

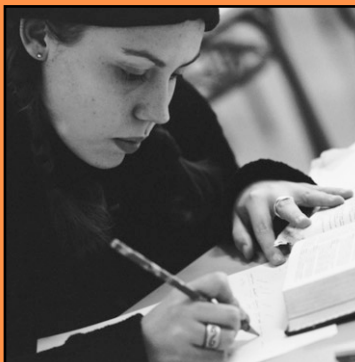
# Ahead of the Curve

A Report on the Success of MyEconLab™



BY MICHELLE D. SPECKLER

*Summer 2006*



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*Ahead of the Curve: A Report on the Success of MyEconLab*  
By Michelle D. Speckler

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## Introduction

Trends in higher education are indicating a paradigm shift in the way student achievement is measured. Institutions across the United States are taking a hard look at the concepts of accountability and assessment and are shifting their focus onto student learning outcomes. Today, comprehension—measurable cognitive and behavioral change—is the new barometer of both student and institutional success. As a result, instructors are increasingly incorporating best practices in assessment in ways that enhance student learning and that are truly valuable and useful—that is, that produce performances with meaning and value beyond success in school.

Several studies cite best practices dedicated to the improvement of student learning outcomes, most of them concluding that the following are critical aspects of any learning-based approach in higher education.

- Active learning techniques
- Prompt feedback
- Acknowledgment of individual learning styles
- Contact between students and faculty
- Emphasis on time on task

Recent studies emphasize a clear, forward-thinking view of assessment as not just a measurement of learning but an integral part of a larger learning cycle. One notable study, *Matching Assessment Models to Project Goals: A Case Study in Introductory Economics Course Redesign*,<sup>1</sup> applied this assessment model specifically to the discipline of economics.

The study found that the problem with most economics courses—even those redesigned to incorporate the latest ideas in education—was a “failure to position activities in a larger context that would help students to appreciate their relevancy.”

The authors discovered that meaningful learning was best achieved through activities that foster interest in and caring about economic concepts and that engage

students with diverse learning styles. They found that “seeing a variety of applications demonstrates that economics is relevant and useful in students’ own lives and therefore worthy of caring.”

These conclusions—and those of other academics committed to the application of assessment to increase student learning outcomes—informed the development of Pearson Education’s MyEconLab™. Students who are actively engaged in course work and who receive constant feedback and relevant assessments throughout the course are more likely to cultivate a long-term interest in economics and so are more likely to transfer the course material to other meaningful situations in their lives.

*I defined learning in terms of change. For learning to occur, there has to be some kind of change in the learner. No change, no learning. And significant learning requires that there be some kind of lasting change that is important in terms of the learner’s life.*

—L. Dee Fink  
Creating Significant Learning Experiences

This report illustrates how the structure and unique features of Pearson Education’s MyEconLab make it more than just another way to foster higher grades; they make it one of the most effective tools an instructor can use to promote learning.

1. *Matching Assessment Models to Project Goals: A Case Study in Introductory Economics Course Redesign*, Cathy Miners, Laurence Miners, and Kathryn Nantz, Department of Economics, Fairfield University, 2004. [http://faculty.fairfield.edu/miners/AEA2005/ODE\\_Paper.pdf](http://faculty.fairfield.edu/miners/AEA2005/ODE_Paper.pdf).

## Taking Action

*A college's purpose is not to transfer knowledge but to create environments and experiences that bring students to discover and construct knowledge for themselves, to make students members of communities of learners that make discoveries and solve problems. The college aims, in fact, to create a series of ever more powerful learning environments.<sup>2</sup>*

Pearson Education's MyEconLab is an online learning environment for economics that helps students study efficiently, helps instructors save time, and makes students more accountable for their learning outcomes. It's a text-specific resource that can quickly and easily be customized by instructors and that provides a wealth of powerful teaching and learning tools—including an eText, a study plan tool, graphing and math tutorials, news features, and tutoring help. Access to MyEconLab comes with new copies of many Addison-Wesley and Prentice Hall economics texts. (For a complete list of textbooks available for use with MyEconLab, visit <http://www.myeconlab.com>.)

### What Makes MyEconLab Different?

Unlike other online products, MyEconLab isn't an add-on. It's a new, integrated way of teaching and learning—and it works. The linchpin of MyEconLab's success is its focus on the student. MyEconLab is hands-on, self-paced, deliverable anywhere with Web access, and adaptable to each student's level of knowledge. Unlike the traditional, lecture-based model of course delivery, wherein students may become passive recipients of information, MyEconLab enhances course delivery by engaging students in active learning. They learn at the time, in the place, and according to the style and pace that best suit them. Regardless of the level of instructor participation—a required course element or independent student choice—MyEconLab works.

