

SUMMARY

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This research project fit in as the empirical side of some of Professor Feinstein's recent theoretical research on creativity and learning patterns. Our focus was the microeconomic courses offered in the first and second year at top economics graduate school programs. We examined reading lists and syllabi and looked for overlap and differentiation in similar courses at different schools. The project is quite large and will not be completed for a few more months, but at this point we believe we have found less overlap than was expected. We are currently in the lengthy process of determining the extent of different courses using different articles that nonetheless provide similar treatments of the same topics. Another one of the questions we asked was, "What do these articles that overlap have in common?" At this point our research has told us that the year published is one important factor. Most overlapping articles weren't that old and weren't that new. There seems to be a middle ground where articles are old enough to become established, but new enough not to be forgotten or outdated. The research will continue, possibly to macroeconomics, in order to see if these results are found in other subjects.

My position consisted of obtaining this large amount of information – on the internet, via email, on the phone, etc. Because I had interacted with the data set on a regular basis, I also had input in deciding how exactly to measure and compare the data. I completed a large amount of the initial analysis – finding where and how schools overlapped and learning how to use and then using STATA to perform regressions on a variety of variables (average year of the articles on the reading list and the year the professor earned his PhD was my favorite).

The SRO was a great learning experience for me. Not only did I learn about the actual subject matter and about the structure of different graduate schools (which will probably come in handy in a few years), I also learned to create clever ways to measure things which by their nature aren't easily measurable. How does one measure overlap between programs? Should a 500 page book be given more weight than a 5 page article? How far should we break down one chapter of reading from a textbook? By the number of topics covered? By the number of subsections? Pages? Immersing myself in the research allowed me to see how professors and researchers have to think everyday. It was a great experience. On a different matter, this project provided a unique experience for me to try and figure out my future. I think I'm trying to decide between business school and graduate school for econ. Jonathan and Arthur are professors at the SOM, but went to graduate school for economics and our topic also happened to be graduate economics. It provided invaluable insight to my future decision and was an opportunity that I'm very grateful to have been given.