

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY



illuminating the Path Forward

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Illuminating the Path Forward

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

ASSA Winter Meetings
January 2019, Atlanta

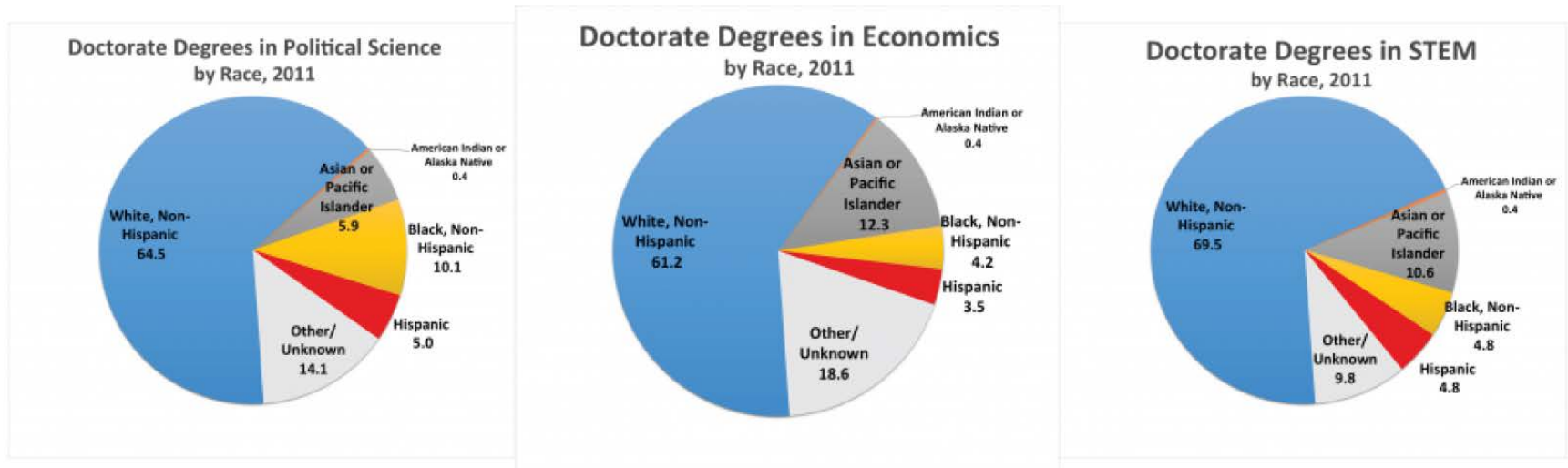
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State of the Profession

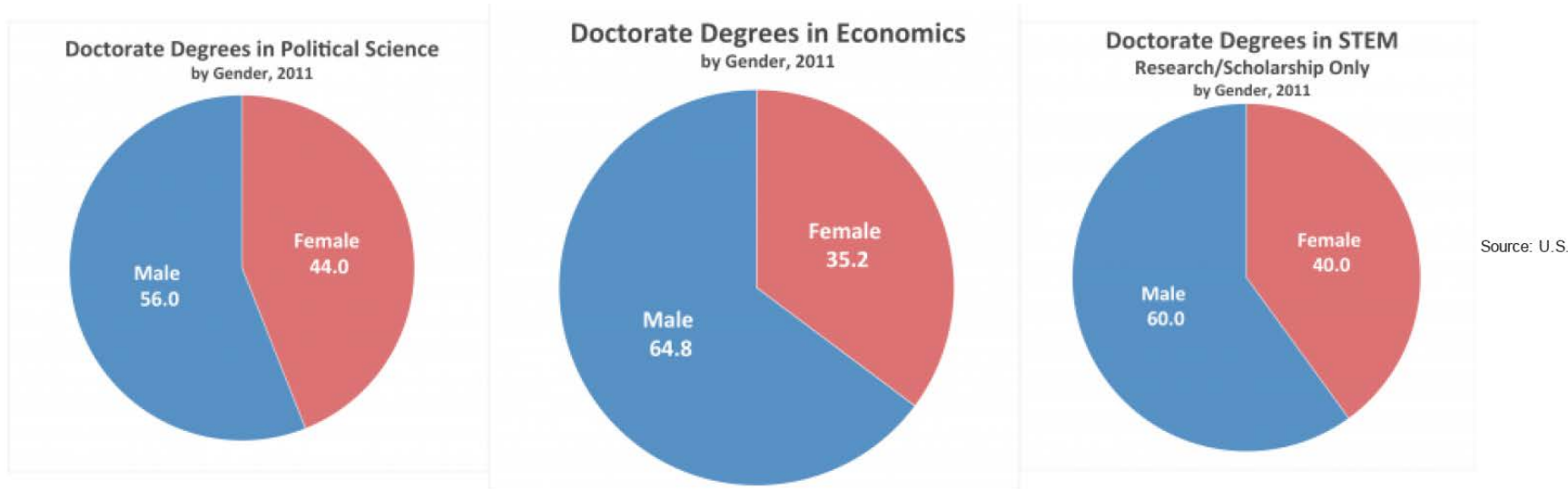
- **Economics is one of the most important and influential social sciences**
- **The economics profession seriously lacks broad participation**
 - Fewer than 30% of PhDs are awarded to women
 - Fewer than 2% of PhDs go to Hispanic Americans
 - Fewer than 1% of PhDs go to African Americans
- **If anything,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

Doctorates by Race/Ethnicity in Comparison



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES); Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) Completions, 1995-2011 (Washington, D.C.: NCES, 2013). Created by data provided by WebCaspar. Includes only U.S. citizens and permanent residents.

Doctorates by Gender in Comparison



Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES); Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) Completions, 1995-2011 (Washington, D.C.: NCES, 2013). Created by data provided by WebCaspar.

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 oeconomicus***
 - 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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