

ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS ASSESSMENT REPORT 2020-21

I. INTRODUCTION

The Economics and Business (EB) department assessment for 2020-21 focused on departmental data on student diversity and academic success. This work proceeded in the context of two major factors:

1. EB courses being taught in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic.

Most of the courses were taught online, with a few others making use of an outdoors tent. In a number of cases student access to remote learning was limited by the technology available to them.

2. Faculty sabbaticals, departures, job assignment changes, and leaves of absence over the past two years.

Edd Noell took a sabbatical in Fall 2020; Enrico Manlapig took a sabbatical in Spring 2021; the department chair Rick Ifland became Interim Provost at the end of 2020; Marty Asher took a leave of absence in Fall 2020 and Fall 2021; Barbara Devivo departed from the EB faculty at the end of 2021; and Enrico Manlapig announced he is taking a leave of absence for 2022-23. This led to the hiring of sabbatical replacement instructors and several faculty searches to fill full-time positions during this time.

II. ANALYSIS

Our assessment focused on student performance for 2020-21 in five lower-division required courses for the EB major: EB 003, EB 010, EB 011, EB 020, and EB 030. There are two key reasons we emphasized these courses: a) their significance for students either committed to or interested in pursuing the EB major; and b) their common pedagogical emphasis on quantitative concepts (with admittedly some variation among the courses in the kind and degree of use of quantitative analytical tools).

On the basis of the Grades Report for 2020-21 provided by Tim Loomer, the department made an assessment of student performance for the 257 grades assigned to students enrolled in these five courses. The initial data indicated a strikingly high number of A's (49.8%) and B's (33.5%) relative to the numbers of C's (15.9%) and D's (0.8%). In addition, there was a significant variation in GPA among the five courses. Of particular note was the higher GPA for EB 010, EB 011, and EB 020 as compared to EB 003 and EB 030. These first three courses were taught by a sabbatical replacement economics faculty member from Point Loma Nazarene University in Fall 2020. It became evident that the GPA data for these three courses (taught that semester, but not the GPA data for them for Spring 2021) should be disaggregated in order to facilitate a more accurate assessment of student performance.

Tim Loomer kindly accomplished the requested disaggregation in a revised report (see appendix), giving rise to a data set of 176 grades. The revised data indicated a dispersion of grades with a significantly lower number of A's (30.1%) and a higher number of B's (46%), C's (22.7%) and D's (1.4%). The overall GPA was lower at 3.027 with a slightly smaller standard deviation of 0.716. Among the five courses, EB 003 has a significantly higher GPA than EB 020, while the other course pairs did not have significantly different GPAs. One caveat should be

mentioned, e.g., that there is some amount of dependence among the data as some grades are earned by the same student, though this is true for a relatively small group.

This data set included 60 GPAs for students of color, and among them were 32 GPAs Hispanic/Latino students (18% of the set). Their GPA was 2.753. The data set included 62 GPAs for female students (35.2% of the set). Their GPA was 3.082, while the male GPAs (114) was 2.997. The number of first-generation student GPAs was 17. Their GPA was 2.871, while the non-first generation student GPAs (159) was 3.044. This does not represent a statistically significant difference ($p = 0.3432$).

III. OBSERVATIONS

Our examination of the data with respect to diversity led to the following observations:

1. Male and female students have very similar GPAs, with female GPAs slightly higher. At 35.2%, the number of female student grades is smaller than the overall female enrollment at the college (60.4%) in Fall 2020.
2. Hispanic/Latino student GPAs were lower than those for Asian, Two or More Race Students, Unknown Race, and Whites, but not at a statistically significant level of difference ($p = 0.189$). There were 2 black student GPAs reported (3.0) and 12 Asian student GPAs reported (3.142), so its hard to draw significant conclusions from this small group.
3. First-generation student GPAs and non-first generation GPAs were very similar, with the latter having a slightly higher GPA.

IV. QUESTIONS/ACTION ITEMS

In the discussion of possible responses to our assessment, we raised the following questions/action items to pursue:

1. How might we increase the number of female students in our major? EB faculty observe that we see a growing number of female students in lower-division courses in recent years, giving rise to a greater representation of female students in our lower-division courses. There was a slight increase in the number of female graduates in the 2021 class (25) as compared to the 2020 class (22), though proportionately it dipped to 41.6% from 43.1%. We would like to find ways to accelerate the growth of female representation. We will connect with other departments on campus to understand how they are addressing the ratio of female to male students in their respective major.
2. How might we improve performance by Hispanic/Latino students in our lower-division courses? While the racial composition among the students taking these 5 courses is very similar to that of the overall student body as of Fall 2020, and the GPAs for black and Asian students were close to the GPA for entire data set, we wish to particularly focus on finding ways to enhance the performance of Hispanic/Latino students in our lower-division courses. We will take this item up for further discussion in 2022-23 departmental meetings.
3. How might we increase the number of first-generation students in our lower-division courses? We note that the portion of first-generation student GPAs in these lower-division courses (9.7%) is smaller than the portion in the larger data set for the college (14.7%). We will

particularly focus on ways to sustain the lower-division EB course enrollment beyond EB 003 for first-generation students.

4. We are making particular efforts to draw into our EB applicant pool economists and business faculty who are female and/or persons of color.