

**Agricultural &**

**Resource Economics**



**Equity & Inclusion Plan**

**August 2017**

# DEPARTMENTAL EQUITY AND INCLUSION PLAN

Our core strengths span the fields of development economics, agricultural economics, energy economics, environment and natural resource economics, and the economics of climate change. These are fields of research that seek to improve the productivity, quality of life, and wellbeing of all people. However, at present our graduate students and faculty are not representative of the social problems, challenges, and opportunities we study.

Enhancing the diversity of our department not just about fairness or political correctness; it could be key to ensuring that our research contributions remain relevant and substantive. If we are to continue to lead and push the boundaries of scholarship in the field of Agricultural and Resource Economics, we must draw from a more diverse range of perspectives, ideas, and empirical methods.

Our department has made some important strides towards supporting diversity in its many forms. But there is more progress to be made. This strategic plan provides an important opportunity to reflect on our efforts to date and identify specific goals and actions that can be implemented over the next five years.

The perspectives and ideas that informed this plan were collected over the course of two department town hall meetings, an anonymous survey to assess the department climate, and consultation with small groups of faculty and graduate students. Women in Economics at Berkeley (WEB), an organization of UCB graduate students in ARE and Economics, has been particularly helpful in providing constructive feedback.

The strategy outlined below is intended to address three broad goals:

1. **Enhance and support a diverse faculty.** This will require proactive steps to identify outstanding candidates from underrepresented groups. This will also require a strategic effort to overcome the small numbers problem that can be an obstacle for a small department looking to increase diversity over a sequence of targeted, field-specific searches.
2. **Enhance and support a diverse graduate program.** We plan to critically assess our admissions process to ensure that we can attract and recruit qualified candidates from underrepresented groups. We will also strengthen our mentoring program to ensure that candidates from underrepresented backgrounds do not feel excluded or marginalized.
3. **Foster a climate within the department that promotes equity, inclusion, and diversity.** There is more we can be doing as a department to create an intellectually supportive environment for all students, staff, and faculty.

The Department Equity and Inclusion Plan is organized into three sections. The first reviews recent demographic trends in the department viewed through the lens of diversity. The second section provides an informal assessment of the current department climate. The third section outlines specific actions we propose to meet these goals.

This Equity and Inclusion Plan was drafted in consultation with faculty, graduate students, and UC Berkeley's Office of Equity and Inclusion. ARE faculty unanimously endorsed this plan at an August 2017 faculty meeting.

## 1. DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

We characterize the composition of ARE students and faculty using data collected from the central campus Office of Planning and Analysis, and departmental data gathered in-house over the period 2007- 2016. Over this time period, we have made only limited progress in diversifying the department in key dimensions of gender, race, and ethnicity. By some metrics, the degree of minority representation has actually *decreased* in recent years.

In part, these numbers reflect a broader, discipline-wide problem. The economics profession includes disproportionately few women and members of historically underrepresented minority groups, relative both to the overall population and to other academic disciplines. In contrast to other STEM fields that have seen continued improvement in the status of women and under-represented minorities (African American, Hispanic, or Native American), progress in the field of Economics has stalled. For at least a decade, there has been no increase in the representation of women among new Economics PhDs and assistant professors.<sup>1</sup> Representation of minorities among undergraduates and graduate students in economics has increased over the past decade, but remains low relative to minority representation in STEM fields (CSMGEP, 2015).

By some metrics, our department falls below the low bar set by Economics with respect to female and minority representation. This is somewhat surprising when one considers that our core fields of strength (e.g. development, environment, resource economics) are among those in which female and minority scholars are most active (as compared to other major fields such as macroeconomics, econometrics, industrial organization).

