

Graduate Student Summit for Diversity in Economics: Summaries and Take-Aways from Workshops

Women in Economics at Berkeley, May 2019

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Outline of Contents

1) Forms of Bias Affecting Different Groups (pg. 2)

- a) Introduction
- b) Groups that are marginalized
- c) Types of Bias
 - i) Lack of Representation
 - ii) Inappropriate/Insensitive Rhetoric
 - iii) Lack of Resources/Opportunities
 - iv) Flawed Perceptions of Women/Minorities
 - v) Regarding Economics-Specific Hiring, Retainment, Research Agendas
 - vi) Bias through Culture/Norms
- d) Steps to take to implement change
 - i) Maximizing Performance under Current Conditions
 - ii) Shifting the Climate

2) Best Practices and Policies (pg. 7)

- a) Introduction
- a) Pedagogy and Classroom
- b) Advising relationships
 - i) What makes a good advising relationship?
 - ii) Finding an advisor
- c) Student-student relationships
- d) Admissions
- e) Job Market and Hiring
- f) Seminars
 - i) Effective Communication in Seminars
 - ii) Speaker and Audience Behaviors

3) Strategies for Winning Buy-In (pg. 15)

- a) Introduction
- b) Winning Buy-In from Peers
- c) Winning Buy-In from Faculty
- d) Winning Buy-In from the Broader professional community

4) Strategies for Self-Preservation (pg. 18)

- a) Introduction
- b) Activities
- c) Therapy
- d) Friends, Family, & Mentors
- e) On the Job
- f) Action Items

5) Action Plan Moving Forward (pg. 21)

- a) Introduction
- b) Recommended Measures for the Profession
- c) Recommended Policies for Departments
- d) Suggestions for Peers

Forms of Bias Affecting Different Groups

Author: Molly Van Dop

Introduction:

In economics departments, many groups experience marginalization and bias of different forms. In the first workshop of the Fall 2018 WEB summit, students sat down together to discuss the different groups that experience bias, the types of bias encountered, and ways to combat bias, providing many illuminating examples along the way. The types of bias described include: bias stemming from a lack of representation, insensitive rhetoric and flawed perceptions regarding women and minority groups, fewer resources or opportunities for marginalized groups, and inherent bias from the culture of the economics discipline. The advice for combating bias is two-pronged: steps to work within the current culture that is common within economics departments, and ways to shift the culture to be more inclusive.

Groups that are marginalized:

There are many groups that experience marginalization within the field of economics. While the following is by no means a comprehensive list, it attempts to illustrate the range of groups affected by bias.

- Women, especially older students and those with children
- Individuals who identify as a member of an underrepresented minority racial group
- International students, and individuals of different ethnicities or nationalities
- First generation students
- Individuals from indigenous communities
- Individuals from rural areas
- Individuals of different socioeconomic status
- Individuals with disabilities or health issues
- Individuals that do not identify as heterosexual

Types of Bias:

There are many types of bias that individuals face in economics departments. Some of these forms of bias are specific to the economics discipline, while others are more systemic across academic environments and beyond. The following sections introduce categories of bias that were regularly introduced as issues across focus groups.

Lack of Representation:

A lack of representation of women and minority groups in economics leads to a variety of negative outcomes. For underrepresented groups, this leads to a lack of role models, especially in tenured faculty positions and leadership roles. This is linked to the “leaky pipeline” effect, and

does not entice people to join the economics discipline or enter into academia. In addition, for members of underrepresented groups where an affiliation with that group might not be obvious (just as in the LGBTQ community), there are pressures to conform to the “straight white male model” and to avoid being visible as a member of that group. This can lead to an even further reduction in representation.

Inappropriate/Insensitive Rhetoric:

Expressions of bias, both implicit and explicit, are frequently directed towards women and minorities in economics departments (and beyond). We attempt to characterize this inappropriate language into two categories. The first set could be broadly categorized as microaggressions, where discrimination might be indirect, subtle, or unintentional.

Some examples, primarily directed towards women, that were brought up during the workshop included:

- Assuming that someone is not in the right department/building because they present as femme
- Comments saying that you don’t deserve something, or you only got it because you’re a woman
- Being told not to go into a particular field “unless you want to get a job at a women’s college”
- Questioning why a women in economics group was started
- Sexual assault jokes at cohort happy hour
- Direct disrespect in the classroom

Examples primarily directed towards other minority groups, that were brought up during the workshop included:

- Mispronouncing names repeatedly
- Making assumptions about identity when speaking
- Putting down certain types of work that are more likely to be studied by women and minorities.
- Negative way of speaking about certain groups of ethnic or racial groups in seminars, (i.e. Why is this country/race always used as a counterexample?)

Lack of Resources/Opportunities:

Another form of bias faced by minority groups and women are fewer opportunities for research and study groups. This can come in the form of direct exclusion, such as collaboration, coauthorship, and dinner opportunities for males, or all male texting groups for help on problem sets. This type of bias may also be less intentional, where assumptions are made about who would be interested in different opportunities (e.g. international students given fewer opportunities to present, students with children invited to fewer social events). Finally, linked to

a lack of opportunities are a dearth of resources important for success. For example, there are few resources for ESL students looking to improve their language skills, which is a barrier to learning, teaching, and presenting.

