

STATEMENT ON DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

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The Economics profession faces a significant diversity gap concerning women and historically underrepresented racial and ethnic minorities, lagging behind not only the general population but also other fields (Bayer and Rouse, 2016). While women constitute a minority at every level of the academic hierarchy, there is a “leaky pipeline” between the 34.3% female new doctorates and the 17.8% female full professors in 2022 (Committee on the Status of Women in the Economics Profession, 2022). Regarding ethnic minorities, the Committee on the Status of Minority Groups in the Economics Profession (2022) reports that less than 10% of Ph.D. students were from a racial or ethnic minority during the academic year 2021-2022. Meanwhile, Black faculty accounted for 2.7% of full-time faculty. Black researchers are even less represented in prestigious organizations such as the NBER (Koffi and Wantchekon, forth.).

I recognize that individuals from minority backgrounds may face exclusion in academia. This lack of diversity not only hampers equitable access to learning and development opportunities but also poses recruitment and retention challenges for talented minority individuals. Moreover, it results in limited diversity of perspectives and viewpoints, undermining the principles of universalism and impeding critical inquiry, debate, and innovation, ultimately obstructing academic excellence. As a researcher, educator, and mentor, I view it as my responsibility to promote an inclusive environment for all students and colleagues, regardless of their backgrounds, beliefs, gender, sexual orientation, or disabilities. These principles have been central to my development as both a Canadian and French citizen

Outlooks from my academic journey. My experiences as a female graduate student and instructor have provided me with valuable insights into how cultural and socio-economic differences can influence people’s behaviors and opportunities.

Navigating multicultural environments. At the Toulouse School of Economics (TSE), 40% of graduate students were international, and my graduating cohort represented over 90 nationalities, fostering TSE's culture of openness and diversity. As an Erasmus fellow at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona during the 2014-2015 academic year, I engaged with local and international students and volunteered with families at risk of social exclusion at the Canpedró Social Center. After completing my Master's, I moved to Montreal in fall 2016 to pursue a Ph.D. at the Université de Montréal, a bilingual and multicultural institution that collaborates with McGill and Concordia universities through the CIREQ joint research center, reflecting the diverse spirit of Montreal itself.

Cultural perspectives in higher education. Thriving in these diverse academic environments, where I engaged with students from around the globe, offered me a firsthand glimpse into various cultural perspectives on higher education. One notable example is the distinct professor-student dynamic, which tends to be more hierarchical in France compared to Spain or North America. In Spain and Canada, I observed students addressing their instructors by their first names, a practice I had never encountered in French classrooms. Furthermore, in French universities, instructors are generally less accessible by design, as the university does not require them to establish regular office hours, even at the graduate level. While some of my professors opted to hold office hours, this was more of an exception than the norm. While approaching professors at the graduate level is more straightforward and less intimidating, at the undergraduate level in France, it is not unusual for as many as 300 students to attend the same lecture simultaneously (and 50 students in tutorial settings), which makes personalized interactions quite rare. I am aware from my discussions with my West African colleagues in Université de Montréal and McGill that this deference towards instructors, particularly professors, may be even more pronounced in other countries, especially in developing nations. Because of cultural differences, some individuals might be unaware of available learning and development opportunities, placing them at a disadvantage.

Evolving as a woman economist. I have sometimes witnessed how the academic environment can be unwelcoming for individuals not fitting into a specified gender schema. This can result in experiencing negative and unprofessional behaviors from peers, as well as more subtle manifestations of gender discrimination. Beyond being obviously unfair and disrespectful, these experiences can erode one's confidence in their academic and professional abilities, as well as their sense of belonging. This can lead to gender minority individuals not taking opportunities of career advancement, by fear of failure or rejection; or simply giving up on their economic or academic careers.

My experience in promoting an inclusive environment. These insights and the awareness of how different behaviors can be determined by individual backgrounds have helped me draft different strategies to foster a safe, respectful and equitable academic environment.

