MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Illuminating the Path Forward

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Towards the Next Generation of Scholarship: Challenges and Opportunities for Full Participation in Ph.D. Training in Economics

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State of the Profession

- Economics is one of the most important and influential social sciences
- The economics profession seriously lacks broad participation
  - Fewer than 30% of PhDs are awarded to women
  - Fewer than 2% of PhDs go to Hispanic Americans
  - Fewer than 1% of PhDs go to African Americans
- If anything, these stats have recently worsened—also compared to other professions—including STEM
Doctorates by Race/Ethnicity in Comparison

Doctorates by Gender in Comparison

- **Doctorate Degrees in Political Science** by Gender, 2011
  - Male: 56.0
  - Female: 44.0

- **Doctorate Degrees in Economics** by Gender, 2011
  - Male: 64.8
  - Female: 35.2

- **Doctorate Degrees in STEM** Research/Scholarship Only by Gender, 2011
  - Male: 60.0
  - Female: 40.0

Source: U.S.

Importance of Diversity

- Social Justice and Individual Freedom
- Culture of Discovery
- Missing out Top-Quality
- Missing perspectives
  - Questions may be answered in incomplete/biased manner
  - Wrong questions are being asked
- Collaboration is the Foundation of Success
Risks of Lacking Diversity

- Missing perspectives and diminished quality will lead to a marginalization of our profession
- This issue is exacerbated due to demographic changes, as other disciplines have broader participation
- Cultural and Institutional Concerns
Survey of Graduate Program Directors

- Summer 2018
- AEA database of graduate programs in the US
- 142 PhD programs and 167 MA programs
- Responses from 59 PhD and 40 MA programs
- Of the 59 PhD programs:
  - 15 in top 30
  - 19 in 31–75
  - 25 others
PhD Admissions

- Most find diversity important, but few have programs to target this
- High GPAs and GREs across the schools
- Most important criteria for admissions:
  - Prior Math Classes
  - GRE quantitative Score
  - Prior Econ Classes
- Letters of recommendation matter
- Personal Statements and Interviews less so
PhD Program Characteristics

- Cohort sizes of 5 (lower ranked) to 20 (higher ranked)
- Strong prevalence of up-or-out qualifier
- Completion rates of 67% - 75%
- TTD:
  - 6 years in top
  - 5 years otherwise
Challenges for Full Participation

- Prior course work and GPAs
  - what do we know about their importance for success?

- GREs create barriers to entry
  - concerns about their interpretation (ETS)
  - overall meaning
  - variation in distribution

- LORs
  - Interpretation

- Up-or-out qualifying exams

- TTD

- Ineffective recruiting initiatives

- Poor mentoring? (Attrition)
Opportunities for Full Participation

- **Active engagement of undergraduates**
  - Div.E.Q: http://diversifyingecon.org
- **Active recruiting**
  - Econ, STEM, SocSci; HBCUs, MSIs
- **Openness to non-traditional paths**
- **Support of Bridge Programs**
  - AEASP, PhDEI, Harvard RSI, …
- **Holistic Admissions**
  - LORs Interpretation; Personal Statements; Interviews
- **Reevaluation of Program Structures**
  - Bridge support; qualifying exams; comps
- **Strong inclusive mentoring practices**
Closing Remarks

• *Homo œconomicus*
  • Generic, blind, blinded?
• “No one has ever been fired for hiring IBM”
  • Institutional Barriers to Entry
• Rigorous PhD Training
  • common language of discourse

What good is sophisticated grammar and a powerful vocabulary if the contents of our narratives are lacking?
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