### *Undergraduate Students*

From 2007 to 2016, the department's percentage of female undergraduate students fluctuated between a low of 46% in 2008 and a high of 59% in 2010. In 2016, the Department's percentage of female undergraduate students was 52%. This gender ratio compares favorably with the broader discipline of economics. Nationwide there are about three males for every female undergraduate student majoring in economics; this ratio has not changed for more than 20 years.<sup>2</sup>

Over this same time period, the department's percentage of under-represented minority (i.e. African American, Hispanic, American Indian) undergraduate students fluctuated between a high of 15% in 2009 and a low of 8% in 2011. Minority representation has been consistently below that of the larger College of Natural Resources, but comparable to the national average. Nationwide, there has been some increase in the percentage of minority students graduating with a major in economics, increasing from 12 percent in 1995 to 14.7 percent in 2014. This rate still falls below the 20 percent of bachelor's degrees awarded in STEM fields as reported by Bayer and Rouse.<sup>3</sup>

### *Graduate Students*

The department's percentage of female graduate students is in decline. Over the period 2003-2010, the share of women ranged from 40% to 55%. Since 2012, however, women have comprised less than 40% of graduate students (37% in 2016). Women comprise 31% of the 2017 entering cohort. The current gender ratio falls well below the College of Natural Resources (54%) but is at or above the national average. In 2016, women comprised 33% of first year Economics PhD students and 31% of new Economics doctorates.

The share of international students in our graduate program has also declined significantly since 2006 from 55% to 35%. This decline is driven in part by budget constraints which now limit the number of international students the department can financially support. The share of URM students has remained consistently low at 3%. This falls far below the national average of 8.5%.<sup>4</sup>



<sup>1</sup> CSWEP Annual Report 2016

<sup>2</sup> <https://scholar.harvard.edu/goldin/background-facts>.

<sup>3</sup> Bayer, Amanda, and Cecilia Elena Rouse. 2016. "Diversity in the Economics Profession: A New Attack on an Old Problem." *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 30(4): 221-42.

<sup>4</sup> CSMGEP, 2015



Our department has recently (since 2012) begun to collect detailed data on graduate student applicants. Over this period, women have comprised 43% of applicants and 45% of the admitted cohort. International students comprise 66% of applicants and 35% of admitted students. African American and Hispanic students together comprise 4% of applicants and 10% of the admitted cohort. The discrepancies between the composition of admitted graduate students and the composition of the students who join our program suggest room for improvement in recruiting female and URM students admitted to the program. This will not be easy; many PhD programs are increasing efforts to recruit a more diverse student body.

### ***Faculty***

Since 2008, the Department's percentage of female ladder-ranked faculty has held relatively steady and consistently lower than the College of Natural Resources. In 2016, 15% (3/20) of the Department's ladder-ranked faculty were female. However, our most senior female colleague has announced her retirement. Accounting for a recent hire, this brings the share of female faculty down to 10%. This is well below the national average for doctoral Economics departments. According to the most recent survey conducted by the American Economic Association, 23.5 percent of tenured and tenure-track faculty in economics are women (Bayer and Rouse, 2016). Women comprise 20% of tenure track faculty across 126 doctoral departments responding to a 2016 CSWP survey (CSWEP, 2017). With women comprising only 10% of our faculty, the problem of limited gender diversity among economics faculty appears particularly acute in our department.

In 2016, no ladder-ranked faculty in the Department self-reported as URM. However, we will soon be welcoming a highly qualified new colleague, a development economist, recruited as a target of opportunity. This faculty member will increase URM representation to a level (5%) that is still low, although comparable with the larger field of Economics. A recent survey conducted by the American Economic Association finds that, in the academic year 2014-2015, URM faculty comprised 6% of full-time economics faculty among the institutions that responded to the survey.<sup>5</sup>

The striking lack of diversity in our faculty represents a missed opportunity and a liability. The composition of our faculty does not reflect the diversity of experiences and perspectives that defines the research areas that our department has built its reputation on. If we are going to maintain our national standing as an intellectual leader in development economics, environment and resource economics, and agricultural economics, we must increase the diversity of our faculty. The only way to do this is via faculty recruitment and new hires.

Since 2010, we have conducted four faculty searches (in 2011, 2013, 2014, 2015). Three of these searches led to the successful recruitment of three excellent new colleagues. All three have greatly strengthened our department, but not increased the share of women or under-represented minorities. The most recent search identified a highly qualified female economist as the leading candidate.

Unfortunately, she declined our offer in order to accept a lucrative position at Northwestern.

This track record has raised concerns about our faculty's search practices. The composition of the applicant pools and short-lists for each search are summarized below. The relevant diversity benchmarks are also provided as a basis for comparison.

