



## **Lynchburg College hosts ‘econ boot camp’ for area high school teachers**

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Area teachers hit the books when they went back to school as students this week at Lynchburg College.

In what has been described as a crash course in economics, or econ boot camp, local educators participated in an intense weeklong class. LC officials said it was designed to give teachers knowledge about economic concepts relevant to classroom instruction.

Cheryl Ayers, the director of the Center for Economic Education at LC, said there has always been a need for this type of course, but this is the first time it’s been offered.

“Now these teachers are finally getting a handle and they have the tools they need,” Ayers said. “I think it’s gone amazingly well.”

Ayers and Joe Turek, dean of the School of Business and Economics, taught the course. Two weeklong sections were offered. Almost 40 educators participated, including elementary, middle and high school teachers.

The course comes at a time when the economic downturn has put finance at the forefront of many minds.

Not only that, but in February the Virginia Board of Education approved several changes to the Standards of Accreditation. Among those revisions was the addition of a personal finance and economics course for high school students that will be required for graduation.

The freshman class of 2011-2012 will be the first group of students to take the course.

Turek and Ayers said they wanted to give teachers more information than they will likely need for the classroom, and offer insight into an “economic way of thinking.”

“It’s a life skill,” Ayers said of economics. “It’s not just something you take to graduate. The whole ability to analyze a situation and consider all possibilities will make the end decision more informed and more effective.”

Altavista High School teacher Vickie Mills said the course was perfect because she and another colleague are piloting economics courses next year.

“It let us gain some real usable things to do with our students,” Mills said, adding she wants her economics course to be interesting and fun for students.

Mills said a better understanding of economics will lead to better choices by her students.

While Mills isn't sure the current economic crisis could have been avoided with more economics education, she did note that if more students were better informed perhaps the current recession would not have been as severe.

Liberty High School teacher Danny Issacs also took the LC economics course. He, too, isn't sure the inception of a mandatory economics and personal finance class could help avoid the current economic climate.

“I would like to say yes,” he said, but added that only time will tell.

Issacs, who is taking the course to be ready if he is asked to teach a finance class, said even if financial crises can't be prevented students need to know the basics of personal finance to make a smooth transition into the real world.

For example, Issacs said students must learn to balance a checkbook and understand the risks and benefits of credit cards.

An understanding of personal finance and an appreciation for the current economic situation is something most educators hope to pass along to their students from the class.

For Turek it's simple: Without understanding economics, students cannot be good citizens.

“Economics issues are everywhere,” he said. “It's just basic.”