Flawed Perceptions of Women/Minorities:

Underlying the inappropriate language and lack of opportunities for women and minority groups is a set of beliefs or perceptions that can lead to this behavior. It's important to recognize the damaging stereotypes.

Some examples generated by the workshop participants, focused primarily on women include:

- Women not being competent at math, or doing poorly at fields that are deemed "math heavy"
- Women are expected to be quiet, conscientious students. Those who are not are considered aggressive, those who exhibit these behaviors fade into the background
- Assumptions that women would want to engage or avoid certain events, such as not getting invited to a social event because it was assumed that a woman would not like poker, or a presumption that women would be a part of social organizing committee
- Perceptions that women are more interested in teaching. Quote: "You teacher-types are always so nice, you won't maximize your payoff."

Some examples focused specifically on other minority groups include:

- International student stereotypes from faculty and other grad students, especially regarding math skills and teaching ability.
- Assumptions about what field people are in based on their identity or membership in an underrepresented group

Regarding Economics-Specific Hiring, Retainment, Research Agendas:

Comments from the workshop that were focused primarily on women:

- Seminar culture and striking gender dynamics, not always visible to men but acutely obvious to females
- Publishing issues and leaky pipeline – it's nefarious because you don't realize you're experiencing it at the time especially as a grad student
- Women are given lower priority than men in spousal hire situations
- Research agendas related to gender can get left behind
- Women become token members for a committee, which leads to a single woman being expected to represent all women. This can also lead to more service-work burden on women.
- Notion that women and minorities benefit from implicit "quotas" within cohort--could this also benefit from increased transparency? Is this wrong?

Comments from the workshop that were focused primarily on other minority groups:

- Research agenda is set by a privileged group of researchers
- Harder teaching assistant jobs tend to go to the international students
- Research agendas related to developing countries can get left behind
- Accused of doing “me-search” when researching a marginalized group to which you belong

Bias through Culture/Norms:

Often, the structure of economics departments are rooted in cultural norms that cater to the success of white males. Some examples of these cultural norms include:

- Aggressive behavior
- Small deviations from expected behavior are looked at negatively, result in not being taken seriously (for example, wearing the “wrong” color suit at AEA)
- Social events are primarily happy hours with alcohol (An American custom)
- Negotiations Male students are more confident to negotiate
- Some students are better at networking--harder for international students.
- Referring to people by their first name
- Playing sports with faculty and students – don’t understand why that’s gendered
- Louder/deeper voices (without foreign accents) get more attention--requiring repetition

Concerns from others interacting with women:

- Professor noted that women don’t contribute but do well in classes; how to engage without intimidating
- Professor finds it easier to meet with male students because not worried about making them uncomfortable – meant it well but colors interactions with professor
- Professor wouldn’t make eye contact with female students to the point of meetings being unproductive

Concerns on being classified as part of a marginalized group:

- It falls on the marginalized groups to solve the problems; how do we get more people interested?
- Some of us are indifferent to these labels, feel like we don’t want these qualifiers
- Imposter syndrome
- Afraid that you are a bad representation of your “group”

Steps to take to implement change:

Maximizing Performance under Current Conditions:

- Need to learn how to use your voice and help yourself out, it can be good to be pragmatic and attempt objectivity.

- Regarding seminar culture, perhaps we can meet in the middle and encourage women to speak up more, men to speak less.
- Fighting imposter syndrome--if people are not going out for opportunities because they feel underqualified, then the person who gets the opportunity is likely less qualified, just more confident.
- While in seminars, meetings, or other places where women are more likely to be ignored or interrupted, looking out for each other is important. Examples include validating others for good questions, or pointing out when people are getting interrupted or talked over.

Shifting the Climate:

- Increase the transparency of resource distribution--teaching and advising
- Regarding English as a second language – Maybe departments could support students more instead of leaving it to 1:1 relationships. TOEFL not enough anymore? Makes undue stress for international students
- We should not assume that white men don't want to be included in the conversation about diversity
- Think about broadening the admissions bar rather than lowering the admissions bar
- Importance of finding allyship – friends, male cohort-members that sometimes feel a bit uncomfortable around – find the one person who you could talk to about and ask them to back you up and explicitly ask them to be your ally
- Take a closer look at Qualifying Exams and other situations where students leave graduate programs. Is there data on people who leave the department? Are students who are leaving economics programs more likely to be of a particular demographic group?

Best Practices and Policies

Authors: Aly Blakeney, Stephanie Kestelman and Chenyuan Liu

Introduction:

The lack of diversity in the economics profession is still pervasive, but departments around the world have made strides in developing solutions to make the field more inclusive. In this document, we recognize problems in current practice and discuss best practices in six broad areas of the economics: Pedagogy and Classroom, Advising Relationships, Student-Student Relationships, Admissions, Job Market and Hiring, and Seminars.

