

2011 Enterprising Teacher of the Year

Mike Paige, Cheyenne Mountain High School

Essay Questions

- **How has the nominee contributed outstanding service to the cause of economic education?**

Twelve years ago Paul Martin, the principal of Cheyenne Mountain High School, approached me and requested that I develop an A.P. Economics curriculum. The first year I had two classes of elective A.P. Microeconomics and Macroeconomics. Today the A.P. Economics curriculum has grown to five sections of elective course work or one third of the student body. This course has produced A.P scores well above the national average but more important than scores is the fact that my students have grown to understand and really love the history and principles of a remarkable subject. As many of my students attest, “Once you see the world through an economic lens your world changes and you understand the world much more clearly. Understanding economics makes you feel smart.” Further in 2009, I initiated and revised our districts freshman social studies requirement to include mandatory economic education. This process did not only include students but training of a staff that could present an informative and creative applied curriculum to freshman. My passion for the subject continues to grow as the seeds of teaching both cultivates my student’s and faculty but also leads me to nourish my own understanding and quandaries regarding economics and the human experience. My colleague, Larry Lawson once wrote, “Mike is indeed, one of the best teachers I have encountered in my entire fifteen-year teaching career. His expertise in his subject matter, down-to-earth teaching style, integrity, and enthusiasm for what he does has made him a favorite teacher among our rather demanding students. Mike has a passion for what he does and that helps foster his students’ interest and motivation as well as gain their respect.”

- **How has the nominee exhibited superior professionalism in engaging students or teachers in economic education?**

The essence of my economic professionalism is being the most knowledgeable economist that I can be. At the root of economics is the human story and students’ are enthralled by their own place in this story. Moreover, I lead by example, being the best-prepared student; the Colorado Council on Economic Education is a key partner in that preparation. As a former student and recent graduate student at George Washington University Law School, Jacob Blumberg said, “There are many teachers in this world that fit the axiom “they teach because they cannot do.” Mr. Paige teaches because that is what he is meant to do. Mr. Paige has the talent and ability to do many things in life.... but the greatest talent Mr. Paige has is the ability to impart knowledge to young minds. Some of my best memories — and most important life lessons — were taught in Mr. Paige’s classroom or in his office when I simply needed advice in advancing my future.” I have also encouraged my colleagues at Cheyenne Mountain School District to broaden their own economic foundation by encouraging them to partake in the excellent curriculum of CCEE.

- **How has the nominee developed creative and effective strategies for understanding economics or personal finance?**

I have developed a creative and effective curriculum utilizing a very analytical and interdisciplinary approach. The foundation of the class is built around an ongoing discussion utilizing the most recent authors in economics and economic research coming from both academia and government. By using an applied everyday approach students can apply their economic awareness and principles to graphic models and mathematic evidence to further provide foundation for both microeconomics and macroeconomics. Further my economics class is focused on the human experience that is instinctually full of richness, depth and humility.

- **How has the nominee demonstrated academic knowledge in economics or personal finance?**

My curiosity and passion has led to a *Stanford University Teacher Tribute Award* as well as *Teacher of the Year in 2007*. While at Colorado College my Master's Thesis titled, *The Economic Impact of Changing Hydrographs on the San Juan River in New Mexico* examined the economic costs associated with changing water levels on the San Juan River. Colorado College recognized this research with honors and distinction. More important than awards are the classroom and student testimonies on how economics has broadened their awareness and appreciation for the fundamentals of economic theory and its application to the American experience and to problem solving in general. The core knowledge that my class provided opened doors that students did not know or understand. And when this door is opened my students are empowered and enriched.

- **How has the nominee utilized the Colorado Council on Economic Education's or the National Council on Economic Education's programs and/or curriculum materials in the classroom?**

The Colorado Council on Economic Education has been one of the key foundations of teaching economics at Cheyenne Mountain High School; by helping build and encourages a staff's economic fundamentals, awareness, and preparation. CCEE has made my job easier as a department chair because the council builds in the excellent teaching necessary for a captivated audience that continues to want more knowledge and application. The core principles and economic literature of Cheyenne Mountain High School economic curriculum have their origin in CCEE. In addition, the Council's own passion and in depth approach has furthered my own desire to be involved in a continually rich conversation. Also, the relationships built from CCEE have led to a partnership with the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs and Dr. John Brock. His *Behavioral Economics* students have presented classroom presentations in my A.P. economic classes and Cheyenne Mountain High School will host a contingent of international economic teacher from Eastern Europe in April of 2011. As further evidence of CCEE's impact Mr. Jeff Kenefsky, a Cheyenne Mountain freshman economic teacher is currently building and applying an exciting new curriculum around the Stock Market Game and is proud of his student's current first place standing. The possibilities and applications are endless and with further passion and knowledge economics has a limitless boundary on both my students and colleagues. As the 15th century Renaissance humanist Pico della Mirandola once wrote, "You, with no limit or

no bound, may choose for yourself the limits and bounds of your nature... Whatever seeds each man sows and cultivates will grow and bear him their proper fruit.”