

Managerial Economics
Prof. Jepsen
Fall 2006

ECONOMIC DATA ASSIGNMENT

In lieu of homework or problem sets, you will prepare two (2) very short reports summarizing two (2) “real world” data series.

Choosing your data

The relevance of the data assignment will depend on the effort and creativity that you give to selecting your data. Many of you have had internships or summer positions with firms that use economic data. Many of you will be graduating soon and hope to obtain jobs in “the real world.” A student who hopes to work for a stock brokerage firm could select the Dow Jones Industrial Average as her data series; a student who interned with a bank could choose the prime rate as his data series. The assignment will be as relevant as you make it.

Part I

You will select an economic data series from the ones discussed in Clayton and Geisbrecht’s *A Guide To Everyday Economic Statistics*. Part I is due at 3 p.m. on September 15, 2006. I encourage you to incorporate the feedback you receive on Part I into your report for Part II.

Part II

For Part II, you will select an economic data series that is **not** discussed in the *Guide*. The data series that you select for Part II may **not** be related to the data series that you select for Part I. For example, if you choose national building permits as you data for Part I, you may not choose building permits for the State of Iowa for your data for Part II. However, if you choose the national unemployment rate as your data for Part I, you may choose building permits for the State of Iowa as your data for Part II. I recommend considering state, local, or regional economic data for Part II. Part II is due at 3 p.m. on September 29, 2006.

Finding the data

For each data series, use the Internet to locate a source for the data. Provide the most recent data you can find on the series—the more recent, the better. Include data for the most recent ten (10) periods. A period will probably be a month, quarter, or year. Give an appropriate citation for your data. This should include the web address AND the organization that compiles and publishes the data. Use official data sources only, not personal web pages. Put your source information below the table rather than at the end of the report. Do not provide more than the required ten (10) data points and the respective dates; you will lose points if you do.

Please note that some of the web addresses in the *Guide* may be out of date. Allow sufficient time to find the data. We will devote the entire class period on September 1st to finding appropriate data.

Writing the report

You need to address three items. First, briefly describe the data (you can pretend that I don't know what the CPI is). Second, describe the story that the data tell. What has happened during the time period of the ten observations? Third, explain why you find the data useful or interesting. Include how this information might be used by you or by others in professional careers. The written discussion should be between one-half and one full page in length.

Do not hand in what you download from the computer. You should retype the data as a part of your report. Present your data first; then write the discussions for each series. Provide a title for each data series. Double space your text, use a 12-point font, and maintain one-inch margins on all sides of the page. You may single space the text within the table. Do not right justify the text. Please provide your UNI ID at the top of each page; do not include your name. Please place the ID in a "header" within the one-inch top margin.

Grading Guidelines

Is the data appropriate?

Data source is from *Guide* (Part I) or is **not** from *Guide* (Part II)

Data is most currently available

Quality of written report

Content

Grammar, punctuation

(Free grammar hint: the word "data" is plural.)

Did the student follow the instructions?

ID, not name, at top of each page

Data source is listed beneath table

Webpage

Organization

Data has title

Data is presented in table format

Due Dates

September 1 Meet in computer lab in room 113

September 15 Part I due at 3 p.m.

September 29 Part II due at 3 p.m.

I reserve the right to change due dates if necessary. Please check the website for any changes.