Pedagogy and Classroom:

Economics is a broad discipline, and as such it can be difficult to appropriately engage all students at each point in their economics learning career. An introductory classroom has a very different class size and culture than more advanced coursework, and teaching methods can vary even among sub-departments (e.g., economic education, agricultural economics, theoretical economics, etc.). In order to properly engage students with a variety of personalities, backgrounds, and content knowledge, the following best practices are recommended:

- Cultivate student interest in economics by showcasing its diversity and application
 - Bring case studies, journal articles, and relevant news stories into the instruction materials to broaden students' view of the discipline.
 - Highlight women and/or minority researchers in the field to give female students and students of color a role model.
 - Bring alumni into the classroom and have them talk about the variety of employment opportunities available to economics degree holders.
- Create small study groups to support student learning and peer interaction
 - Doing so can allow for shy students to have a voice, and for more advanced students to help their peers.
 - Can help to create community within the classroom.
 - Groups can be randomly assigned, but ensure that diverse students are not forced into a group with whom they cannot relate.
 - Structure course assignments and exercises to require group interaction.
- Walk around during in-class assignments to identify any students that may be struggling.
- Encourage and incentivize questions, and ensure that a student's contribution is valued even if it is not "right".
- Establish course expectations from the beginning, and model that challenges to authority will not be met with or engaged.

As graduate students, it will take time and effort to fully develop a teaching style. There are multiple resources available, including teaching and learning centers within universities and AEA's Committee on Economic Education workshop panels. Some of these resources may not be styled specifically for graduate students, though it is recommended that graduate-inclusive resources be developed in the future. Universities specifically should

devote more attention to teaching education pedagogy to graduate students who are or will be teaching.

It is important to note that teaching is an essential part of graduate student preparation, and will follow candidates onto the job market. Liberal arts colleges highly value teaching statements and evaluations, as they may value the importance of teaching quality more than research institutions. Regardless of ultimate career goals, an economics educator's best effort should be forth to make economics an exciting, stimulating, and highly interactive discipline for undergraduates.

Advising relationships:

In learning how to conduct research, graduate students also learn how to build an advising team and manage their advisor portfolio. These skills are part of the "hidden curriculum" of graduate school, and as such may not be formally explained to students. However, the quality of one's advising relationships can have large impacts on one's academic success. Best practices in terms of advising relationships can be attributed to three main agents: students, faculty and the department itself.

What makes a good advising relationship?

Students are the drivers of their advising experience in graduate school, and should consider the following when building and managing advising relationships:

- Build a portfolio of advisors. Different people can support research at different stages. Faculty outside your field can provide mentorship and share human capital needed to navigate the economics profession. Knowing that no one person needs to provide all aspects of advising enables students to have a team that can help improve their research and support future endeavors.
- The advisor-advisee relationship requires two-sided engagement. Evaluate early and often whether a given relationship is working.
 - Pick someone who challenges you and pushes your research forward. Your advisor should be someone who is willing to invest in you.
 - It is fine to "shop around" and take your time in jumping into a relationship.
 - Remember that this is your career. Help your advisors help you succeed by being open about career goals, family planning, where your work is stuck, and other factors affecting you professionally. Different faculty members may be able to help in each of those cases.
- Personalities can make a difference, since students and advisors may spend a lot of time together.
 - Know yourself. What is important to you? What motivates you? What kinds of deadlines do you need to set for yourself?
 - There may be a trade-off between being in a given subfield, and having an advisor who looks like you or shares your background.

Advisors can follow these best practices to support students from a diversity of backgrounds:

- Advisors should not assume that students know how to navigate the economics profession. Human capital is often transmitted in informal ways, so educating all kinds of students on how to apply for certain grants or how to respond to referee reports, for

example, can reduce information inequities. Doing so reduces the likelihood that successes or failures are due to lack of human capital.

- As an advisor, there's a way to challenge without making your advisee feel belittled. Students want to be taken seriously, and criticism can be conveyed tactfully and respectfully.
- Students come from different countries and educational backgrounds, so when correcting students' grammatical mistakes, do so kindly.
- Similarly, sarcasm, irony and jokes may get lost on people from different cultural backgrounds. Do not take this personally, and refrain from sarcasm and irony in more serious conversations.
- Refrain from holding office hours in places like the gym or a bar, as they may discourage some students from attending.

Finding an advisor:

Building a relationship from ground zero can be challenging. Departments can facilitate this process:

- Having a formal second year paper enables students to "test drive" an advisor.
- Similarly, a more formal research assistantship process for the summer after first year can help students meet faculty that they would be interested in having as advisors.
- Workshops where both students and faculty present preliminary work can be a good place to start establishing those relationships. It allows students to see early-stage work by faculty, and promotes frequent student/faculty interactions.
 - These kinds of workshops could even be student-organized.
- Transparency in how RA and TAs are assigned can mitigate the biases that may arise if positions are informally assigned. Having a public list of what positions are available and allowing open applications may be one way.

Student-Student Relationships:

In a field where there appears to be little premium for kindness, negative student-student relationships can often create an unwelcoming environment for graduate students. We identified some strategies for improving student-student relationships.

- 1) Hold events for graduate students in environments that are welcoming for all.
 - a. For example, evening events at bars may be uncomfortable for those who don't drink or difficult to attend for graduate students with children. A better alternative would be a mid-day picnic or breakfast.
 - b. Another example would be to join a co-ed intramural league instead of informal sports gatherings that tend to be all male.
- 2) Departments should invest in graduate student socialization.
 - a. Instead of having an individual student host an event in which some people might be left out, a department-funded event requires that all graduate students be invited and signals that the department cares about fostering positive student-student relationships.
 - b. Departments should have a social committee that is in charge of organizing, and should share organizational responsibilities broadly.

