

Statement on Diversity and Inclusion

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The American Economics Association begins its “Best Practices for Economists” with the statement: “It is no secret that the economics profession suffers from a profound lack of diversity.” It continues by noting that less than one-third of the PhDs awarded in Economics in the U.S. in 2018 went to women and less than 5 percent went to Blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans.* These trends reflect exclusion at every stage of the profession, and the lack of inclusion of these groups harms equity and limits the scope of research and methods. This is a serious problem, but it is not intractable. So far in my career as an economist, I have worked to promote a more diverse and inclusive environment, and I am committed to continuing that work going forward through mentorship, research, and teaching.

Many steps in my career were made possible by good mentors, and I am committed to actively extending the same mentorship I received to a diverse group of students and colleagues. My undergraduate advisors helped me develop an interest in economics; the economists who I worked with during my research assistantship at the Federal Reserve Board helped me develop tools to do research; and my advisors at NYU guided me in asking and answering poignant research questions. Along the way, these mentors helped me navigate sometimes opaque systems for advancing in the field. That mentorship is not always afforded to students of color or women. Knowing how important that mentorship was for me, as an economist I will work to provide that same mentorship to students and colleagues, especially those from under-represented groups in the field.

Economics seminar culture is notoriously aggressive. This culture is particularly hostile to women and under-represented minorities, and an important way to improve diversity in economics is to create seminar environments that feel welcoming and inclusive. During my time at NYU, I have worked to create seminar settings in which seminar participants give constructive rather than combative feedback. In the fall of my fifth year, feeling frustrated with the lack of a space to share and receive constructive feedback on early-stage research ideas, I, along with Tom Sargent and other students in my cohort, created a weekly group to

*Statistics: AEA “Best Practices for Economists.” Available at <https://www.aeaweb.org/resources/best-practices/introduction>.

discuss new research ideas. We responded to the way existing seminars were run, in which new ideas are often torn down, by creating a group focused on constructive criticism of new research ideas. We invited students who we knew might feel uncomfortable presenting in a larger seminar setting, and I found the group was successful because we created a space where people felt comfortable sharing their work without fear of unfairly harsh criticism. I personally found the group to be a productive way to engage with my peers, and I know so did many of my peers. I hope to continue to work to create more inclusive and constructive seminars going forward.

There are effective pedagogical tools that can help include and engage a diverse group of students. One particular approach that has been empirically demonstrated to be effective is active learning. Rather than viewing economics as a body of knowledge that only an instructor could convey to students, this approach asks students to be active participants in the learning process. Not only is this pedagogical philosophy effective at improving student outcomes, but I have also found in my own teaching that it helps empower and engage students who have less high school preparation in mathematics or economics. Another important component of teaching inclusive courses is to incorporate topics that students might find important to their own lives, such as gender, race, education, and income mobility. Many of these topics do not appear in traditional introductory courses, but the inclusion of these subject reflects the true diversity of research within the discipline and engages students who might have felt left out by economics in the past. This approach has also been empirically demonstrated to increase enrollment in introductory courses among under-represented groups.

Economics has a long way to go to address its lack of diversity. However, we can take effective actions today to improve it. I am committed to promoting more diverse representation in the discipline through mentorship, research practices, and teaching.