

## CANDIDATE REPORT

### Faculty Promotion Evaluation Report: Lisa A. Giddings Part I: Teaching

#### TEACHING EVALUATION

##### A discussion of teaching philosophy and personal growth

My teaching philosophy stems from my beliefs about undergraduate level education, as well as my own experience. Having attended an undergraduate institution (the U.S. Air Force Academy) that consciously turns 17 year old over-achievers into non-individuals who “strive for the average,” I understand the importance of a well-rounded, interdisciplinary undergraduate education. I believe that a college education (as well as learning generally) should be about growing emotionally, spiritually, and intellectually through the attainment of critical thinking skills, experience, confidence, and the ability to contribute responsibly to one’s community.

##### A discussion of course expectations (what do you expect students to learn and do)

If I were to describe myself as a teacher, I would use three adjectives: enthusiastic, demanding, and fair. I do not approach the classroom with the goal of getting my students to memorize complicated formulas or to be able to conquer calculus and enter the world of number-crunchers upon graduation. I recognize that most of my students will not become economics majors, but that the “economic way of thinking” can benefit them nonetheless. Therefore, instead of recruitment, my goal is for students to walk out of the class having gained at least four things: 1. To learn how to think carefully and critically; 2. To have analyzed a variety of topics so that they can better understand and participate in the world around them; 3. To know where to turn to if they need an economic point of view and how to evaluate those sources; and 4. To gain confidence in their own abilities after having tackled complicated problems both analytically and mathematically.

In order to teach economics in this manner, I provide students with a variety of pedagogical and assessment strategies. My classes include lectures, but I also make it a priority to engage students in group work, presentations, formal and informal debates, computer labs and programs like Excel and SPSS, and discussions via Desire2Learn. My process of evaluating students, while ever-improving, consists of questions ranging from multiple choice, essays, and problems, to participation in class and longer projects with writing-intensive requirements. I utilize a variety of methods because I believe there is no single adequate strategy to teach or to learn. At the end of the semester, my students are more confident about math, know quite a bit about many current policy issues, and have an initial grasp on the fundamentals of economic analysis.

##### A description of your approach to grading and evaluation

Grading and evaluating students is, in my opinion, the most difficult part of my job as a professor. If asked this question during the fall of 2000, I would have talked about the downsides of multiple choice questions and the importance of giving students many opportunities and ways to show what they had learned. I still assign essay exams and avoid multiple choice as much as possible, but the greater problem is actually assigning grades rather than how to evaluate. Prior to my experience at UW-L, I did not consider my grade distribution and, in retrospect, I assigned grades in a less than analytical manner. Over the past four years, in conjunction with my department colleagues and a greater campus-wide discussion about grade inflation, I have become aware of this issue and am taking it to heart. Now, I strive to assign grades in a consistent and fair manner, with a greater awareness of the general tendency toward grade inflation.

##### A description of methods you use to measure your teaching effectiveness

I regularly distribute mid-term questionnaires to my students in order to get confidential written feedback during the course of the semester (See attached surveys in Appendix A).

Each semester for my most regular courses, ECO110 and ECO336, I keep a journal about the effectiveness of the readings, activities, and discussions. Essentially, it is a diary of what

works and what does not, what questions spurred good discussions and what questions left the students flat. I use this journal to adjust exam questions as well as problem sets that either I have developed or borrowed from the textbook. This enables me to keep track of questions that are confusing or did not generate the depth of thinking I had intended.

I regularly take advantage of on-line technologies such as Blackboard and Desire2Learn in my courses. These technologies allow me to continue classroom discussions outside of the classroom and they also enable shy students to get involved in discussions. Online discussions provide another avenue through which I can gauge the level of understanding at the individual level

Additionally, I occasionally look at the various Internet sources at which students freely discuss their professors. While one must take these comments with a grain of salt (more so than other avenues students use to evaluate their professors, such as SEIs), one can still gather hints of trends and general disgruntled-ness from which one can learn.

#### **Your responses to assessment outcomes**

One of my goals is to be as sensitive as possible to student needs. What I first try to do is to put student comments and suggestions into context; was the course extremely difficult? Did the student appear to work hard? Am I expecting too much? Am I expecting too little? etc. Very often, I have adjusted my teaching techniques mid-semester after student comments on their written evaluations. For example, while my ECO336 students very much love the opportunity for discussion that I regularly build into the class one day per week, they were frustrated by the lack of structure provided by student presentations. In response, I continued to have student presentations, but made sure that I provided handouts with the main points of the day's topics.

After using the computer-aided tool, *Aplia* (see below for a description of this tool), I was barraged by ECO110 student criticism through written evaluations, SEIs, and the Internet. Students hated it, and I agreed. The weekly computer-aided homework was too easy (busy work), too difficult (a lot of algebra that we did not focus on in class) or not relevant to my main goals of the course. Furthermore, with the computer deadline of 11:59 p.m. every Sunday, it was unforgiving. As a result, I decided not to use this at all in my ECO110 course.

At one point, I heard from students that my lectures are disorganized. I think this is in part a matter of my stream-of-thought style of lecturing that naturally benefits students who come to class prepared. In an attempt to become more organized and provide students with more organization, I give them a week-by-week schedule telling them the topics that will be covered that week, what reading is necessary, and what will be due (see [http://www.uwlax.edu/faculty/giddings/2004-2005/ECO110F04/week\\_by\\_week.htm](http://www.uwlax.edu/faculty/giddings/2004-2005/ECO110F04/week_by_week.htm) and [http://www.uwlax.edu/faculty/giddings/2004-2005/ECO336F04/week\\_by\\_week\\_ECO336\\_F04.htm](http://www.uwlax.edu/faculty/giddings/2004-2005/ECO336F04/week_by_week_ECO336_F04.htm)).