Expliciting norms. Incoming international students may not be conscious of the cultural differences in higher education. In particular, they may not be used to easily approach their professor. Fostering an inclusive and equitable classroom environment hence implies to explicitly make students aware of the group norms applying to the class. Following up on the example of professor-student relationships, these rules should clearly state the functioning of office hours and the kind of interactions students should expect with the teaching team. As I explain in my teaching statement, I routinely commence each academic term by presenting a set of established classroom norms, which encompass various aspects, including communication protocols, attendance expectations, and academic performance standards. This practice proved vital in introductory core curriculum courses I taught at Université de Montréal, which featured students from diverse backgrounds, including international, major, and non-major students.

In addition, reminding these norms at the start of each academic session is also beneficial to non-international students from minorities and first-generation students. Clearly defining ground rules has been a key factor in nurturing an atmosphere where students show respect for both each other and their learning environment and build trust in the teaching team. As an instructor, I have always encouraged all students experiencing any difficulty to come and talk to me directly so that we can deal with the issues they are facing together, in a safe environment.

Being fair and flexible. The COVID-19 pandemic has made the importance of creating a safe space for students to communicate their individual challenges even more evident. I was a lecturer at the Université de Montréal at the time of the March 2020 sanitary crisis and lockdown. During this experience, I made sure to be as available to my students as possible and to be aware of the difficulties they were facing. This enabled me to adapt my teaching and plan for solutions that were as equitable as possible.

Many international students from Europe, West Africa, and Asia had to return home and subsequently found themselves living in different time zones. In addition, several of my students were serving in the army in spring 2020: some Swiss students were conscripted upon their return home, and some Canadian students were called as reserves. Furthermore, others had limited access to a computer as they had to share it with other family members. Multiple students lacked a stable internet connection and could simply not attend Zoom conferences.

To adapt to these diverse situations and avoid excluding some students, instead of dispensing live lectures on Zoom, I prepared a detailed learning plan, including a reading and exercise schedule as well as pre-recorded videos. Additional office hours online were planned to accommodate the different time zones. I organized phone calls with students who were in very remote areas where Internet calls were not possible. For the same reason, I also adapted evaluations: instead of a synchronous online exam, I planned for students to work on a 15- to 20-page dissertation, which they had a few weeks to prepare. In this assignment, students had to analyze a hot policy topic of their choice using the knowledge acquired in the course. They were guided by detailed instructions as well by support from the teaching team provided by email and during extended

office hours.

Mentoring students. As a woman and graduate student and then postdoctoral researcher, I have been fortunate to benefit from the mentorship of other women, in particular my coauthors Emmanuelle Auriol and Alice Mesnard, as well as my current supervisor Erin Strumpf. These privileged relationships have profoundly influenced my career, providing me with role models of successful, intelligent, and passionate economists, constantly standing and working against stereotypes in the profession. Their support and encouragement have played a pivotal role in my decision to pursue a PhD and an academic career, for which I am immensely grateful.

With this in mind, I aspire to pay this kindness forward by supporting young economists, particularly women, in their pursuit of careers in Economics. From the fall of 2022 through the spring of 2023, I had the pleasure of collaborating on a policy report with a female graduate student from McGill University. During this collaboration, I had the opportunity to provide guidance and engage in discussions about various career options within the field of Economics. I shared insights, offered advice, and encouraged her to explore different paths and opportunities available to her. It was a rewarding experience to be able to support and mentor a fellow aspiring economist, and I hope to continue such mentorship and guidance in the future.

Addressing the underrepresentation of women and minorities in Economics is a top priority. As a researcher, educator, and mentor, I am deeply committed to promoting diversity and inclusion in my professional relationships, breaking down barriers, and fostering an atmosphere that encourages diverse perspectives and viewpoints. Recognizing the importance of mentorship and the invaluable role of female mentors in my own career, I am particularly driven to support women pursuing careers in Economics and inspire the next generation of economists to challenge stereotypes. I will advise all students on how to succeed. I will inform them of the resources and opportunities available to them and encourage them to leverage these. I pledge to work collaboratively to address the diversity gap in Economics and create an inclusive environment where everyone, regardless of their background, can thrive.

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