

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION STATEMENT

How diverse is Economics and why does it matter?

It is well established that Economics as a profession suffers from a lack of diversity. As per an interim report published by the AEA Ad Hoc Committee on the Professional Climate in Economics in 2018, there is significant evidence of discrimination and harassment against women and minority groups, although most of the evidence is anecdotal. Economics is lagging behind other fields in terms of equal opportunities, and biases (both conscious and subconscious) are leading to denial of fair treatment. The report also finds lack of systematic data collection on these issues through surveys and other reporting mechanisms. Inadequate incentives, requirements and accountability mechanisms for departments and organizations to adopt best practices are culminating in a professional climate that is not sufficiently welcoming of women and other under-represented groups. A downstream effect of this is a lack of interest towards Economics among high school students and potential majors from diverse backgrounds.

This concern has also been raised in research published in academic journals. For example, Bayer & Rouse (2016) points out that in 2014 only 42 economics doctorates were awarded to African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans out of 500 to U.S. citizens and permanent residents, and only 157 to women. 23.5% of tenured and tenure-track faculty were women, with 15% at the full professor level versus 31% at the assistant level. Only 6.3% were African American, Hispanic, or Native American, with 4% at full professor against 8.1% at assistant. In 2014, only 28.4% of economics bachelor's degrees went to women and 14.7% to minorities. Between 1995-2014, the percentage of new economics PhDs awarded to women stagnated between 30-37%, while those to minorities declined from 11.4% in 2007 to 7% in 2014.

This phenomenon is referred as the “leaky pipeline” problem (Buckles (2019)) because people from under-represented sections of the society ultimately select themselves out of the profession leading to a lack of intellectual diversity. This can be detrimental for the field because homogeneity in background and experience can result in blind spots in research topics, methods and policy prescriptions. Diversity fosters fresh insights and innovations and for Economics to thrive as a field, it is imperative that people from all walks of life are welcomed.

What have I done so far?

As a graduate teaching assistant, I have had the opportunity to interact with students from diverse backgrounds. To ensure that I am best prepared to take care of their needs, I have regularly attended workshops organized by UWM’s Accessibility and Resource Center (ARC) and Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL). As an independent instructor, I have always designed courses that best accommodates the needs of the students, be it in terms of multidimensional learning content, flexible deadlines, and/or alternate testing arrangement. This is because I believe that different students learn differently, and to ensure the academic growth of everyone, diverse content is a key ingredient. I have held office hours dedicated to the students who feel uncomfortable discussing their requirements in front of their peers but are willing to share

their concerns in private, away from the judgement of the others. In Summer 2021, I taught a course titled “Economics of Personal Finance” to a group of students all of whom were from disadvantaged background. The objective of the course was to teach them healthy financial habits that can lead to long term benefits for them.

Although not in an official capacity, I have also mentored students in multiple semesters through a program called Panthers International Pals (PIP) organized by the UWM Centre for International Education. The goal was to help incoming international students settle down in a new country as smoothly as possible.