

***This Week @Metro***  
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**Section: Academics**

**Center for Economic Education seeks to improve “economic literacy”**

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Without an understanding of basic concepts in economics, people are unable to save and invest for retirement, handle credit cards and personal debt, or understand how government spending affects them. Metro State’s Center for Economic Education, a program of the School of Business, is working to avoid these pitfalls.

“Our primary aim is to increase economic literacy among Colorado’s K-12 teachers,” says Professor of Economics Erick Erickson, who directs the center, “so they can pass it on to their students, and keep up with the state standards in economics.”

Established more than 30 years ago (in 1977) under former Dean of the Business School Michael Brown, Metro State’s Center for Economic Education is closely aligned with the Colorado Council on Economic Education (<http://www.ccee.net>). The privately funded council offers college-level classes in economics to K-12 teachers for professional development credits.

Metro State’s center is a service unit for the council, according to John Cochran, dean of the Business School and former center director. As such, Metro State professors teach classes for the council, advise the council on classes to offer K-12 teachers, and, under a new initiative, are planning to establish relations with Metro State’s Teacher Education Department to advise teacher licensure candidates on the resources available to them in the field of economics.

In February, Erickson presented “The Economic Impact of Gold on Colorado History” at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science. K-12 educators in attendance at the all-day session received 0.5 credit hours from the Colorado School of Mines. In January, Associate Professor of Finance Paul Camp taught “Personal Finance for the Economics Classroom” to teachers at the Federal Reserve Bank in Denver. Other Metro State professors who have taught classes recently for the council include Mohammed Akacem, Kishore Kulkarni and Rey Hernandez-Julian.

In the realm of advising the council, Erickson is planning to give a talk to the council’s board of directors on economics education from a professor’s perspective. Assistant Professor Rey Hernandez-Julian is also providing advice to the council on one of his areas of research expertise: teaching the economics of education (see [http://www.mscd.edu/~collcom/artman/publish/dykhernandez\\_tvw4013107.shtml](http://www.mscd.edu/~collcom/artman/publish/dykhernandez_tvw4013107.shtml)).

“It’s a wonderful experience to interact with Colorado teachers,” says Erickson, who’s in his 22<sup>nd</sup> year at Metro State and is the center’s third director since its inception. “It’s important (with this group) not just to deliver content, but to understand how they’re going to use it in teaching others.” Erickson says the hardest piece for him in teaching teachers has been helping them devise teaching activities that are age-appropriate for the levels they teach. “Luckily, the council always has calls into an expert teacher to help devise these activities,” he adds.

This is one area in which Erickson hopes to work with Metro State’s Teacher Education Department. “That’s their bailiwick,” he says. He’d like to formally establish relations with the department to advise teacher licensure candidates “on the resources available to them from the Colorado Council on Economic Education in the future. They may not need these resources for four or five years into their careers. But we want them to be able to access the information when they do need it, whether it’s to meet Colorado content standards, for professional development or just devising lesson plans.”

Metro State’s center will play a role in two upcoming programs of the council. “Primarily Teaching” is a summer seminar for teachers on using primary sources, particularly the Federal Archives. Erickson will deliver a lecture on how to use material from the archives on Colorado price controls during World War II. A second program is a workshop this fall for teachers on environmental economics.

“Our ambition is to go beyond what we’re doing now,” says Erickson. “We’d ideally like to create avenues to reach future elementary education teachers.”



Center for Economic Education Director Erick Erickson: “It’s a wonderful experience to interact with Colorado teachers.” Photo by Johanna Snow

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