---

<sup>5</sup> These data may not be representative given a low (48%) survey response rate.

**Table 1. Recent Faculty Applicant Pools in ARE**

	<b>Benchmark (ARE)</b>	<b>Applicant Pool</b>	<b>Short List</b>
<b>2011 Search</b>			
Female	40%	13%	0%
URM	16%	16%	0%
<b>2013 Search</b>			
Female	42%	39%	40%
URM	15%	8%	0%
<b>2014 Search</b>			
Female	38%	30%	0%
URM	13.5%	8%	0%
<b>2015 search</b>			
Female	38%	39%	50%
URM	13.5%	7.3%	0%

Taken at face value, this table is not encouraging. In two years out of four, the short list of candidates invited to give job talks included no female or URM candidates. None of the four searches has resulted in the appointment of a female or URM colleague.

It is important to note, however, that our department has been making a concerted effort to attract and vet a diverse and inclusive pool of applicants. Search chairs have attended workshops conducted by the Office for Faculty Equity and Welfare (OFEW) that provide useful guidelines for the faculty search process. Search committee members have made dozens of calls to colleagues in order to identify promising candidates, expressing particular interest in encouraging qualified women and under- represented minority candidates.

The two most recent searches help to highlight two related obstacles that complicate efforts to increase the diversity of our small faculty. If we are to succeed in attracting highly qualified female and URM scholars in the future, we will need to find ways to address these challenges.

**The small numbers problem:** The first challenge is the small number of candidates that enter the job market for a particular field in any given year. In 2014, our department was searching for an Assistant Professor of Resource and Environmental Economics and Sustainability. Attracting a diverse and inclusive pool of applicants was identified as an important priority by this search committee. The committee consulted with faculty and students to identify promising female and URM candidates. The search chair personally contacted promising potential candidates to encourage them to apply. The final applicant pool included 29/103 women and 8/103 URM candidates, approximately on par with female and URM shares of economic graduate students in that year. However, in this particular year, the research profiles and qualifications of these candidates were not well matched to our department and/or the position. Consequently, the final short list was comprised solely of white and Asian male candidates. By all accounts, this outcome was attributed to the small numbers of qualified female and underrepresented minority PhDs in any given year combined with the winnowing effects of a targeted search.

This search resulted in the hiring of a highly esteemed colleague. He is a truly excellent addition to our faculty. However, the hiring of another white male faculty member raised important concerns about the department's commitment to equity and inclusion. In response, the search committee chair convened a department-wide

meeting. A constructive discussion ensued, and additional steps we could be taking to attract highly qualified female and URM candidates were identified.

*Anxieties about maintaining our first-place national ranking* among Agricultural and Resource Economics departments gives rise to second challenge. Hiring faculty is one of the most important and difficult tasks of any department. In a small faculty, each new hire has a substantive impact on the future trajectory of the department. Discussions about how diversity considerations should enter the search process have direct implications for the larger conversation about the future direction of the department.

In 2015, our department was searching for an Assistant Professor in the field of Natural Resources and Agricultural Economics. The search chair took feedback from the aforementioned town hall meeting very seriously. In addition to the protocols the department has already been following, he implemented changes suggested at the meeting, such as redacting all identifying information from job market papers reviewed by the search committee to mitigate the effects of implicit bias.

An impressive pool of applicants was ultimately winnowed down to two outstanding candidates. One male candidate is conducting high quality research closely related to areas in which our department has traditionally been strong. This candidate, a recent graduate, shows great promise but has yet to establish a publication record. A second female candidate is more advanced in her career (although not yet tenured) and has a proven track record of publishing in top tier journals. Her research pursues non- conventional lines of inquiry that are related to (but depart markedly from) the kind of research that our department has built its reputation on.

The deliberation over this choice between two excellent, but very different, candidates laid bare some difficult trade-offs and tensions. More specifically, it exposed a plurality of opinions about what kind of candidates we should be looking to recruit as we chart a future course for our small department, and what role diversity should play. Some see a fundamental tension between defending our top ranking and prioritizing diversity considerations in hiring decisions. Others see critical complementarities.

