Infusing Quantitative Literacy throughout the Social Science Curriculum

ABSTRACT

Sociology (86)
Political Science (85)
Economics (82)
Geography (88)
This project is working to transform teaching in the social sciences by infusing quantitative literacy throughout the curriculum and by providing undergraduates opportunities to engage in active research experiences using the most advanced social science data. The primary project activities are creating, disseminating, and assessing teaching materials that make it easy for instructors to integrate data analysis in non-methodology courses. The goal is to reduce the "quantitative reasoning gap" between what students learn in early courses and the importance of empirical research in the social sciences. The partners in this project are building upon two extant sources of data (1) the Social Science Data Analysis Network (SSDAN), which distributes teaching modules based on US Census data, and (2) the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), the world's largest social science data archive.

A second goal of the project is to recruit experienced faculty members to develop new tools for assessing student learning and to conduct assessments in their classes. These assessment tools are intended for distribution with existing and new teaching materials. New software and teaching strategies are being developed to simplify complex data for presentation to undergraduates.

A third goal is to provide training for faculty members to introduce them to the characteristics of new data sets, relevant statistical techniques, teaching strategies, and assessment procedures. Much of the dissemination to end users is taking place through the use of cost-effective Webinars. The communication resources of the American Sociological Association, the American Political Science Association, the National Numeracy Network, and the more than 600 colleges, universities, and research institutions who are members of ICPSR are to be mobilized to disseminate information about new teaching materials. Web sites are to be enhanced to help faculty form teaching communities within disciplines. This approach is expected to help bring about a transformative change in the ways that undergraduates encounter and understand the role of research in the social sciences.

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