

A Workshop to Enhance Inclusivity in Economics at Liberal Arts Colleges

Organizers

Amanda Bayer, Swarthmore College
Fernando Lozano, Pomona College

Faculty Leaders and Conference Proposers

Anne Preston, Haverford College
Melanie Khamis, Wesleyan College
Lucie Schmidt, Williams College

Description

The importance of diversity and inclusiveness in economics education and policymaking is unquestionable. Lack of diversity in economics as a field quite possibly results in suboptimal creativity and limited problem solving among our graduates. There is a large literature that shows that more diverse groups tend to be more creative and find better solutions to problems. For example, Hong and Page (2004) show that teams whose members are diverse will outperform teams whose players are alike, even if the latter are considered better in terms of ability. Similarly, Wooley et al. (2010), who explore the collective intelligence of groups, show that diverse groups tend to have greater collective intelligence than less diverse groups. Also, this lack of diversity in economics results in bias perspectives in policymaking. A recent survey of members of the American Economic Association by May *et al* suggests that women and men have very different perspectives in issues ranging from monetary theory, fiscal policy or the gender wage gap.

Notwithstanding the importance of diversity in Economics, the diversity statistics in our field are grim. For the academic year 2012-2013 the American Economic Association reports that only 0.4% of undergraduate degrees were awarded to Native American students. 5.3% to U.S. citizen black students and 8.6 to U.S. citizens Latino students. Economics not only suffers from a lack of racial and ethnic diversity, but also from a lack of gender diversity. According to the 2011 IPEDS report only 30% of economics undergraduate degrees were awarded to women. While we do not have these data composite for Liberal Arts Colleges, it is important to acknowledge that we fall short in creating an environment of inclusivity for our students, and often alienate women, students of color, or low-income students.

This workshop will discuss different our experiences using different instructional methodologies to engage a more diverse population in the study of economics and enhance its educational experience. The topics to be discussed include the use of technology, setting clear academic standards, using social entrepreneurship to engage students in economics, community service and learning, as well as using relevant policy issues to teach economics. We will build on our collective experiences of organizing a

panel in the 2014 Meetings of the American Economic Association “Diversifying Economic Quality: Innovative Teaching Techniques and Diverse Undergraduate Populations” and the 2014 workshop “National Summit on Diversity of the Economics Profession”.

Given these high stakes, it is indispensable that undergraduate institutions revisit current practices to generate interventions that lead to a more inclusive environment for women and underrepresented minorities in the economics profession. A successful intervention at the undergraduate level will have the double result of more graduates in economics and potentially more graduate students that will feed the professoriate in the future as well as policy making. Bringing together economists from all AALAC Colleges would be a first big step towards collaboration and achieving this.

Preliminary Program

The conference will be held for a day in February 5, 2016 in the campus of Pomona College in Claremont, California. We will invite Dr. Cecilia Conrad, VP of the McArthur Foundation to give the keynote talk, and an alternate is Professor Cecilia Rouse, Chair of the Committee for Status of Minority Groups in the Economics Profession and Dean of the Woodrow Wilson School of Public Policy at Princeton University.

8:00 – 8:50 am	Breakfast and Introductions
9:00 — 9:50 am	Diversifying Economic Quality, Amanda Bayer (Swarthmore)
10:00 – 10:50 am	Curricular Innovations and the Demographic Shift, TBD
11:00 – 11:50 am	Communities of Learning and Cohort Programs, Jo Hardin (Chair, Math Department, Pomona)
12:00 – 1:20 pm	Lunch
1:30 – 2:30 pm	A Bridge Program for Economics, Lucile Schmidt (Williams)
2:30 – 3:20 pm	Moderated Discussion on Best Practices, TBD <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Research• Classroom Experiments• Problem Based Learning• Teaching Feminist and Heterodox Economics• Community Partnerships and Learning in Economics,
3:30 – 4:20 pm	Student Voices Program
4:30 – 5:20 pm	Moderated Discussion: What works? Future issues.
5:30 – 6:00 pm	Reception
6:00 – 8:00 pm	Dinner with Keynote

Future Activities

Our hope is that this is the first of many future meetings between AALAC Economists. Ideally, we would agree to meet in the future during the American Economic Association

annual meetings. Also, and being economists, hopefully we can design and evaluate programs that will inform us how to make more inclusive spaces in our classrooms to better support our students in the pursuit of their education, regardless of majoring in economics or not.

Because of our emphasis in high quality education and student teacher interactions, Liberal Arts Colleges should be the leaders in classroom inclusivity and diversity in Economics. With this conference, we hope to start collaborations that will lead us towards this goal.