In the end, the offer was extended to the female candidate. Unfortunately, our offer could not compete with other offers from top department, thus highlighting a third challenge! Having identified a strong female or URM candidate, it can be hard to attract these candidates.

In sum, our department is already making a concerted effort to ensure equity and inclusion in faculty searches. These efforts notwithstanding, the relatively low share of female and URM faculty in our department remains unacceptably low. Section 3 outlines some additional strategies we plan to implement to overcome formidable challenges and negotiate nuanced trade-offs.

## **2. CURRENT CLIMATE**

In addition to tracking the demographic trends in our faculty and student populations, a clear-eyed assessment of the culture and “climate” of the department as it pertains to equity, diversity, and inclusion will be important for informing future strategy.

Over the past two years, the Equity Advisor has convened two town hall meetings to openly discuss diversity-related issues in the department. She has administered an open-ended survey for graduate students regarding diversity and equity concerns. She has also met with representatives of some under- represented groups to open up channels of communication between students and faculty. These conversations and survey responses inform this informal survey of department culture and climate. Future reviews would benefit from a more systematic and comprehensive approach to gauging department climate and collecting feedback.

Overall, the news is good. Students report having a positive experience. Many have indicated that simply

initiating the conversation about how the department can demonstrate support diversity and inclusion improves their sense of place in the department.

All that said, there is room for improvement. Specific concerns raised by graduate students provide some guidance.

- Some students have questioned whether a faculty so lacking in diversity can meaningfully prioritize values of equity and inclusion. Two anonymous survey responses help to elaborate upon this broad concern:

*“The fact that there are enough economists with racist and sexist views to populate Econ Job Market Rumors is extremely worrisome. It does not give me much faith in the sensitivity or awareness of economists outside the department, and makes me wonder if some of my professors and colleagues secretly hold these views”*

*“It is clear that a handful of people in the department care about both diversity and inclusion. But ideally the faculty as a whole would demonstrate commitment to supporting and valuing diversity in its many forms.”*

The larger field of economics can, at times, feel inhospitable or hostile to women and minorities. There is only so much our small department can do to change the broader culture that students encounter at conferences or on the internet. But these experiences can substantively affect graduate students’ sense of their professional prospects and/or complicate interactions with well- intentioned ARE professors or fellow students. Our department should be doing more to clearly and meaningfully establish a department culture that is unequivocally supportive and inclusive.

- It can be difficult for graduate students to raise and respond to issues if and when they arise. One anonymous survey respondent writes:

*“As a PhD student, it is simply \_not\_ possible to “call out” a professor when they say or do something problematic or that makes me uncomfortable. We are too dependent on our professors’ favorable opinions to risk antagonizing them over these issues.”*

Establishing accessible channels of communication through which students can provide constructive feedback on how they perceive their interactions with faculty can help inform departmental policy and practice.

- Several students have raised concerns about graduate student mentoring. The matching process between graduate students and advisors can be intimidating for students who feel shy or marginalized. This can have lasting impacts on graduate school experience and job market outcomes. One student observed that “the preponderance of male faculty means that female graduate students are less likely to have close, familiar relationships with their advisors”.

The department currently coordinates an informal “brown bag lunch” for first year students to grease the wheels of interactions between faculty and new graduate students, and facilitate the matching process. The development and environmental economics fields coordinates research seminars to provide group advising on students’ work in progress. These meetings and seminars are well attended by faculty, indicative of faculty investment in graduate student mentoring.

Student feedback suggests additional steps could be taken to ensure that all students feel comfortable about approaching potential advisors and initiating contact with faculty.

- Students have expressed concerns about the increasing tuition difference between U.S. and international students. Dwindling numbers of international students is a disappointing trend, particularly for those in the field of international development.

An exciting student-led initiative has emerged to help foster a supportive community to help women successfully complete their Ph.D. in Economics, support the recruitment of a more diverse faculty, and mentor female undergraduate students. Women in Economics at Berkeley (WEB) has been actively working to advocate for women in Economics through panel discussions, research seminars, and undergraduate mentoring. The momentum behind WEB is encouraging, and the department will increase its efforts to support the organization and work closely with its members to identify ways that department practices could be improved.