#### **TEACHING DEVELOPMENT**

##### **Improvements in teaching techniques**

During the fall of 2002, I introduced a method to inspire active learning in my ECO336 classroom through gathering and examining primary data. I required students to survey couples and then use the data to explore relevant issues to our class discussions, including the wage gap between men and women as well as the division of labor in the household (see attached survey that I developed for previous research based on the 1983 Blumstein and Schwartz couples' survey Appendix B). Not only did they learn the ideas presented in the classroom, but they also got a taste of the difficulties associated with survey data, while learning basic basic SPSS skills.

During the spring of 2004, I employed a computer-assisted program for graded homework assignments in ECO110 and ECO308 (see <http://www.aplia.com>). The system provides myriad practice problems for students as well as graded homework.

During the fall of 2004, I began the semester in ECO110 and ECO336 with a unit titled "Why Learn?" designed to get students to focus on learning and set personal goals for the semester (see Appendix B for the exercises and homework assignments related to this unit).

This was followed by a restructuring of ECO110 around the “Big Ideas” rather than along the lines of the standard textbook. In order to do this, I now have students use the standard textbook only as a supplement, and an alternative text that puts all of the materials into chapters that focus on different major social and public policy issues, along with a packet I put together that presents sections of different works of fiction (see the class materials in Appendix C). It is my belief that using fiction in the introductory classroom engages students in a more fundamental way and integrates their liberal arts education more thoroughly.

**Participation in workshops, institutes, seminars, graduate courses, or participation in professional organizations or attendance at professional meetings**

○Attended OPID Teaching Conference, *Making Teaching and Learning Visible: Integrating Scholarly Inquiry into Campus and System Culture*, held in Madison, WI, April 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, 2004.

○Participated in an informal discussion group organized through the College of Liberal Studies on Teaching for Diversity (spring 2003).

○Attended Faculty College, June 3-6, 2002 Richland Center.

○Attended the seventh annual International Association for Feminist Economists (IAFFE) teaching workshop “Assessment and Evaluation Techniques and Strategies Workshop”. Thursday, January 3, 2002 in Atlanta Georgia.

**Research as preparation for teaching**

My main research program has focused on measuring and explaining issues that women and minorities face in the labor market including the wage gap, discrimination, and occupational segregation. Additionally, I have published papers on the division of labor in the household. In developing ECO336 for my first time during the fall semester of 2001, I relied on my research experience to identify the main issues to be addressed in the course. The course covers three major sections: Women and the Labor Market, The Household, and Poverty. Within each category, there are three sections: 1. Overview of the Issue, 2. Economic Theories, and 3. Policy Responses. In this manner, students are presented with empirical information on each topic, such as existing wage gaps between working men and women, then we discuss economic explanations of these observations. Finally, we discuss what policy responses have been used to alleviate the issue (see attached course materials in Appendix C).

During the spring and fall semesters of 2003, I conducted an experiment to determine whether or not gathering primary data significantly affects the learning process in ECO336. I developed an entry and exit instrument (see attached in Appendix B) to test understanding of the main course. Next, I randomly selected one of the two sections to gather the primary data. Both sections of the course were required to use the collected data for assignments (see Appendix D for the presentations I have given related to this research).

**Development of new course and units**

○ECO474/499: Independent Study on Globalization

During the spring of 2004, I offered an independent study on the topic of Globalization that was attended by 14 students. The course was designed as a reading-intensive seminar and I brought in three speakers on various topics, including Dr. TJ Brooks, Dr. John Betton and a representative from Wells Fargo in Minneapolis (see attached course materials in Appendix C).

○Lesson Study Project

During the 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 school years, I collaborated with several colleagues in my department on Dr. Bill Cerbin’s Lesson Study Project. We took two or three core concepts in the introductory microeconomics course commonly taught throughout the department and attempted to teach them more effectively using active learning techniques and assessment strategies (see a description of the project in Appendix C and at <http://www.uwlax.edu/sotl/lsp/intro.htm>).

**TEACHING ASSIGNMENT**

Since my arrival at UWL in the fall of 2000, I have taught eight different courses, six of which were entirely new preparations. My courses include ECO110: Microeconomics and Public Policy, ECO120: Global Macroeconomics, ECO336: Women in the US Economy, ECO710: Managerial Economics, ECO311: Comparative Economic Systems, ECO306: History of Economic Thought, ECO308: Intermediate Microeconomic Theory and, lastly, ECO474/499: Independent Study on Globalization (see course materials in Appendix C).

**Identification of any areas of unique expertise and their value to the department**

I believe that I provide two unique assets to the department. The first relates to ECO336. The Economics of Gender is one of my major research foci. I established my expertise in the area by receiving a “distinction” on the topic’s comprehensive exam during graduate school. Additionally, my research is cited in the most recent edition of the main textbook used in the course.

Additionally, prior to coming to UW-L I studied in Washington, DC and had the opportunity to work at several prominent research institutions including The World Bank, the Institute for Women’s Policy Research, and Nathan Associates, Inc. Please see my curriculum vitae for specific descriptions of what I did at those institutions.

**Details about your duties that are different from classroom teaching**

I participated in the UWL-Undergraduate Research Conference as faculty advisor to Michael J. Murray. The paper presented was “Explanation of the Wage Gap Between Male and Female Faculty at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse,” April 17, 2003. See also my “Service to the University” for additional duties aside from those related to classroom teaching.