One of MyEconLab's strongest advantages is that it is built on the highly successful MyMathLab platform,

an accepted industry standard in math instruction. "Every economics teacher out there recognizes the incredible math weakness that prevails," says Jefferson Edwards of Cypress Fairbanks College. "With MyEconLab, students can seamlessly review math concepts without leaving the program."

MyEconLab also saves instructors time. By transferring the tasks of content delivery, student assessment, and grading to a powerful suite of course management tools, MyEconLab enables faculty to spend more time doing what really counts: teaching. "I'm teaching two sections of more than 400 students each," says Kelly Blanchard, lecturer at Purdue University. "There's no way I could grade homework or quizzes for all those students. With MyEconLab, I'm able to assign homework and quizzes and discover firsthand how students are doing on a given topic."

### How MyEconLab Works

Since 2002, more than 70,000 students have used MyEconLab at more than 600 institutions on five continents. One of the reasons MyEconLab works so well for so many is its hands-on accessibility. A rich set of course materials, adaptable instructor tools, and an easy-to-navigate interface enable a more productive use of both instructor time and student time. "Students learn by doing. They can't just listen to a lecture and learn economics. MyEconLab's tutorials give students hands-on experience, providing the tools for them to master the content area even better than the best lecture can provide by itself," says Robert Harris of Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

A 2003 study by Hassan M. Selim concluded that the effectiveness of course-based Web sites relies on four

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2. Barr, R.B., and Tagg, J., "From Teaching to Learning: A New Paradigm for Undergraduate Education." *Change*, Nov./Dec. 1995.

*My students learn more content using MyEconLab than they would otherwise. They have a stronger grasp of concepts that lasts longer. And it reduces the amount of time required of me outside of class.*

—Vivian Renee Giermann  
University of Akron

factors: (1) the interactivity of the Web site such that students can control when and where they engage in the activities; (2) the ability to complete the course work quickly via animations and multimedia modules; (3) the ability to have course materials available anywhere at anytime, thereby increasing student-to-student and student-to-instructor interaction; and (4) the ability to increase the student's productivity and effectiveness.<sup>3</sup> MyEconLab provides easily implemented avenues that address all four factors within a solid pedagogical framework of self-assessment and highly effective study methods. For example, students can complete a practice or an assigned test and immediately obtain the results, which inform the student's individual Study Plan and which show in what areas the student needs assistance. The Study Plan points the student to targeted practice exercises after which an opportunity is offered to retest and refresh the Study Plan.

Following are some of MyEconLab's unique program features.

**Flexible assessment options.** Instructors can assign homework, give quizzes or tests, or assign Study Plan practice work from an extensive bank of assessment items tailored to each textbook. Instructors choose the problems to assign, control when the assignment is due, and how many times or how long the student can access it.

**Gradebook.** MyEconLab grades assignments and deposits the grades into an online gradebook that offers

the option to weight assignments and then organizes scores by type, section, or individual student. In addition, the spreadsheet-style Gradebook view shows all assignments for all students. View controls make it easy to move to any assignment quickly and offer advanced sorting, frequently used tools, and easy-to-use menu controls for advanced settings, such as how attempts are counted and how grades are calculated.

**Homework and test manager.** One consolidated manager helps instructors create, copy, and select exercises and then set point values, preview, and assign them. For even more convenience, instructors can view and arrange all assigned work in a single ordered list, which is especially helpful for setting prerequisites and revising a syllabus from semester to semester.

**Coordinator courses.** Managing multiple course sections is easily done—by creating a coordinator course. Once the course is created, colleagues can copy it to create sections or member courses. Changes to the coordinator course affect all of its members, so changes need be made only once.

**Authoring of custom exercises.** Instructors can create custom exercises using multiple choice, true/false, or short answer formats. With MyEconLab's built-in equation editor, it's simple to present formulas, text, graphs, and images to your students.

MyEconLab benefits students, too, both at the time of learning and afterward, in increased retention of concepts and in increased understanding of how those concepts are at work in the world around them. "Increasingly, we realize that learning occurs not simply through study and contemplation but through the active discovery and application of knowledge. From John Dewey to Jean Piaget, to Seymour Papert, we have ample evidence that most students learn best through inquiry-based or 'constructionist' learning. As the ancient Chinese proverb suggests: 'I hear and I forget; I see and I remember; I do and I understand.'"<sup>4</sup>

MyEconLab helps students understand the hows and whys of economics by putting at their fingertips experiential content tools that fit their individual learning

