculty for discussion.

#### Fall 2020 Steps:

- Analyze the information collected from the Alumni and Student surveys. We also plan to make use of the results of the annual senior survey conducted by the University where there is a good match between our student learning objectives and the survey learning outcomes.
- Based on the information gathered, we plan to assess, together with the Resource Economics faculty, the need for and feasibility of larger student and alumni surveys. A larger alumni survey could make use of our alumni contact on LinkedIn (we currently have 1,214 members).

#### Spring 2021 Steps:

Depending on our decision in Fall 2020, we could either:

- Administer larger surveys of alumni and current students, or
- Work on revising our SLOs, do another curriculum mapping exercise, and devise a Department plan to communicate these objectives to students.

## **What are the Student Learning Objectives for your department or program(s)?**

### Resource Economics, B.S.

- Creatively apply the acquired knowledge from their respective fields to make optimal choices in their professional and personal lives.
- Understand and master microeconomics as a foundational theory.
- Achieve proficiency in the supporting disciplines, such as macroeconomics, mathematics, statistics, and finance.
- Acquire a broad knowledge in related fields in order to be well-versed in current economic and policy issues.
- Communicate effectively using multiple platforms, including oral, written, and emerging technologies.
- Integrate theoretical principles with quantitative techniques to promote decision making.
- Synthesize, analyze, evaluate, and generate effective solutions to evolving problems in their respective fields and personal lives.
- Consistently foster safe, fair, open, and diverse professional and social environments.
- Continually integrate new knowledge gained from a variety of sources, with ability to discern the quality of the source, in order to make well-informed decisions.

### Experiential Goals

- Team-based learning
- Non-economic aspects of career preparation
- Conduct independent and group research
- Co-curricular involvement (student groups, leadership)
- Interactions with alumni
- Department-wide new-student meeting (new orientation which will provide an overview of the department, course plans, and resources as well as the learning objectives)
- Internship (required by the Consumer & Family option, strongly encouraged/promoted in all programs)

### Resource Economics, M.S.; Resource Economics, Ph.D.

- Creatively apply the acquired knowledge from their respective fields to the advancement and dissemination of that knowledge.
- Understand and master the theoretical underpinnings of microeconomics, econometrics and the student's chosen field (Environmental and Natural Resources, Industrial Organization, Behavioral and Experimental Economics).
- Understand and master the theoretical underpinnings of Empirical Economics.
- Communicate effectively, both orally and in writing, across multiple platforms including emerging technology.

- Integrate theory and quantitative analysis to generate effective solutions to evolving societal challenges.
- Provide critical insights and leadership in their fields of expertise.
- Continually integrate new knowledge gained from a variety of sources, with ability to discern the quality of the source, in order to make well-informed decisions.
- Consistently practice respectful and inclusive behavior to foster safe, fair and diverse professional and social environments.