

Our proposal requested funds to help build a web-based resource for students to use in conducting independent economics research, and to purchase written materials to increase student effectiveness in using econometric tools, and to hire a student to conduct data gathering and organization.

Goals:

The goal of the project was to create a centralized, web resource for students to use for accessing economic data and for obtaining guidance regarding the statistical tools needed for conducting independent, original research. This goal has been largely met.

In particular, the proposal goals were to: provide access to data from a broad range of sources to meet the demands of multiple field courses; present data formatted in a way that can be consistently used across many field courses; provide clear guidance on techniques to access data resources not included on the site; and present guidelines for effective econometric and statistical software package use.

To facilitate this data gathering process, we used the bulk of the grant dollars in Fall 2007 to hire a research assistant to access and generate extracts from U.S. Census, Current Population Survey, National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, and Digest of Education Statistics datasets. This effort involved time intensive data cleaning and formatting effort, as well as documentation and description of the data sets.

Anticipated Outcomes:

The first anticipated outcome of the project was to have the web resource in place by the end of fall semester 2007. The initial use of the web-resource was scheduled for the ECON 480: Introduction to Econometrics course taught in spring semester 2008. These anticipated outcomes are now actual outcomes. The web address for the resource is: <http://www.montana.edu/stock/econ403/data.htm>.

At this point, approximately half of the students in the ECON 480 course are utilizing the data from the course website for their research projects. The remaining students will be asked to contribute their other data resources to the total collection.

Assessment Plan:

The proposal included assessment of the web resource directly by the professors and by students during use in the Introduction to Econometrics course. At this point, assessment has been via informal interactions with students as they complete their course research. After the completion of the course, the website will also be evaluated by other students and instructors in economics field courses that require research projects. We will modify the final website as necessary in response to these evaluations.