

## **PROPOSAL: EMPIRICAL STUDY OF DIVERSITY AND OVERLAP IN KNOWLEDGE TRANSMISSION IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS**

**Jonathan Feinstein, John G. Searle Professor of Economics and Management  
School of Management  
Arthur Campbell, Assistant Professor  
School of Management**

The production of new ideas and knowledge is central for economic growth. For the most part this process has been treated as a black box in the economics literature. However, there is a growing body of literature which endeavors to study the innovation process. The generation of knowledge necessarily builds upon itself. Hence academic universities generally serve the dual role of both fostering the development of new knowledge and passing on existing knowledge through teaching to students. Our joint project focuses on modeling the dynamics of learning and knowledge generation in the educational context. For our work this summer we are specifically interested in gathering information about what is taught in core graduate courses in major fields of economics, such as macroeconomics. Our plan is to collect syllabi/reading lists from instructors teaching these courses. While gathering a cross section, consisting of syllabi for the current year will be a starting point, we aim to develop a panel dataset of syllabi over years. We are interested in what may be thought of as product differentiation in this context – the heterogeneity in what is taught, as well as the overlap, across institutions. Ultimately, we will map this back to a model in which each professor/program chooses to teach what is believed to be optimal for its students, from the viewpoint of their future production of knowledge as well as their marketability as teachers. Differences in curricula can be attributed to different beliefs about what subset of existing knowledge is most useful, as well as differences in market position and the types of students who can be attracted to a given program.

The student we hire will participate in the collection of the articles/concepts taught in graduate level courses across leading institutions over time (top 10 or top 20). In some cases this will require the student to contact relevant people at the institution. Subsequent work will then be orientated towards analyzing this data and testing theories of the heterogeneity and overlap of materials, and the effect of institutional design on the transmission and creation of knowledge.

Skills that will be useful though not essential are familiarity with STATA and comfort with basic microeconomics.