- c. Facilitating formal events attended by students at different stages of the PhD can help all types of students feel more welcome.
- 3) Create safe spaces for women and minorities who need a place to talk about challenges they face in graduate school or encounters with other students.
 - a. For example, one school has a women-only graduate student office that they advertise as a resource for younger students who need to talk to a woman in an older cohort.
 - b. Other schools have women's breakfast groups to create a safe space for conversation.
 - c. Normalize discussions of challenges faced by groups underrepresented in economics, so that students are not penalized for signaling commitment to addressing inequities in the economics profession.
- 4) Furthermore, the goal of creating an inclusive environment and strategies for achieving this should be presented to first years as soon as they arrive on campus.
- 5) Departments should provide in-person, seminar-style sexual harassment training – web modules are not enough. Consequences to harassing other students should be clear and enforced.
- 6) Many graduate students just need someone to talk to. As fellow graduate students, we can help them by being good listeners. However, there are also formal programs that can be put in place to allow this.
 - a. For example, one school has trained and paid peer-mentors who are available to other students in their program. Specific groups of students spend a disproportionate amount of time doing emotional support work, and should be compensated for it since it takes time and energy away from research.
 - b. A set of departments continuously reinforce what sorts of mental health resources are available to students.
 - c. Another idea is to provide *clear* information to students regarding who is a mandatory reporter and who is confidential so they know who they can talk to.

Admissions:

Admissions into graduate economics programs can be a gamble at best and a highly biased process at worst. When looking at the diversity of admitted graduate students, statistics seem to vary across institutions. Of the six universities represented, two reported less than a 50/50 split of male to female enrolled students, two mentioned that half of enrolled students were international, and only one stated that the proportion of women was higher than men. Statistics on graduate student admission and attrition were available at one institution, but nothing is currently done with the data. Students who are admitted to these universities do appear to have sufficient funding, at least for the first year, with the opportunity to apply for additional funds.

Advancement in the degree program seems to negatively affect women, with women disproportionately not making it through the preliminary exam/qualifying process. This raises concerns as to why female students are not being supported by faculty to pass this stage, when they are aware that this phenomenon is occurring. There is also a question as to the timing of these exams: completing one year of graduate studies is not a good proxy for a student's future research potential, so should departments begin rethinking the entire process?

It was also identified that the application procedure itself might contribute to some of the bias towards higher rates of male students. Letters of recommendation from male faculty might carry more weight with the admissions committee, as economics professors from R1 schools (predominantly male) are weighted higher and female writers tend to be from a more qualitative field. Male students are also more likely to speak up more in class, which ultimately may lead to a better letters than female students who are less vocal in a classroom setting. Additionally, diversity statements (where required as part of the application process) tend to be undervalued or not read by the admission committee, which is where female and people of color applications may have the ability to stand out from white male peers. This may also be true for the personal statement.

Information on issues inherent to the application process should be made available to current and future applicants. Suggestions include placing this information on EconSpark, Grad Café, and passing it down through existing professional and personal networks. Transparency in funding offers should also be encouraged by having all students in an admitted cohort providing details of their individual funding package.

The group provided a number of recommendations to improve graduate student admissions and retention processes, including:

- Gather statistics on admissions data and publish it publicly in an easily-accessible clearinghouse
- Economics departments should publish very clear admissions criteria on their websites, including the weight given to each part of the application
- Any graduate student who is asked to serve on an admissions committee should be paid for their work on the committee
- Advisors should be available to help female students in their first year of graduate studies to help counterbalance the negative effect of preliminary/qualifying exams
- Undergraduate students need to be aware that in order to get a solid letter of recommendation, they must be engaged and vocal during class time
- Admissions committees should put less weight on letters of recommendation due to the inherent biases
- Add information on syllabi in core undergraduate economics courses that details how students can begin preparing immediately for admission in a PhD program, including recommended courses
- Actively recruit students from non-R1 schools
- Recruit women and people of color that appear to have strong potential and use the entire summer before the first year in a graduate program to teach any curriculum deficiencies the group may have (e.g., higher level math, econometrics knowledge, etc.).
 - An alternative is to split preliminary/qualifying exams into the first two years: econometrics tested at the end of the first year, and microeconomics tested at the end of the second year to allow students more time to take additional math courses

Job Market and Hiring:

Job market and hiring can be stressful for both the demand and supply side. To promote a culture of diversity, the job market candidates, the hiring departments, and the AEA organizer all can play a critical role. We discuss the general guideline and suggestions for improvement for three stages of the job market process: the preparation stage, the interview stage, and the fly-outs.

First is the preparation stage. The preparation can start as early as the summer before the job market. Departments can adopt many practices to support students going on the job market. Here is a list of best practices shared in the session for the department and the job market candidate to consider:

- **Alumni Sharing.** The department may have alumni come back to visit current students who were non-traditional hires and talk about their experience. Additionally, have current job market candidates talk about their experience after the AEAs to the graduate student body.
- **Faculty Support.** The department should organize mock-interviews from faculty for the job market candidates. Try to get multiple interviews to be exposed to different interview styles. The candidates can also talk to faculty about their job market experience.
- **Attend Conferences.** Go to regional conferences or field conferences before AEA. You may not have any time to actually attend any of the sessions when you are busy going to interviews. It's a great way to interact with others in your field.

