Students provide non-partisan economic advice to state legislators for academic credit

University of Colorado Boulder Economics 4231
"Applied Economic Analysis and Public Policy"

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Description and motivation

This course

- o applies economic analysis to current issues of public policy in the State of Colorado
- o explores the challenges of integrating informed economic analysis into the legislative process
- o allows students who are interested in issues of public policy to learn about the relevant economic analysis and to apply it to the process of determining public policy
- o provides the State of Colorado with improved and more consistent economic analysis.

Course structure

- o begins with lectures developing the theoretical foundations for government engagement in the economy
- o then provides a description of the structure and procedures of the Colorado General Assembly
- o continues with lectures on the economic justifications for and limits to government intervention in specific markets
- o concludes with the contents of specific Assembly bills

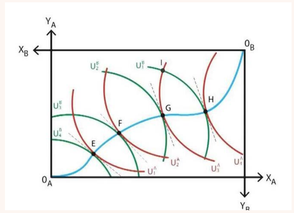
Public policy issues

- o arise in many Economics courses
- o few, if any, engage the public policy process directly.
- o engagement is valuable to the many students who will be active in public policy after graduation, either as participants or as citizens.

Process

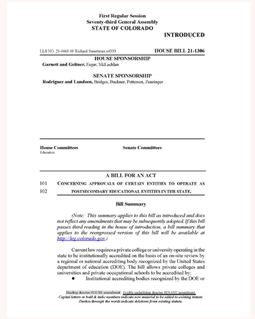
Lectures establish analytical foundation

- o the provision of public goods, the internalization of externalities, and the remediation of market imperfections are potentially efficiency-enhancing
- o redistribution is potentially welfare-enhancing



Students each choose 4 Assembly bills

- o determine whether the bill addresses public goods, externalities, market imperfections or redistribution
- o review relevant economic literature



First Regular Session
Seventy-third General Assembly
STATE OF COLORADO

INTRODUCED

LLS NO. 21-0466.01 Richard Sweetman x4339 HOUSE BILL 21-1306

HOUSE SPONSORSHIP

Garnett and Gilchrest, Esgar, McLachlan

SENATE SPONSORSHIP

Rodriguez and Lundeen, Bridges, Buckner, Patterson, Zenzinger

House Committees
Education

Senate Committees

A BILL FOR AN ACT

101 CONCERNING APPROVALS OF CERTAIN ENTITIES TO OPERATE AS
102 POSTSECONDARY EDUCATIONAL ENTITIES IN THE STATE.

Bill Summary

(Note: This summary applies to this bill as introduced and does not reflect any amendments that may be subsequently adopted. If this bill passes third reading in the house of introduction, a bill summary that applies to the reengrossed version of this bill will be available at http://leg.colorado.gov.)

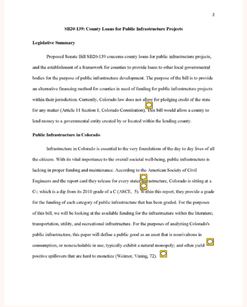
Current law requires a private college or university operating in the state to be authorized by the state board of education or by a regional or national accrediting body recognized by the United States department of education (DOE). The bill allows private colleges and universities and private occupational schools to be accredited by:

- Institutional accrediting bodies recognized by the DOE or

Shading denotes HOUSE amendment. Double underlining denotes SENATE amendment.
Capital letters or bold & italic numbers indicate topics added to bill by amendment.
Dashes through the words indicate deletions from existing statute.

Students write 5-page papers

- o up to four closely-edited drafts for each bill
- o minimum standard required to continue to oral presentation



SB20-139: County Loans for Public Infrastructure Projects

Legislative Summary

Proposed Senate Bill SB20-139 concerns county loans for public infrastructure projects, and the establishment of a framework for counties to provide loans to other local governmental bodies for the purpose of public infrastructure development. The purpose of this bill is to provide an alternative financing method for counties in need of funding for public infrastructure projects within their jurisdiction. Currently, Colorado law does not allow for pledging credit of the state for any matter (Article 11 Section 1, Colorado Constitution). This bill would allow a county to lend money to a governmental entity created by or located within the lending county.