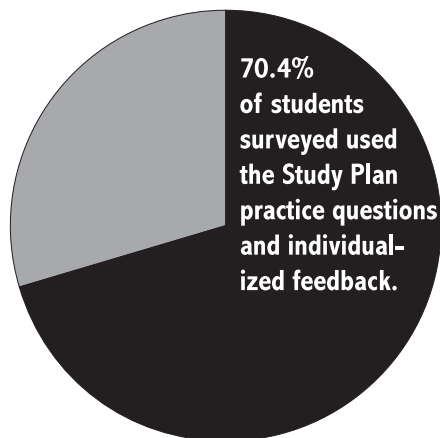
3. Selim, H. M. An empirical investigation of student acceptance of course Web sites. *Computers & Education*, 40, 2003, 343-360.

4. Duderstadt, James J.; Wulf, Wm. A.; Zemsky, Robert. Envisioning a Transformed University. *Issues in Science and Technology* online, National Academies, University of Texas at Dallas, 2005.

Students surveyed about MyEconLab are overwhelmingly positive. (See charts 1 and 2.)

### Chart 1. Usage of Study Plan Practice Questions and Feedback

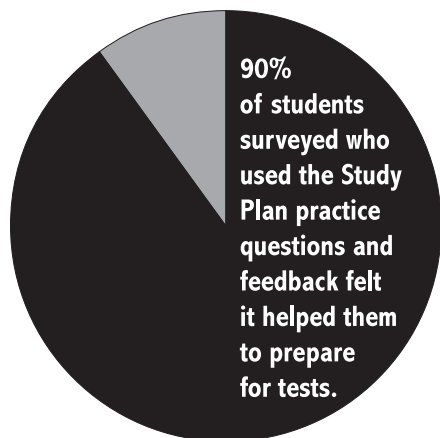
From a fall 2005 nationwide survey of students using MyEconLab (conducted by Contemporary Solutions<sup>5</sup>)



n = 325

### Chart 2. Helpfulness of Study Plan Practice Questions and Feedback

From a fall 2005 nationwide survey of students using MyEconLab (conducted by Contemporary Solutions)



n = 227

styles. *The features listed below may vary. Each course is developed for a specific textbook.*

**eText.** Each MyEconLab course contains a fully integrated, interactive version of the textbook, comprising animated graphs and figures, audio narratives, and hyperlinks to self-quizzes and other resources that address different learning styles.

**News features.** Automatically incorporate current events into your course—without spending time searching for articles. Several MyEconLab courses deliver weekly or daily news feeds with links to related Web sites, and homework/discussion questions directly to students' desktops. Instructors save time, and students learn how course concepts apply to the real world.

**Graphing tools: graded graphing problems, Grapher and Data Grapher.** MyEconLab's graphing tutorials offer students hands-on experience manipulating data to see how curves shift and the ability to plot their own graphs that are checked by the computer. Grapher and Data Grapher also enable students to draw their graphs as illustrations.

According to a fall 2005 survey conducted by Contemporary Solutions, 82 percent of students surveyed felt that the graphing tools were easy to use. They liked the visual image of how a concept worked, and they appreciated the ability to manipulate the graphs to see how changes affect the graphs. When asked how MyEconLab promoted concept mastery, students from all of the institutions polled responded that the interactive graphs were integral in providing a deeper understanding of core economic concepts.

MyEconLab's graphing features put MyEconLab ahead of other online courseware. "I selected MyEconLab because of the automated graphs," says Diana Fortier of Waubensee Community College. "It offers a level of interactivity I couldn't otherwise offer my students."

Jefferson Edwards of Cypress Fairbanks College puts it simply as, "The Grapher aspect makes MyEconLab superior to other packages."

**Research Navigator** (*available in the CourseCompass version*). The Research Navigator contains four exclusive databases of credible and reliable source material: the *New York Times*, the *Financial Times*, peer-reviewed journals, and a Best-of-the-Web Link Library.

5. Contemporary Solutions, Inc., is a San Francisco-based market research company founded in 1999 to provide the publishing and media industry with marketing research projects and custom-designed surveys.

*When students have to draw a blank graph, they start with no information other than what is in their heads. This makes MyEconLab's Draw Graph a much improved tool over Aplia.*

—Kimberly Mencken  
Baylor University

### MyEconLab Technical Support

When integrating technology into the classroom, most faculty agree that technical support is a critical component in ensuring a seamless—and satisfying—course experience.

Faculty users of MyEconLab can be confident that they'll receive top-notch customer service for both their own technical questions and those of their students. Technical support is available by e-mail 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Support is available by phone Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. eastern standard time and on Sunday evenings—when students use it most—from 5 p.m. to midnight.