The second is the interview stage. For most people, the interview will take place during the AEA annual meeting in January. During this time, candidates will have an intensive schedule, so it is important to plan wisely beforehand. Besides, little change in the institutional arrangements may have a large impact in promoting a more diverse, more friendly hiring culture. Here is a list of best practices:

- For the job market candidates and other Ph.D. students
 - Generally, it is not advised to submit your job market paper to the AEA when you are on the market. You will be very busy with many interviews. You might not even have time to go to any sessions.
 - Graduate students who are a cohort behind a student on the job market could volunteer to be their personal “conciierge” where they attend all of the interviews, bring breakfast, and call Ubers for the next hotel. This exposes them to the job-market process prior to being on the job market themselves.
 - If you want to participate in the AEA sessions, there is a higher acceptance rate with entire sessions instead of individual papers. Also, aim for CSWEP sessions. Invite senior people in the related field to be invited for discussants.
 - Some universities have graduate students on the search committee, generally, those that are going on the job market, while some universities do not. For public policy schools, this is generally the norm.
- Ideas for AEA job market improvements:
 - Do not have only men in the room during an interview.
 - Utilize resources in the community, such as boardrooms in local businesses or libraries. However, capacity and proximity is an issue that is difficult to address.

Perhaps interviews can be rescheduled so that they can be held on campuses, such as in classrooms. Canadian Economics Association utilizes this method.

- Add guidelines to how the hotel room should be structured. For example, the interviewers' chairs should not be blocking the exit.
- Add guidelines for appropriate and inappropriate behavior for interviews. Designate a point of contact to report issues or violations of those guidelines.

The third stage is the fly-outs in January through March. The fly-outs include a job market paper presentation (some may also have teaching presentation), interviews and meetings throughout the day with faculty and students, and informal meetings or dinners with other faculty members. We mainly discussed the presentation and the suggestions can be found in the next section, seminars.

Seminars:

Research seminars are an important part of academic life. For the audience, they provide an opportunity to expose to new research ideas, to engage with and keep up with the state of the field. For the authors, they provide commitment devices to get research done, to improve the particular paper and get feedback. For Ph.D. students, they learned to respond to questions and handle “attacks”. For junior faculty, they can air a polished paper in seminars. For senior faculty, they can talk through a rough idea. In summary, research presentations take a critical role in supporting the dynamic of academic research. However, the current practice has much room for improvement. In this section, we identify problems and layout plan for actions, with a special emphasis in promoting an inclusive culture.

Effective Communication in Seminars:

A common problem with seminars is low-quality communication. Time is precious for everyone, and low-quality communication prevents participants from getting the most value from seminars. Some bad practices may be harder to handle for under-representative groups or non-native speakers. Here are a few examples of low-quality questions:

- Questions that aren't questions.
- Questions that attack the whole idea – e.g. why would anyone study this?
- Overly technical questions, either to tear down or show off.
- Expect norms from a different subfield to be applied, even when they're not standard in the subfield in question.
- Generally, making the seminar about themselves.

In some cases, conversations between audience and presenters are helpful in clarifying. However, they can also create a problem for effectively communicating ideas. We find the following examples:

- Extended back-and-forth may digress too much from the main topic.
- Talking between audience members
 - Short, quiet questions between members of the audience can be helpful, clarifying things so they don't have to ask the speaker.
 - Harder for non-native speakers to handle the background chatter.

In response, a good practice to make the conversation more effective is to have protected time or rules on interruption. This can be helpful in allowing people to get preliminaries out of the way before a deluge of questions. The most common practice is to have the first ten minutes without questions. Besides, in internal or student presentations, it might also be helpful to require that faculty can ask questions after two student questions. It encourages student participation and helps to create a more relaxed culture.

Speaker and Audience Behaviors:

We recommend a few suggestions for better practice to mitigate the differential treatment problem:

- What should speaker behavior be like?
 - Be conscious of how speakers are behaving differently, e.g., angry men are viewed differently than angry women; angry white men are viewed differently than angry black men etc.
 - Be polite – say things like “that’s a good question”, then tell them why they’re wrong :)
 - Be confident in your own work
 - Think about your inside and outside reactions – emotions are hard.
 - Inside, the default response is often panic – tell yourself “I’ve worked hard”.
 - Remember that criticism isn’t all about you, it’s about how the paper can become better – tell yourself “Great, I’ve learned a new thing”.
- What should audience behavior be like?
 - Emphasize presenting problems with solutions when you make a comment.
 - Don’t measure the worth of speakers by how they do in seminars
 - Free people up to present lower quality, preliminary work.
 - Example of department chairs who have pushed students not to present at conferences because they thought the work would make the student look bad.
 - Try to interrupt bad behavior
 - Subject to the caveat that the speaker might be about to do that, and you should let them.
 - Change your own behavior.
 - Think about the physical arrangement – are faculty in the front and center?
 - Often seminars are derailed by a single person – challenge their behavior.

Strategies for Winning Buy-In

Authors: Kate Pennington, Lauren Schechter, Leah Shiferaw

Introduction:

Changing norms in the field of economics requires winning buy-in from three key groups: your peers, faculty, and the broader institutional community. Winning buy-in from each of these groups starts with creating a shared set of facts. Many economists aren't aware of the issues faced by their colleagues from underrepresented groups. Even if they are broadly aware of discrimination and underrepresentation, they may not realize how these issues play out through department culture or policy. Here, we discuss ways to educate and activate peers, faculty, and the broader community.

