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Profile: Margaret Landman

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Recently, there has been considerable discussion about the literacy (or rather, illiteracy) of typical Americans, where literacy is measured by the assessment of reading and mathematics skills. It seems that Americans are also illiterate in economics. According to a survey of 1600 people conducted by the Gallup Organization last year, students and non-students can correctly answer basic economics questions, such as what is a government budget deficit and what does the Federal Reserve do, only about 40 percent of the time. Dr. Margaret Landman, Professor of Economics and Director of the newly-formed Center for Economic Education at Bridgewater State College, believes that knowledge of these and other fundamental economics concepts is important for individuals and businesses to make informed, intelligent choices about consumption, saving, investments, work, and voting. Promoting economic literacy throughout the region, therefore, is a primary goal of Bridgewater's Center for Economic Education.

Through her work at this Center, which is located in the Department of Economics in Tillinghast Hall, Margaret hopes to make information about economics programs and data available to educators and business leaders throughout southeastern Massachusetts. The Center's affiliation with the National Council on Economic Education, as well as with the state Council, provides it with access to a wealth of educational materials which are made available to all teachers of economics, from kindergarten through college. The Center is also working to update and expand its collection of economic data, so that it can serve as a resource center for local educators, businesses, and government agencies in need of information on local and national economic conditions and forecasts.

Last spring, the Center for Economic Education offered its first workshop on international economics for teachers and administrators. This one-day Saturday workshop was sponsored by the Center for the Advancement of Research and Teaching (CART), a Bridgewater State College institution established to support faculty projects. About 20 participants, representing a variety of subjects, grade levels, and local school districts, came to Bridgewater State College to learn about international trade and finance through discussion groups, guest speakers, and practice sessions with economic education materials. Some of these workshop participants have expressed an interest in continuing their involvement with Bridgewater State College.

For the future, Margaret is planning a number of activities to develop and expand the programs offered by the Center for Economic Education. While the College already provides some financial support for the Center, she will look to supplement this budget by applying for grants to support future workshops and seminars for teachers and business people. She also plans to attend and make presentations at professional conferences to increase the visibility of Bridgewater's economic education programs. In 1994, Margaret will be working with Dr. Vernon Domingo of the Earth Sciences and Geography Department and with Mr. George Watson, Director of the Economic Education Council of Massachusetts, to create economics and geography materials for middle schools as part of a National Science Foundation CD-ROM project.

Margaret is currently in the process of recognizing and encouraging interested teachers and business leaders to become affiliated and involved with Bridgewater's Center. She welcomes suggestions and ideas from all members of the College community. Bridgewater State College has always been a leader in teacher education and, with its new programs on economic education, can look forward to becoming a strong contributor to regional economic education and development.