“The technical staff is great,” says Doug Gehrke of Moraine Valley Community College. “All of my problems are handled quickly. They trained me and come to the campus whenever needed.”

Edwards agrees. “The tech support has been very good—very helpful to me and my students. Everyone is always courteous and friendly, and most important, they've solved my issues.”

MyEconLab is hosted on systems that incorporate built-in load balancing—multiple servers that can be independently replaced or added to without affecting service. The systems comprise powerful up-to-date hardware specifically designed to handle more traffic than projected each semester. In addition, the systems are redundant. They are configured for automatic failover in the event of a hardware problem, meaning that instructors will always experience guaranteed performance levels. In fact, the system's average up-time of 99.9 percent either meets or exceeds most commercial standards.

### The MyEconLab Faculty Advocate Community

MyEconLab's faculty advocate program is built upon the proven effectiveness of peer-to-peer advising. The program offers access to a nationwide community of faculty advocates—instructors experienced in teaching with MyEconLab—to advise and counsel faculty currently using MyEconLab and those interested in incorporating it into their courses.

Faculty advocates provide phone coaching and support, conduct campus demonstrations, and present MyEconLab at conferences and workshops. As power users of MyEconLab, faculty advocates also provide Pearson Education with critical user information to steer upgrades and enhancements to the program.

Advocates and Pearson Education staff meet formally and informally throughout the year in person and via telephone, e-mail, and online demonstrations to exchange teaching strategies and discuss plans for MyEconLab enhancements.

### MyEconLab and Industry Innovation

Cypress-Fairbanks College (Cy-Fair) was consciously and intentionally created four years ago as “a responsive, innovative, and collaborative learning community that thrives on preparing students for a lifetime of learning and change.” The college is driven by a commitment to active learning engagement and collaboration for each student.

Cy-Fair students become actively prepared for a changing world. They are taught to apply knowledge, be independent learners, work in groups, and solve problems. To that end, faculty use a breadth of tools and methodologies, including MyEconLab. MyEconLab's focus on active learning and the needs of the individual learner make it a perfect complement to Cy-Fair's innovative credo.

Edwards, professor of economics at Cy-Fair, implements MyEconLab in both his online and seated-classroom courses, which isn't unusual. The format his classes sometimes take, however, is unusual and involves the coteaching of two courses around an integrated theme. Most recently, Edwards cotaught Macroeconomics and the 2nd Half of U.S. History. His students were offered the ability to exercise their economics knowledge in a historical context. “MyEconLab's flexibility made it

a valuable resource,” says Edwards. “We were able to look at how economics affected elections, the Depression, the Progressive Era, income tax, the founding of the Federal Reserve . . . There’s an incredible overlap between political history and economic policy. MyEconLab was the launching pad to get there.”

### What Students Are Saying

MyEconLab students don’t just learn more about economics. They also learn how to learn, they enjoy learning more—and their new attitude is reflected in their grades. (See chart 3 and table 1.) According to a Contemporary Solutions survey, students cited the following ways they felt MyEconLab improved their grade.

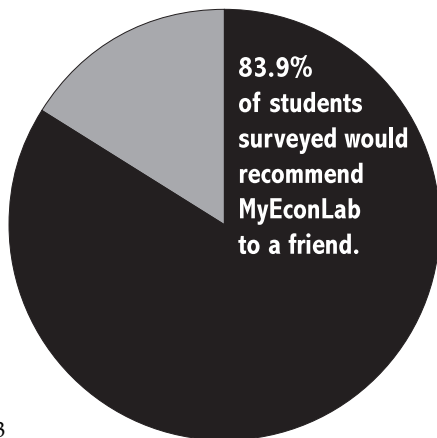
- MyEconLab increased productive study time.
- MyEconLab focused on topics in which students needed help.
- MyEconLab divided the material into understandable concepts.
- MyEconLab offered practice exams and homework that enabled familiarity and exposure to test questions.

Students surveyed about MyEconLab say the following.

- *MyEconLab allowed me to see where I stood on all topics so I knew what to study more.*