Winning Buy-In from Peers:

It is important to engage peers both in advocating for inclusive policies and in building inclusive department cultures. To win buy-in from peers, one of the most important first steps is to educate them about the issues that may be present through:

- **Discussing existing research:** The discipline values rigorous evidence, and talking about studies published documenting the problem may help raise awareness.
- **Sharing anecdotes:** Foster an environment of empathy for negative experiences in general, and then share with others when those negative experiences arise as a result of membership in a marginalized group.
- **Climate surveys:** Climate surveys can be more effective than other alternatives such as trainings, since in some instances only women and underrepresented minorities choose to attend diversity or sexual harassment training sessions.
- To do this, it's important to foster relationships where this type of honest communication is possible. Building trust through social events can help build the foundation for sensitive conversations. If a larger mass of students feel connected to the department, they may be more motivated and feel safer working for change. Suggestions include:
 - **Daytime social events:** The fact that a large portion of informal socializing occurs at night and in the presence of alcohol can be exclusionary – parents are unable to attend, there tends to be a higher incidence of inappropriate behavior, and those who don't drink may not feel comfortable attending. It would be more inclusive to also have some social events during the work day and without alcohol.
 - **Formal mentoring:** A mentor “buddy system” where participants are paired and incentivized to meet once a month could help create useful professional relationships. It's important to respect the fact that some students are looking for friends and others are primarily looking for professional relationships.
 - **Randomized office assignments:** This initiative could create opportunities for students to interact with those they might not normally meet organically, including students in other cohorts and other subfields.
 - Additionally, having these initiatives organized by grad students (preferably each by a different person/group) could create more of a collaborative culture that would support efforts toward diversity. It's also been noted that important social connections are often formed during situations like conferences and recruitment

- relaxing funding constraints to encourage conference attendance (even when not presenting) and making recruitment a more positive experience for everyone (appropriate behavior toward prospective students during recruitment, avoiding shared hotel rooms if possible) would be steps in the right direction.

Lastly, we can create buy-in among peers by emphasizing that both policies and cultural changes that are good for women and minorities are often good for everyone. By emphasizing the mutual benefits of these efforts, we can focus on our similarities rather than our differences and create a larger critical mass of peers that support inclusive policies and work to create an inclusive culture.

Winning Buy-In from Faculty:

How do we engage faculty in the work of building inclusive policies and department cultures? First, it is important to determine what an inclusive department culture would look like. WEB summit participants shared some examples, including:

- **Accessible faculty:** an environment in which students feel that they can approach others within the department to talk, and that faculty will be receptive and available.
- **Social events:** informal events for faculty and students to engage with each other, particularly events not centered around alcohol.

Collecting data through climate surveys, within and across departments, can be a powerful tool for bringing faculty awareness to the issues. This allows students an outlet to communicate their concerns with faculty and their departments in a structured way. Organizations like WEB can also serve as a point of contact and to gain leverage in communications.

Appointing a faculty representative dedicated to handle topics and policies related to inclusivity is a next step towards engaging faculty with this work. Additionally, pinpointing policies in other departments that work to promote inclusivity can serve as a positive reference and potential negotiating tool with which to engage faculty and departments.

Winning Buy-In from the Broader professional community:

Beyond activating our peers and faculty, we need to transform the broader professional context in which we work. What strategies can we use to make inclusion a goal for key institutions including journals, professional groups, and conferences? We begin by outlining barriers faced in each of these three contexts, and providing ideas for dismantling them.

As with peers and faculty, winning buy-in from the broader professional community starts with spreading and discussing a shared set of facts. New evidence showing that women receive less credit for co-authorship has helped spark important conversations about publishing while female. Similar research on the effect of perceived race and nationality would help push discussion forward. We encourage journals to publish statistics on submissions and acceptances by author demographics. Is it harder to publish as a member of an underrepresented group?

In addition to submissions, we need to scrutinize the review process. We discussed the possibility that women are systematically more thorough reviewers, perhaps dedicating more time to reviewing. Again, clear information would help: journals should publish statistics on the

gender and racial breakdown of reviewers each year. This will help describe the distribution of refereeing burden and indicate whether certain demographic groups are de facto gatekeepers of the type of research that gets published in top journals. Relatedly, are recommendations taken more seriously when they come from white men? We encourage journals to publish statistics on the percent of time the ultimate decision matches female reviewer recommendations versus male reviewers.

Finally, refereeing articles should be directly rewarded as a crucial aspect of academic inquiry. We advocate including referee work in tenure evaluations, a change that we expect would create buy-in from all academics but also progressively benefit the groups who have been putting in the most unrewarded work.

Next, we can make the criteria for admission into professional groups transparent. For example, becoming a member of NBER currently requires a shoulder-tap. Leaving membership in beneficial professional groups up to an opaque ingroup selection process creates bias. Professional groups with selective admission should provide transparent selection criteria and guidelines for application. To create buy-in for changes like this, we encourage advocates to emphasize that these changes should increase the quality and intellectual diversity of those groups.

Conferences are a third key institution in the broader professional context of economics. We encourage conference organizers to offer childcare and to choose locations that are relatively fast and easy to travel to. This will make it easier for economists who do not live in major transit hubs and/or who have demanding household responsibilities to attend. We strongly suspect this will increase the number of women who are able to attend, as well as expand the list of sending institutions.