Public Infrastructure in Colorado

Infrastructure in Colorado is essential to the very foundations of the day to day lives of all the citizens. With its vital importance to the overall societal well-being, public infrastructure is lacking in proper funding and maintenance. According to the American Society of Civil Engineers and the report cited they release for every state infrastructure, Colorado is sitting at a C- which is a dip from its 2010 grade of a C (ASCE, 7). For this report, they provide a grade for the funding of each category of public infrastructure that has been graded. For the purposes of this bill, we will be looking at the available funding for the infrastructure within the literature, transportation, utility, and recreational infrastructure. For the purposes of analyzing Colorado's public infrastructure, this paper will define a public good as an asset that is non/t-alrous in consumption, or nonexcludable in use, typically exhibit a natural monopoly, and often exist positive spillovers that are hard to monetize (Weimer, Vining, 73).

Students present papers orally

- o three-minute maximum, strictly enforced
- o minimum standard required to continue to testimony

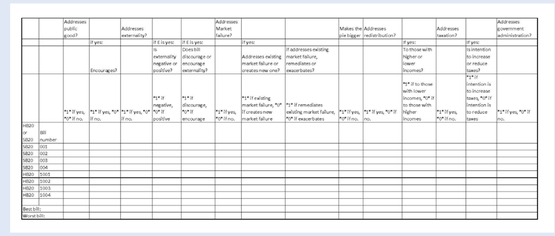
Students testify on 2 bills

- o testimony occurs in front of Assembly committees
- o committee members question students spontaneously

Outcomes

Legislative Score Card

- o students participate in a joint project rating economic content of all bills considered during the first half of the Assembly session



		Addresses public good?		Addresses externality?			Addresses Market failure?			Makes the tax bigger	Addresses redistribution?		Addresses taxation?		Addresses government administration?	
		If yes:		If it is yes:	If it is yes:		If yes:						If yes:		If yes:	
		Encourages?		Is externality negative or positive?	Does bill discourage or encourage externality?		Addresses existing market failure or creates new one?	If addresses existing market failure, remediates or exacerbates?					To those with higher or lower incomes?		Is intention to increase or reduce taxes?	
		"Y" if yes, "N" if no,	"Y" if yes, "N" if no,	"+" if negative, "-" if positive	"+" if discourages, "-" if encourages	"Y" if yes, "N" if no,	"+" if existing market failure, "-" if creates new market failure	"+" if remediates existing market failure, "-" if exacerbates	"Y" if yes, "N" if no,	"Y" if yes, no,	"Y" if yes, "N" if no,		"+" if to those with lower incomes, "-" if to those with higher incomes	"Y" if yes, "N" if no,	"+" if intention is to increase taxes, "-" if intention is to reduce taxes	"Y" if yes, "N" if no,
HB21																
SP	BB															
SB21	number															
SB21	001															
SB21	002															
SB21	003															
SB21	004															
HB21	1001															
HB21	1002															
HB21	1003															
HB21	1004															
Row 15:																
Row 16:																

Grades

- o 10 points for each of 4 papers
- o 5 points for each of 4 oral presentations
- o 10 points for each of 2 testimonies
- o 10 points for participation in Legislative Score Card
- o 10 points for final examination
- o 100 points total

History of Assembly participation

Year	Number of bills considered by the Colorado State Assembly	Number of student reports submitted to the Assembly	Number of student testimonies in front of Assembly committees
2021	626	36	16
2020	563	42	7
2019	598	28	14
2018	721	41	21
2017	681	47	20
2016	685	24	14
2015	682	37	19
2014	621	52	30
2013	613	43	21

Evaluation

- o State Representative Shannon Bird
- o "The serious members of the Assembly all read your students' papers."