### Chart 3. Recommendation to a Friend

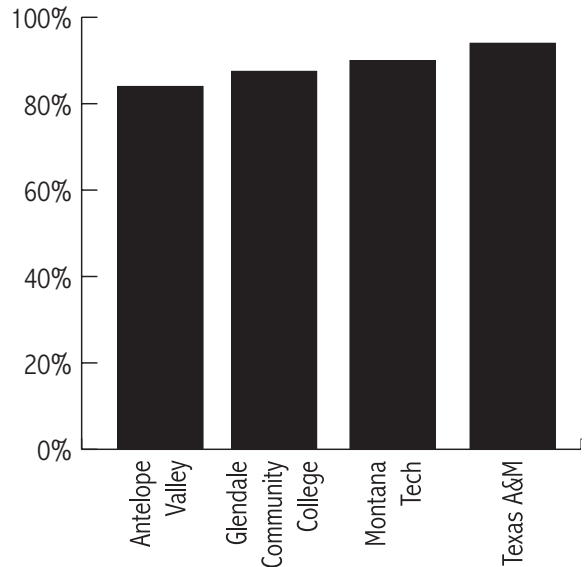
From a fall 2005 survey of Texas A&M students using MyEconLab (conducted by Contemporary Solutions)



n = 33

### Table 1. Grade Improvement

Percentage of students in a fall 2005 national survey who believed that using MyEconLab improved or perhaps improved their grade for the course (conducted by Contemporary Solutions)



n = 171

- *MyEconLab is what taught me everything about economics.*
- *MyEconLab was a good asset to the course. It almost serves as an online tutor when you don’t have an answer.*
- *Since the information was broken down and there were more resources available, I was able to further my understanding.*
- *I was able to study better and teach myself without costly errors. I could see where I was wrong and go back and understand the concept.*
- *MyEconLab helped me to gain understanding of how money works in the real world.*
- *[MyEconLab] helped me master economic concepts. Using it put the textbook to work before test day.*
- *MyEconLab helped me better prepare for tests because it offered me more resources and more help.*



## Case Studies

We interviewed five instructors from higher education institutions around the country. Each institution currently uses MyEconLab in a manner deemed most suitable to the institution and its students—in classrooms, computer labs, and online. Some structure their entire course around MyEconLab. Some use MyEconLab solely for homework and quizzes. Others offer MyEconLab to their students for enrichment and self-assessment.

Initial reasons for implementing MyEconLab differ among instructors. Many hoped to improve the quality of learning—by boosting pass rates and increasing retention; some sought a more effective testing tool. Some instructors needed help managing class sizes that had grown beyond capacity; another needed a vehicle to accommodate a growing distance-learning population.

What all of the instructors have in common is dedication—they care deeply about their students and whether their students succeed—not just in college but on a path of lifelong learning. Each instructor interviewed agreed that MyEconLab helps students do just that.

### **Kelly Blanchard** **Purdue University, Indiana**

Managing a large class can be challenging—exponentially so when large means more than 400 students and you’ve got two classes of that size each semester. Of the myriad issues inherent in overseeing a student population of that size, grading is one of the most onerous. The extraordinary amount of time required to grade 800+ homework assignments means that most instructors simply don’t assign it. And so it was for Kelly Blanchard, lecturer at Purdue University, until she discovered MyEconLab.

Blanchard implemented MyEconLab for the first time in fall 2005. “Comments from students were very positive,” she says. “MyEconLab offers them a way to practice every week. They receive immediate feedback and a feeling of personal attention that I simply can’t provide

in a class that large. Students tell me that they like the study plan and have started to use it to its full potential.”

“I especially like the Ask the Instructor button on the screen,” Blanchard says. “I get lots of feedback from my students that way. It provides me with an idea of what the students need at any given time. As a result, my teaching has become more targeted and efficient.” From the students’ perspective, MyEconLab greatly improves Blanchard’s accessibility, which in turn helps foster a more productive student/teacher relationship.

*If you’ve got more than 50 students and want a way to test how they’re doing on a given topic, there’s really no other rational way to do that but MyEconLab.*

—Kelly Blanchard  
Purdue University

Of particular benefit to Blanchard was the customizability of the program: she was able to supplement publisher-supplied text by uploading material she wrote herself. Initial concerns about how the program might ask questions were soon rendered obsolete when she discovered how many variables the program offered.

Blanchard won an award this year for excellence in undergraduate teaching. In part, she attributes this to her success in spanning the distance across 400+ students and offering her students the best of online courseware—including a broad range of resources and a way to stay personally connected. “I wouldn’t go back to the old way of working,” she says.

## **Diana Fortier** **Waubonsee Community College, Illinois**

Unlike most instructors who've made radical paradigm shifts in their teaching, Diana Fortier wasn't actively seeking to change her approach to teaching economics. In fact, she was pleased with how her classes were proceeding—no unwieldy class size growth, no sudden funding cutbacks, no discouraging pass rates. “MyEconLab simply came with the book I was already using,” she says. “I believe in the student-centered learning model. If a product's goal is to increase instructor efficiency and student learning, I'll try it.” She introduced MyEconLab to her Principles of Economics students in fall 2003; in fall 2005 she made using it a requirement.