A few easy fixes are common to both conferences and department activities. These changes are minor and probably don't require widespread buy-in; they can be implemented by the event organizer. First, events should be centered around food or entertainment, rather than alcohol. Second, when possible, events should end with the workday so that people who have family or other responsibilities are not excluded. Finally, social activities should be accessible and welcoming -- ideally, they should bring the group together rather than divide it into subgroups. We highlight sports as a common social activity that is often divisive.

Strategies for Self-Preservation

Authors: Taylor B. Anderson and Katerine Y. Ramirez Nieto

Introduction:

In the short-term, self-preservation strategies can help us navigate our experiences. And, in the long-term, these techniques can build our confidence and comfort within the economics community. Self-preservation takes many forms, but in essence it is protecting one's own mental, emotional, and/or physical state. With the pressures of graduate school and the sometimes divisive culture in economics departments, exploring different strategies for self preservation and finding the ones that work for you are critical to achieving success and taking care of your mental and emotional health along the way.

Activities:

All of the groups talked about the importance of doing activities outside of school and work as a strategy of self-preservation. Time to unwind, laugh, and play can be beneficial to building a support system, relieving stress, and making connections with people unrelated to economics. The activity of choice varies person-to-person, but there was consensus among participants that physical activity is a powerful remedy when working through a difficult time. Many international students also find that reconnecting with their culture through local groups was helpful in dealing with homesickness and other feelings of isolation. Some students shared that they find reprieve from stress through activities that bring-out their creative spirit, which feels dampened at times in the economics discipline. Below is a list of activities that several participants mentioned:

a. Physical:

- Playing intramural or local club sports
- Doing individual workouts
- Attending group fitness classes - Zumba, Yoga, etc.
- Volunteering to walk shelter dogs
- Hiking, biking, running, etc.

b. Cultural:

- Joining a local cultural group
- Attending places of worship
- Volunteering in the community

c. Creative:

- Taking art classes or music lessons
- Playing in a band or singing in a choir
- Having an at-home craft day

Therapy:

All of the groups also discussed the stigma of mental health and getting help through various services. In addition to this, groups thought about ways to break down this stigma within the university-wide and departmental contexts, which is covered in the action item section of this brief. Since the services provided at each university vary widely, we cannot make any claims about what is or is not offered to students regarding mental health. However, all groups discussed the importance of talking about mental health more openly with their peers,

colleagues, and even supervisors, while also touching on the challenges of having these conversations. Particularly, many students felt they cannot be open with people in the economics department, because it would undermine their achievements and hinder their potential assignments to certain projects. The professional services one requires might change as time passes or with different experiences, so that transition is important to acknowledge. Due to the competitive and sometimes hostile environment in graduate school and economic departments specifically, it is crucial for students to find the right therapeutic services for them, which can take many forms:

- a. University counseling services
- b. Group or individual therapy sessions
- c. Meditation, individual or in a group setting

Friends, Family, & Mentors:

All of the groups also talked about the importance of having a network outside of economics where you can vent and work through some problems. Some of the participants found connecting with their family was good way to get positive reinforcement and advice on how to handle certain situations. We should recognize that this is not the case for everyone, and it can be particularly challenging for international students to get in touch with their families abroad. Other students depend on their friendships and found many of those relationships have become stronger by supporting each other through hard times. Spending time with friends could be as simple as watching a weekly TV show together, and still be fulfilling. Lastly, several participants discussed the importance of having a mentor or life coach.

On the Job:

The last component of strategies for self-preservation is in regards to the working conditions of graduate students. This was not discussed by all of the groups, but was stated enough times in the notes to warrant a section in this brief. Particularly, students talked about techniques to achieve a healthier work-life balance and the role of a student worker union at their university. There were several action items that came out of these conversations, which are covered in the next section. Here are some of the self-preservation strategies for a better work environment:

- a. Be active in your university's Graduate Student Union
- b. Set and advertise a time when you will answer emails
- c. Track your time - are you *actually* working?
- d. Communicate with advisors/PIs/bosses about your schedule & workload
- e. Post a policy about time to respond - 24 or 48 hours

Action Items:

Several groups' discussions moved toward identifying solutions to the stigma of mental health, work-life balance of TA/RA-ships, and overall resources for students during graduate school. Many of the solutions put-forth by participants were things that could be achieved within the economics department, while some will require participation between departments or schools across the respective university. The most frequently proposed solutions have been listed below as potential action items:

- a. Breaking the stigma of mental health
 - Assess the mental health literacy of the department
 - Bring in university counseling office for a presentation
 - Conduct official check-ins on first-year PhD students by the department

b. Work-life balance of TA/RA-ships

- Start a policy of recording TA hours, since this is highly variant, although all are paid the same stipend
- Develop a buddy/mentor system between first-year and senior PhD students

c. Overall

- In some countries, TAs and RAs are unionized with the faculty, which may be beneficial in advocating for certain changes
- Designate a member of the faculty or administration from outside of the department to report on graduate student concerns within the department

Action Plan Moving Forward

Authors: Natalie Duncombe and Sarah Zeng

Introduction:

The WEB summit elicited much discussion not just on the state of diversity in economics but on actionable solutions to begin addressing these issues at the profession, department, and peer level. We have compiled a list of some of these actions, and while by no means complete, we hope that it will offer guidance in initiating change.