### 3. GOALS, STRATEGIES, DELIVERABLES

This section outlines items for discussion and possible action at the department level. These actions are intended to address three broad goals introduced in section 1.

#### *Enhance and support a diverse faculty*

- ***Broaden faculty searches and refrain from focusing on subfield specialization to mitigate the small numbers problem.*** This is not easy to accomplish given the targeted nature of FTE requests and the scarcity of new FTE approvals. With several retirements anticipated in the coming years, a coordinated effort to fill multiple positions over multiple years could provide the ability to act opportunistically when strong female or URM candidates enter the field.
- ***Chart a future course for the department that builds strength in areas that are attractive to female and URM scholars.*** The field of Agricultural and Resource Economics is changing, and as the top ranked department we are in a position to be agents of change. The areas of research we choose to emphasize and build in the future should be those that help us achieve our goal of attracting a more diverse pool of highly qualified candidates
- ***Identify and engage with early-career underrepresented potential candidates.*** Both CSWEP and CSMGEP have programs aimed at providing women and underrepresented minorities with greater mentorship (such as CSWEP's Mentoring Breakfast and CSMGEP's Mentoring Program) or opportunities to conduct guided research (such as the CSWEP/CSMGEP Summer Fellows Program). Some of our faculty already participate in these kinds of programs. These activities should be expanded.

#### *Enhance and support a diverse graduate program*

- ***Review and implement admissions practices*** to ensure that qualified underrepresented students are encouraged to apply and are evaluated appropriately. Graduate admissions chairs should meet with the equity advisor at the beginning of the admissions process to discuss priorities and lessons learned from prior years.
- ***Increase recruitment efforts for underrepresented applicants.*** Every URM and female prospective student should be contacted personally. Any opportunities to supplement campus diversity fellowships to make them more competitive should be pursued

#### *Foster a climate within the department that promotes equity, inclusion, and diversity.*

- ***Create a standing committee on equity and inclusion*** to raise the profile of departmental commitment.



- **Implement an annual climate survey** to collect feedback from students and monitor progress towards our equity and inclusion goals.
- **Raise awareness:** One faculty meeting per year and one town hall meeting per year should be dedicated to discussing survey results and charting next steps. This will not only raise awareness among faculty and students, but also demonstrate that the department is committed to responding to any issues that arise.
- **Schedule a coordinated (department-wide) office hour session** once a semester to provide all students the opportunity to meet and connect with faculty.
- **Engage and support WEB and other student initiatives** designed to improve the department climate.

#### 4. FACULTY RECRUITING DATA

Recruiting year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
N applicants	63			1	67		105	102	117	1
% female	33%			100%	40%		36%	38%	38%	0%
% non white	48%			100%	26%		25%	24%	24%	100%
campus comparison Economics										
% female Campus					34%		34%	34%	34%	
% non white campus					26%		27%	27%	26%	
N interviews	20				18		25	14	16	
% female	10%				17%		35%	15%	50%	
% non white	35%				33%		37%	57%	13%	
N short list campus visit	5				7		6	5	6	
% female	20%				0%		40%	0%	50%	
% non white	0%				0%		33%	50%	17%	
Number total Sequential Offers made	1			1	2	1	1	1	1	1
% female	0%			100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%
% non white	0%			0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	100%	100%
recruited	1			1	1	1	1	1	0	1
search type	regular			targeted	regular	targeted	regular	regular	regular	targeted
Hire/Offer is female or non white	No			Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

#### 5. REFERENCES

- Bayer, Amanda, and Cecilia Elena Rouse. 2016. "Diversity in the Economics Profession: A New Attack on an Old Problem." *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 30(4): 221-42.
- CSMGEP. 2015. *Report of the Committee on the Status of Minority Groups in the Economics Profession*. December 2015.
- CSWEP. 2016. *The 2016 Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in the Economics Profession*. Perry, Gregory. 2010. "What is the Future of Agricultural Economics Departments and the Agricultural Economics Profession." *Applied Economic Perspectives and Policy*, 3(1): 117-134.
- Weersink, Alfons. 2006. "Agricultural Economics in Canada: Ready to Step Up or Fall Back?" *Canadian Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 54(1): 1-9.