*I never forget that MyEconLab is an expense for the students. It needs to be worth it, and it is.*

—Diana Fortier  
Waubonsee Community College

Fortier uses MyEconLab as a learning tool in both her online and seated-classroom courses. By allowing students to take structured quizzes as many times as they want, every student is offered the opportunity to score 100 percent—and, more important, to learn the material—and thus more students are motivated to use the program. “MyEconLab keeps my students on track,” says Fortier. “Chapter quizzes offset student procrastination by ensuring they keep on task. If a student is having a problem, MyEconLab indicates exactly what that student needs to study.”

When asked what tools she finds the most beneficial to teaching economics, Fortier doesn't hesitate. “The interactive automated graphs,” she says. “The ability for the student to manipulate a graph and see how variables are affected by the change is what really distinguishes

MyEconLab from the paper-and-pencil model as well as from other online programs.”

eThemes of the Times—articles from the *New York Times* with analysis questions—and weekly news articles are major time savers for her. “Someone has already pulled out articles that relate to economics and to the chapter at hand,” she says. “As much as MyEconLab helps students, *that* helps the instructor. In three years, I haven't received anything but positive feedback on the weekly news and eTheme articles. They introduce my students to the why of economics and enable them to immediately apply the concepts they are learning to real-world news and events.

“MyEconLab is an effective tool for the future,” Fortier adds. “It prepares students for business courses as well as for life beyond the classroom by emphasizing those skills they'll need to compete in the marketplace: self-motivation, the ability to meet deadlines, familiarity with technology, and an appreciation for the investment of their time. When it comes down to it, it's about character—students who are self-motivated to use MyEconLab and meet the deadlines benefit. They learn to ask questions and to get help when and where they need it. MyEconLab is an invaluable teacher in that way.”

Fortier foresees continuing to teach with MyEconLab. “There's no turning back,” she says. “MyEconLab helps both students and instructors. There's something there for everyone.”

## **Jefferson Edwards** **Cypress-Fairbanks College, Texas**

Four-year-old Cypress-Fairbanks College (Cy-Fair) started with a vision of something that had never before been accomplished: the creation of a responsive, innovative and collaborative learning community that thrives on preparing students for a lifetime of learning and change. To accomplish this vision, Cy-Fair founders developed what they call a learning signature—a unique approach that guides them in designing, developing, and delivering their vision: active learning engagement and collaboration for each student.<sup>6</sup>

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6. For more information about Cypress-Fairbanks College, about the school's learning signature, and how MyEconLab helps the school achieve its goals, see “MyEconLab and Industry Innovation,” page 6. Visit Cy-Fair on the Web at [www.cy-faircollege.com](http://www.cy-faircollege.com).

Vision in hand, the founders had an opportunity to put together something truly innovative. And that they did. Cy-Fair has computer and Internet technology—updated every three years—built into every classroom. Instructors have laptops. The library offers nearly 200 unrestricted computers for student use; the student union offers about 30. And the entire campus is wireless. As would be expected, when it came time to recruit faculty, the administration actively sought those with both experience and the inclination to think nontraditionally about education.<sup>7</sup>

“The result was a bunch of real go-getters,” says Jefferson Edwards, professor of economics at Cy-Fair. A 28-year veteran of undergraduate teaching with a passion for the fresh, effective use of technology in active learning, Edwards epitomizes the kind of early-adopter instructor whose philosophy and teaching style neatly dovetail with the Cy-Fair vision.

Edwards teaches distance-learning and seated-classroom courses and sought online courseware that would be appropriate for both. Under the guidelines established by Cy-Fair (its learning signature), he experimented with different courseware packages and selected

*Students tell me that offering them MyEconLab is almost like offering them individual tutors.*

—Jefferson Edwards  
Cypress-Fairbanks College

7. The hiring of faculty was driven by a management philosophy called topgrading, which dictates that the key to building a superior company or, in this case, college is the ongoing ability to recruit and retain the best personnel possible. “Simply put, topgrading is the practice of packing the team with A players and clearing out the C players,” Bradford Smart, author of *Topgrading: How Leading Companies Win by Hiring, Coaching, and Keeping the Best People*, says. “A player is defined as the top 10 percent of talent available at all salary levels—best of class. With this radical definition, you are not a topgrader until your team consists of all A players.”

MyEconLab. “The integrated package—including study guide and online textbook—is incredibly helpful,” he says. “I like the overall layout. It’s a very neat, clean home page. The control panel is beautiful. It’s very easy to move around. Everything is well laid out and easy to

*There are still an amazing number of kids who play computer games but aren’t computer literate. MyEconLab is user-friendly to them. They can make their way around quickly and find what they need.*

—Jefferson Edwards  
Cypress-Fairbanks College

use. The kids see exactly what they need, immediately. And if there are concepts or skills the students aren’t familiar with, MyEconLab offers specific pages, self-tests, and other ways for them to find the help they need. Some students have started asking me, “Why aren’t other courses done this way?”