Recommended Measures for the Profession:

1. Actively embrace and encourage expression of the differences between economists. Too many departments claim to celebrate diversity and yet through their actions eliminate diversity by encouraging students to assimilate to the status quo. Part of this requires interacting with people outside of your comfort zone and actively listening to learn more about other perspectives without judgement.
2. Share information about profession-wide organisations that support diversity in the economics profession. These groups include:
 - a. Union of Radical Political Economics (urpe.org)
 - b. American Society of Hispanic Economists (ASHEweb.org)
 - c. International Association for Feminist Economists (IAFFE.org)
 - d. National Economics Association for Black Economists (neaecon.org)
 - e. Committee on the Status of Women in the Economics Profession (CSWEP) data
 - f. Committee on the Status of Minority Groups in the Economics Profession (CSMGEP)
 - g. AEA LGBTQ Economics Working Group
 - h. Note that there is still no American Asian Economics Association!
3. Get informed about the status of diversity in economics. Support the collection of disaggregated data on representation numbers and minority experiences. Furthermore, collect and organise the related research in a centralised place so that it's easily accessible. Another strategy of making this information more accessible and easier to share would be the creation of one-page infographics with basic diversity statistics in the discipline.
4. Encourage your peers to become allies by providing resources, tips, and strategies on how to support underrepresented or disadvantaged groups.
5. Learn from your peers! Let there be avenues for sharing and discussing steps and initiatives made by other departments towards creating a supportive environment for all, whether that be in the EconSPARK forum, conferences, or workshops. Establish and support mentoring programs with economists across institutions to allow for better dissemination of knowledge and best practises.
6. Establish profession-wide standards of conduct, with special attention to sensitive situations. For example, we could use a code of conduct for interviews conducted at the annual AEA meetings, which are held on beds in hotel rooms. Also helpful would be industry-wide standards for referee reports.

7. Create a comprehensive process for addressing harassment and similar incidents at interviews, conferences, et cetera. Part of this should include a dedicated anonymous reporting tool and a gradient of consequences for the gradient of offenses.

Recommended Policies for Departments:

Admission & Faculty Recruiting:

- Provide these faculty with economist-targeted bias training
- Actively recruit students who may be overlooked:
 - http://diversifyingecon.org/index.php/Actively_recruit
- Recruit and retain diverse faculty:
 - [http://diversifyingecon.org/index.php/Recruit and retain a diverse faculty](http://diversifyingecon.org/index.php/Recruit_and_retain_a_diverse_faculty)

First-Year:

- Match first-years with upper-years who have similar interests
- Provide TAs for prelims and all first-year classes
- Have faculty present to first-year students about fields
- Formalize matching early with younger students and faculty, even those that will not be an advisor, to get students used to speaking with faculty
- Program for matching students from underrepresented groups with faculty (in department or university) from similar backgrounds and make sure to compensate faculty for their time doing this mentorship

Research mentorship:

- Openly advertise RA-ships and matching processes
- Weekly research groups that are open to all students in the field
- Training on advising diverse students
- Make expectations for advising clear - initiating meetings, advising expectations on both sides

Culture:

- Provide events for faculty and student socializing which are non-exclusive (e.g. non-sport and non-drinking oriented)
- Inclusion/Diversity work counted towards faculty service
- Perform a climate survey to target problem areas

Sexual Harassment:

- Point of contact for harassment/issues in the dept
- Internal sexual harassment training every year
- Partner with another department so students have someone outside of their department to speak with

Department Resource Guides:

- Mental Health
- Sexual Harassment
- Advising diverse students
- Removing bias from the classroom
- Talking about diversity in the classroom

- Respectful seminar culture

Suggestions for Peers:

1. Reach out. You can do it. There are many ways that you can engage with your research community:
 - a. Get involved with student-only weekly research presentations . You can make a difference by attending and/or leading to open up conversation and offer constructive advice. If you don't have a regularly scheduled student seminar in your department, start one.
 - b. Serve as an active mentor, especially for first year students. If your department doesn't already have a graduate student mentorship program in place, you can start one. Contact Sarah Zeng at s9zeng@ucsd.edu for guidance on how to structure an effective mentorship program.
 - c. Join a social committee and plan events that are open to everyone in the department. Coordinate a variety of activities at different times to ensure that as many people as possible feel welcome. If you don't feel like you can devote enough energy or time to be a coordinator, consider volunteering a few hours for an event or two. It makes a huge difference for the event coordinators and reduces overall costs for everyone.
 - d. Start a peer support network as a mental health resource. Establish volunteers with office hours where students can come and discuss their needs and how to access relevant resources.
2. Fight discrimination in the classroom. Some strategies include:
 - a. Present your own research. This will give you credibility and improve students' perception of you as an intellectual research and not just a cog in the academic machine. This also demonstrates to students that they, too, can pursue their own research interests.
 - b. Enforce randomised study groups to encourage students to work with other people they may not have chosen to work with themselves. This teaches them valuable interpersonal skills as well as broadens their experiences with different perspectives.
 - c. Reference female and POC professors and authors by their title. E.g. Say Professor Romer rather than "Christina" even if you call her the latter.
 - d. Encourage rude or interrupting students to come to office hours with their questions rather than engaging with them during instruction time.
3. Check out your resources. For example, calwomenofecon.weebly.com provides slides that you can present to your peers to communicate diversity issues. Also be sure to check out your local graduate student body group or professional graduate student association for additional support.