For Edwards, that MyEconLab was built upon the MyMathLab platform is one of its unique and strongest selling points. “One of the biggest problems we have in teaching economics concerns the poor math skills of many of our students,” says Edwards. “MyEconLab enables them to practice and improve those skills without leaving the program. Plus, there’s familiarity there. Our math department uses MyMathLab.”

Edwards recognizes that teaching is more than just technology. “No technology is all good or all bad; technology is a tool like any other: able to be integrated into a teaching style,” he says. “For example, PowerPoint is good software, but just a terrible way to teach economics.

I use a combination of present-day resources to get and keep my students’ attention—audio clips and videos of Steven Colbert; and Web sites such as the IMF, the World Bank, the Federal Reserve Boards in New York and in Dallas, and the *Wall Street Journal* online.”

“The field of economics instruction is changing,” says Edwards. “The Internet and technology have changed—

and multiplied—our teaching opportunities. I choose and like to use the Internet in my teaching.”

**Doug Gehrke**  
**Moraine Valley Community College, Illinois**

Doug Gehrke had been implementing elements of online technology in his traditional classes for several years—even before Moraine Valley Community College (MVCC) offered online courses. So when the college purchased a Blackboard license, he was already poised to take full advantage of the opportunity with a publisher that possessed the same visionary perspective that he did. That’s when Gehrke discovered MyEconLab. Shortly thereafter, he sold the rest of his department on it.

*With MyEconLab, students learn more than just course material. They learn online skills, how to perform under deadlines, how to be accountable, and how to work with other people.*

—Doug Gehrke  
Moraine Valley Community College

“One of the things that really impressed me about MyEconLab was how easy it was to translate my traditional classes to ones with online material,” Gehrke says. “In fact, it was MyEconLab’s ease of use that facilitated the development of solely online courses at MVCC. Today the only time students in online courses need come to campus is for midterms, finals, and project tests.”

Implementation of the courseware was seamless. “It was very good,” Gehrke says. “Once the staff saw how easy MyEconLab was, they jumped on board. It was clear that MyEconLab was the most effective way to initiate online courses. Instructors and students easily accessed technical support when they needed it, and they reported being really happy with the experience they had.”

“Sometimes an online class like MyEconLab is the best bucket of cold water that a student can face before hit-

*MyEconLab’s eText is great—Particularly in that it helps offset the skyrocketing cost of textbooks. Naturally, students love that.*

—Doug Gehrke  
Moraine Valley Community College

ting the real world,” Gehrke says. “It offers them the challenges that they’ll face in the workforce, including self-responsibility and self-discipline. The very nature of the program forces students to be responsible for their own learning: if they follow the plan of the class, they will be successful—guaranteed.”

MyEconLab addresses individual learning versus the group learning of a traditional model. “Today we need more resources to reach different types of students,” says Gehrke. “MyEconLab offers that. It enables us to individualize teaching to reach all different levels of students. Better students can learn even more than what’s offered in the class. And students who need more help receive that help.

“I get very good feedback on the Web site,” Gehrke says. “Students say it is one of the nicest, best-organized sites they’ve seen in online courses. They also like the Grapher and the interactive tutorials. The site is just full of so many wonderful things.

“There’s no way I could throw this much material at students in a traditional classroom setting,” says Gehrke. “MyEconLab enables me to offer an abundance of information and learning opportunities—without overwhelming my students. And it’s a godsend for instructors who are overburdened with tons of sections. It’s just great stuff. I think it’s the greatest thing to happen to teaching in the 38 years I’ve been teaching!”

**Fola Odeunmi**  
**Cypress College, California**

“After 30 years of traditional classroom teaching, I need to regularly find ways to keep motivated, stay challenged,

and, most important, continue to pass that juice to my students,” says Fola Odebunmi of Cypress College (CC). “Staying engaged in economics and with my students is how I do that. MyEconLab makes it easy.”

Prior to 2004, when she found MyEconLab, Odebunmi sought an effective, interactive learning model—but found nothing but frustration. Most courseware didn’t elicit the level of student participation that she wanted. “The void was huge,” she says. Available content was minimal—review questions, maybe a study guide. And there existed no opportunity for graphing. “Students generally abhor math,” she says. “If you don’t want to spend a lot of time with equations, you need graphs. You must have one or the other as a tool for analysis.”

*MyEconLab enables me to convey to my students the passion I have for economics. It reenergizes me as a teacher. The students feel that, and they, in turn, do better.*

—Fola Odebunmi  
Cypress College

At the end of spring 2004, a Pearson Education sales representative found Odebunmi. Odebunmi was excited about MyEconLab’s graphing possibilities and the immediate feedback it offered. But she was also apprehensive. The product was new, and Cypress College doesn’t offer any technical support. “I was blessed that Pearson’s server hosts MyEconLab,” she says. “It greatly reduced my feelings of risk. It also helped that Pearson was committed to stand by me and train me. Pearson staff came for orientations. They demonstrated MyEconLab to both me and my class. That was encouraging. And it worked.”

Although full implementation of the program was gradual, five semesters later Odebunmi is using the full spectrum of MyEconLab features and needs to meet with her online students only three times a semester: at orientation, at midterms, and at finals.

“They know I’m only an e-mail away,” she says.

Odebunmi is excited to see students make the shift from learning from rote memory to experiencing the application of theory through graphs, themes, charts, and relevant articles. “I see the change in their questions,” she says. “I can tell that they understand the concepts better. Their level of performance is better, too. I see more As and Bs than ever before.

“This kind of knowledge is imperative to succeeding in a global market that is increasingly more complicated and more competitive,” Odebunmi says. “It is our responsibility to offer our students what they need. And that means engaging them in hands-on, interactive activities that promote critical thinking—the ability to see all sides of an issue and arrive at a rational conclusion based upon the data. MyEconLab provides students with the tools of analysis to support their arguments wherever they are: at the bargaining table, at an interview, or reading the newspaper.”

Odebunmi recommends MyEconLab to all her fellow teachers, asserting that a good case can be made for the quality, advantages, and efficiency of using it. “The way I see it, MyEconLab can help the whole pedagogy of economics—teaching it, learning it, retaining students,” she says. “MyEconLab makes classes more interesting, and it raises the quality of the students we send into the employment market. It’s a win-win-win situation—for students, instructors, and the discipline itself.”

*The educational structure in 2006 is largely the same as it’s been since 1946. Change is necessary—across the board, across the country, and accessible by all. There is a huge role there for MyEconLab.*

—Fola Odebunmi  
Cypress College

## Conclusion

Economic journals are replete with articles telling instructors how important it is to engage students in active learning, to create more-meaningful and lasting learning experiences, and to elevate the basic tenets of economic philosophy from abstract classroom exercises to what they truly are: systematic methods of viewing and understanding the way individuals—and, in a larger sense, the world—work.

These same instructors are challenged by recent changes in higher education, including increasing pressure from administrations to incorporate more and more technology into their classrooms, increased class sizes, decreased availability of teaching assistants and adjuncts, and a body of students that represents a broad continuum of preparedness for economics instruction.

*The majority of students approach economics in the abstract. MyEconLab helps them make the connection between economics and the larger sphere of their lives.*

—Fola Odebunmi  
Cypress College

Pearson Education recognizes the shifting environment of economics instruction; as the global leader in online learning, Pearson is committed to helping. Surveys indicate that MyEconLab is helping instructors in a variety of settings around the world teach students with various learning styles to actively engage in the comprehension of economics.

According to the fall 2005 report titled *Envisioning a Transformed University*, by academics James J.

Duderstadt, Wm. A. Wulf, and Robert Zemsky, today's students are uniquely poised to take advantage of—and thrive under—the kind of active, self-paced multimedia learning that MyEconLab employs. “Adept at multitasking and context switching, [students] approach learning in a highly nonlinear manner. . . . They are challenging the faculty to shift their instructional efforts from the development and presentation of content . . . to interactive activities that will transform lecturers into mentors and consultants to student learning.”

Since 2002, more than 70,000 students have learned economics and deepened their comprehension of the world around them with the help of MyEconLab. Says a University of Vermont student, “MyEconLab helped me understand how to apply textbook and class information to real-world problems in concrete ways.”

Instructors employ MyEconLab for a variety of reasons: to better manage overwhelming class sizes, to energize their students and themselves, and to address concerns about concept retention. Some implement the full range of MyEconLab features; others use only a few. No matter what the reason for using MyEconLab or the level of use, all testify to MyEconLab's dependable and easy-to-navigate site, its emphasis on assessment and learning outcomes, and its unique ability to meet each student's potential. “The paradigm is great. Those who use it and use it the way it is intended do very well,” says Diana Fortier of Waubensee Community College. “It improves their test scores, and their grades improve.”

For more information, visit MyEconLab online at [www.myeconlab.com](http://www.myeconlab.com).





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